

Guide to the East German poster collection political series, 1943-2009

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1943-2009

A Collection in Special Collections and Archives C0169

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History

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Guide to the East German poster collection political series, 1943-2009

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

C0169

Date

1943-2009

Language

German

Abstract

This series contains posters relating to political persons, events, and organizations from the Deutsche Demokratische Republik. The series contains 652 posters of various sizes. The posters range in size from 99.5 x 69.5 cm to 40 x 29.25 cm. The average poster size is 57 x 81 cm.

Creator

Thomas Hill

Physical Characteristics

652 posters

Repository

George Mason University. Special Collections and Archives.

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Purchased from Thomas Hill in 2009.

Processing Information

Processed by Lauren Shutt and Sean Tennant in 2010. EAD markup completed by Sean Tennant.

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Preferred Citation

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Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

Special Collections and Archives holds many other posters on the history of East Germany.

Historical Information

On October 7, 1949, following the partition of Germany at the end of World War II, the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) was formed under the governance of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED). The SED had been formed from two previous political parties, the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD) and the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD). In 1955, the Soviet Occupation Zone was officially declared to be a sovereign state. Under the SED, the infrastructure, industrial plants, and public property were all nationalized. Additionally, all political parties and mass organizations were controlled under an umbrella organization known as the Nationale Front (NF).

Initially, the SED was led by Wilhelm Pieck, who served as the first and only president of the DDR from 1949 to 1960. After 1950, the actual power in the DDR was held by Walter Ulbricht, the First Secretary of the SED. During this beginning period of the DDR's history, the new state's economy was severely weakened by war reparations to the USSR. This problem was exacerbated by the heavy emigration to the West that was induced by the increased poverty caused by the war reparations. In response to the emigration problem, the DDR closed the Inner German border in the 1950s. On the night of August 12, 1961, East German soldiers began construction on the Berlin Wall.

From 1949 until the 1970s, West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany) considered the DDR to be an illegally constituted state. It was only in 1971, under Chancellor Willy Brandt, that West Germany established normal relations with the DDR. That same year, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev deposed Walter Ulbricht as the DDR head of state. Ulbricht's policies were experimenting with liberal reform, so Ulbricht was replaced by Erich Honecker, who increased government controls on the population.

In 1989, public outrage over local government elections led to large amounts of illegal emigration from the DDR. In August, Hungary unsealed its border and lifted restrictions, leading to over 13,000 people leaving the DDR to the West via Hungary. In October, public demonstrations led to Erich Honecker's resignation. His replacement, Egon Krenz, was slightly more moderate. On November 9, 1989, sections of the Berlin Wall were opened. The governing party of the DDR soon resigned and attempts to establish a democratic DDR were overwhelmed by calls for reunification with West Germany. Later that year, the 2 + 4 Talks were held between the East Germany, West Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the USSR. The five original East German states, which were abolished in 1952, were reestablished, and conditions for reunification were agreed upon. On October 3, 1990, the five East German states officially joined the Federal Republic of Germany.

Scope and Content

This series contains posters relating to political persons, events, and organizations from the Deutsche Demokratische Republik. The series contains 652 posters of various sizes. The posters range in size from 99.5 x 69.5 cm to 40 x 29.25 cm. The average poster size is 57 x 81 cm.

Common political figures present within the series are Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Ernst Thälmann, Rosa Luxemburg, and Karl Liebknecht. These people are generally depicted by portrait photographs or illustrations. The majority of the portrait posters are in commemoration of former political leaders and communist figures, although there are some that are campaign posters for contemporary politicians. The series also contains posters from political organizations such as the Feiern Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB), the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED), the Solidaritätskomitee der DDR, and the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ). Also contained in the series are posters expressing solidarity with various revolutionary movements around the world, mostly focusing on Africa, Southeast Asia, and Central America. The posters are associated with events such as the elections of 1990, the fall of the Berlin Wall, Soviet Seven Year agricultural plans, and the anniversaries of the births of noted communist figures. Graffiti from the Berlin Wall is also a popular subject. The majority of poster images are photographs with text, although there are also illustrations and some abstract art with political text.

Index Terms

Persons:

Billhardt, Thomas.
Grosser, Hubert, 1954-
Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich, 1870-1924--Posters.
Liebknecht, Karl Paul August Friedrich, 1871-1919--Posters
Marx, Karl, 1818-1883--Posters.
Thälmann, Ernst, 1886-1944--Posters.
Luxemburg, Rosa, 1871-1919--Posters.

Corporate Names:

Alternative Liste (Political party)
Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands (Germany : East)
Demokratischer Aufbruch (Political party)
Freie Deutsche Jugend.
Germany. Bundestag--Elections, 1990--Posters.
Germany (East). Volkskammer--Elections, 1990--Posters.
Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft.
Grünen (Political party)
Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland.
National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (Germany : East)
Nationale Front der DDR
Neues Forum (Political party)
Republikaner (Political party)
Solidaritätskomitee der DDR.
Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands.
Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands.
SPD der DDR.
Unabhängiger Frauenverband der DDR.
Vereinigte Linke (Organization)

Geographical Names:

Germany--History--1945-1990--Posters.
Germany--History--Unification, 1990--Posters.
Germany (East)--Politics and government--Posters.

Subjects:

Berlin Wall, Berlin, Germany, 1961-1989--Posters.

Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin, Germany, 1961-1989--Posters.

Document Types:

Political posters--Germany (East)

Protest posters--Germany (East)

War posters--Germany (East)

Arrangement

The arrangement is by subject and a numbering system.

Contents List

Series 1: Political Posters

Unit Date 1943-2009

Scope and Content

[Poster Inventory with Brief Descriptions](#)

Sample images are also available. Please contact speccoll@gmu.edu for more information.

Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University