

## GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

**Date of Elections:** 14 June 1981

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament on the normal expiry of their term of office.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The unicameral Parliament of the German Democratic Republic, the *Volkskammer* (People's Chamber), is composed of 500 members directly elected for 5 years by universal suffrage.

### **Electoral System**

Every citizen of the GDR who is at least 18 years old on election day and resides in the country has the right to vote and to be elected to the *Volkskammer*, unless he is under tutelage or has been deprived of his civil rights by court decision.

Electoral lists are established at least 21 days prior to the polling day and are publicly displayed for two weeks. Voting is not compulsory.

Candidates for the *Volkskammer* are nominated 30 to 40 days before election day by parties and mass organizations, which may present their proposals in a joint list of candidates of the National Front of the GDR. Voters may propose changes in the list(s) up to five days before the elections.

The 500 Deputies are elected in 72 constituencies, each choosing from four to eight members, depending on its population. To be elected, a candidate must receive more than half of the valid votes cast in his constituency. If, within a constituency, an insufficient number of candidates obtain the required absolute majority needed to fill all the seats, a second ballot is held within 90 days. If the number of candidates winning this majority exceeds the number of seats in the respective constituency, the order of the candidates on the election list is decisive. Elected candidates who, on this basis, receive no seat become successor candidates who fill vacancies in the *Volkskammer* which occur during a legislative period.

### **General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

The 1981 elections for the *Volkskammer* coincided with those for the country's 14 regional assemblies and for the Municipal Assembly of East Berlin. The general elections were the first since all Deputies, including those from Berlin, were elected on the same basis.

Political parties and mass organizations—all belonging to the National Front of the

German Democratic Republic—which participated in the poll were headed by the Socialist Unity Party (SED), formed in 1946. National Front candidates totalled 679. On polling day, 500 of these were elected, the remaining 179 becoming substitute Deputies.

At its first meeting on 25 June, the *Volkskammer* re-elected Mr. Willi Stoph as Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Since 1976, the Chairman of the Council of State (Head of State) has been Mr. Erich Honecker.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Volkskammer*

Number of registered electors. . . . .	12,352,263	
Voters. . . . .	12,255,006	(99.2%)
Void ballot papers. . . . .	2,878	
Valid votes. . . . .	12,252,128	
<i>Votes in favour of the National Front of the GDR</i>	12,235,515	

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats
National Front of the German Democratic Republic . . . . .	679	500

2. *Distribution of Deputies according to Professional Category*

Workers. . . . .	236
Intellectuals. . . . .	115
Salaried employees. . . . .	89
Members of agricultural productive co-operatives, individual farmers, gardeners. . . . .	52
Others. . . . .	8
	500

3. *Distribution of Deputies according to Sex*

Men. . . . .	338
Women . . . . .	162
	500

4. *Distribution of Deputies according to Age Group*

18-20 years. . . . .	12
21-25 . . . . .	34
26-30. . . . .	19
31-40. . . . .	63
41-50 . . . . .	128
51-65 . . . . .	205
Over 65. . . . .	39
	500