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The Opposition Charges the SED with Fraud in the Local Elections of May 1989 (May 25, 1989)

In an interview with a leftist West Berlin newspaper, Protestant pastor Rainer Eppelmann, a spokesman for the GDR opposition, charges the SED with fraud in the local elections of May 1989 by pointing to the discrepancy between the number of negative votes counted by impartial observers and those officially recorded.

Glasnost against Election Fraud

taz: You're one of the twelve GDR citizens who raised charges of election fraud. Why weren't you satisfied with filing a petition or an objection?

Rainer Eppelmann: I did both. I filed a petition with the National Council of the National Front, requesting that the election be annulled and that new elections be announced for us in the district of Friedrichshain. I also raised charges of election fraud because according to our penal code, that is, according to current law, it's a crime that must be punished. Up to now, there had never been any proof of it. In 1986 some people in our peace group participated in the public counting of ballots in eight of the 128 polling stations that existed in Friedrichshain at the time, and they counted more "no" votes than were later announced. Back then, however, we could only speak of tendencies, whereas now we have evidence. The newspapers referred to 1,611 "no" votes this time. But we were present for the vote count at 83 of the 89 polling stations and came up with over 4,700 "no" votes. And that figure isn't even from us, we just added up the official results for each polling station. That's why I had to press charges against the director of the Friedrichshain election commission.

Do you really think the charges will be followed up on?

We'll see. I know that according to current GDR law, the prosecutor has seven days to review the case and decide whether or not to start preliminary proceedings. I will calmly wait until the end of the month and otherwise consider further steps. But first I assume that the attorney general will take legal steps against the election fraud in the prescribed manner.

Never before have such charges been filed in the history of GDR elections. Why now?

These reactions to the local election are certainly an expression of a new attitude. Glasnost and perestroika do not stop at the borders of the German Democratic Republic. They are definitely in the minds and hearts of many people here. Developments like those in Poland, Hungary, the Soviet Union, and also now in China, do not pass by us without a trace. And the election fraud

that has now become visible cannot simply be swept under the rug. Laws apply to everyone, also to those in the government.

What does this mean for Egon Krenz, the chief election commissioner of the GDR?

As I said, I filed charges against the election commissioner of the Friedrichshain district. I can well imagine, however, that the election was carried out correctly here and that the result was also passed on correctly. There is growing suspicion that the election fraud took place higher up, that there was fiddling with the numbers from above. I don't want to speculate; it is the job of the attorney general to determine where the fraud occurred, whether in the election commission of the district or higher up in the political hierarchy.

Source: Birgit Meding, "Glasnost gegen Wahlbetrug" ["Glasnost against Election Fraud"], *tageszeitung*, May 25, 1989.

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