

# AIRGRAM

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INFO: BERLIN, BREMEN, DUESSELDORF, FRANKFURT  
HAMBURG, MUNICH STUTTGART

FROM : Amembassy BONN

DATE: JULY 25, 1969

SUBJECT : Impressions of the FDP Convention at Nuernberg

REF : Munich's 360 and 380; Bonn's A-1021, Feb. 26, 1968

POL 12-6 GER W

### SUMMARY

The 20th regular convention of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), held at Nuernberg June 22-25, had as its chief item of business the adoption of an election campaign platform. Thorough spadework by the party managers, plus tacit agreement by both reform and conservative factions to avoid a showdown on controversial policy matters, promoted the occasion into a show of party unity. Only two challenges developed to the carefully tailored platform draft, and both were disposed of without serious conflict. A radical amendment on co-determination, proposed by the FDP youth affiliate (Jungdemokraten) chiefly to bait the conservatives, was remanded for further study. On all-German policy -- a central point of internal dispute -- dexterous tactics preserved the leadership's current position against de jure recognition of East Germany.

The truce on platform policy reflected a growing awareness on all sides that internal squabbling could be a fatal luxury in this election year. Numerous conversations with leading delegates revealed general pessimism concerning the FDP's electoral prospects -- in sharp contrast to the euphoric mood following the Heinemann election coup in March -- and uncertainty about the party's future policy course. At the convention's end, mistrust between the rival factions had not appreciably diminished, and both sides were beginning to show discontent with chairman Walter Scheel's leadership style, plus some skepticism about his ability to keep the party from being forced into a hopeless tactical position in the after-

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Clearances:

DORN, Wolfram

B.F.  
Germann (3)

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The general assumption that the NPD would succeed in winning Bundestag representation was challenged by few delegates. A notable exception was Wolfram Dorn, internal security expert in the Bundestag and a leading member of the reform group, who denied that the FDP had lost momentum; at a minimum, the party would reach 12 percent of the vote, and he was all set to make an effective canvass of his Ruhr district, with a small fleet of sound-trucks and a corps of youthful volunteer workers. Hans-Roderich Schneider, FDP press chief, offered the following estimate of the outcome: CDU/CSU, 44 percent; SPD, 36; FDP, 12; NPD, 4.5; radical left, 2.5. But his attractive secretary-aide, the wife of Stern correspondent Peter Staehle, observed that those who were holding to the 12 percent forecast (in the more optimistic mood of earlier months, regarded as a minimum level) were really saying that they hoped the FDP vote would at least reach 10 percent -- in effect the minimum required to ward off the impression of failure.

#### Coalition Strategy Clouded

Although the delegates responded enthusiastically to the rousing "let's go, team" speech by Genscher at the close of the convention, it did not succeed in overcoming their pessimism about the party's electoral prospects. Contributing to this pessimism was a growing awareness among the reform elements that the SPD, despite the fact that FDP votes had put its candidate into the presidency, had cooled considerably toward the idea of a coalition with the FDP. As one veteran observer (Hermann Schreiber of Spiegel) noted, the SPD was behaving like a disappointed lover who has realized that his paramour's charms are not what they seemed; the SPD leaders had become openly skeptical of the FDP's ability to hold to a social-liberal course, or in any case to win sufficient representation in the next Bundestag to qualify as a reliable coalition partner.

This ebbing of SPD sympathy meant bitter disappointment to those like Karl Moersch, of Baden-Wuerttemberg, who had all along held that the FDP could not survive in the long run unless it jettisoned conservative ballast and took up "independent" -- i.e., reformist -- positions on both domestic and foreign policy. For Moersch, it has been axiomatic that the CDU/CSU could not be expected to accept these positions; any hope of realizing FDP concepts, especially as regards all-German policy, would have to depend on cooperation with the SPD. He was now trying desperately to keep this possibility open but, as he told the reporting officer, without much expectation of success. A corresponding inclination toward the SPD had indeed developed under Scheel's leadership, guaranteeing his continued support

... leading to the 12 percent forecast (in the more optimistic mood of earlier months, regarded as a minimum level) ...