

January 19, 1990

Germany: Strengthening Party-to-Party Ties□□□□

Citation:

"Germany: Strengthening Party-to-Party Ties", January 19, 1990, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Approved for Release by the Central Intelligence Agency, October 29, 2019.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/209532>

Summary:

An analysis of efforts of West German political parties to shape elections in East Germany.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

2172

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GERMANY:

Strengthening Party-to-Party Ties

More and more West German political parties are competing to shape the May elections in East Germany, which in turn will have a major effect on the West German Bundestag race in December.

The West German Social Democrats recently set up joint policy and election committees with their East German counterpart.

The East German SPD's first national congress last weekend changed the party name to match the West German party's and endorsed its stance in favor of German unity. The East German Social Democrats, confident Western support will increase their electoral strength, rejected running on a common electoral list with other opposition parties.

West German Christian Democratic leaders agreed Tuesday to seek an East German coalition of nonsocialist parties.

The Christian Democrats and Free Democrats are spreading their support among several new groups and their counterparts, who are struggling to live down decades of cooperation with the Communists. Bonn this week agreed to delay formally establishing a "treaty-based community" with East Berlin until after May to avoid giving the ruling Communists an electoral advantage.

The Greens also have begun talks with several like-minded groups in environmental and arms control policy. The rightwing Republicans claim to have strong support in East Germany and are trying to organize there despite government opposition.

Comment: The West German parties hope they can help produce a stable democratic coalition in East Berlin that excludes the Communists. They probably expect such a coalition to seek gradual unification along the lines of Chancellor Kohl's 10-point plan. The Eastern parties probably will increasingly welcome West German aid to improve their finances and to gain electioneering experience and access to the media. They could become virtual appendages of their Western counterparts, a development likely to facilitate reunification.

The proxy contest in the East also will have a strong effect on the December election in West Germany. The East German Social Democrats may have an edge on other opposition groups because of large-scale Western aid and historical SPD strength in what is now East Germany. Their success would allow their West German counterparts to pose as champions of German unity. The parties of the governing coalition probably will increase assistance to prevent the SPD from stealing Kohl's thunder on unity. (C NF)

-CIA, DIA, NSA-

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TCS 2715/90
19 January 1990