

The Right Honourable The Lord Carrington KCMG MC
 Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
 London SW1

My Lord,

ELECTIONS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY:
 THE CAMPAIGN AND THE RESULTS

1. The final official results of the Federal German elections held on 5 October were published on 23 October. They show only marginal changes from the provisional figures announced on 6 October. The distribution of seats in the ninth Bundestag, which meets for the first time on 4 November, is as follows (1976 figures in brackets):

Social Democratic Party (SPD)	218 (214)	} Government:
Free Democratic Party (FDP)	53 (39)	
Christian Democratic Union (CDU)	174 (190)	} Opposition:
Christian Social Union (CSU)	52 (53)	

The two Government parties thus gained 18 seats and will govern with a majority increased from 10 to 45.



The Campaign

2. This was without any doubt one of the most boring democratic elections in the history of modern Germany. When the CDU/CSU elected Franz-Josef Strauss as their Chancellor-Candidate on 2 July 1979, I reported that life had returned to German internal politics, that the adrenalin was flowing, and that the battle lines had been drawn for the 1980 election campaign. Strauss was hailed as the only German politician of stature enough to take on the Chancellor with a chance of winning. But his challenge failed to materialise: and three days before polling day the election was front page news in only one of the nation's four main serious newspapers.

3. There were two main reasons for this. The first was that the result was never seriously in doubt. The second was that there were no real issues.

4. Throughout the campaign the message carried by the opinion polls was tediously constant. At no stage between Strauss' nomination as Chancellor-Candidate and polling day did the polls put the CDU/CSU ahead of the SPD/FDP. The Government's lead was consistently estimated at over 5%. In the FRG, with a system of proportional representation and with a relatively low proportion of floating voters, this is a virtually unassailable position. One opinion

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poll taken about three weeks before the election recorded that 69% of voters expected the Schmidt/Genscher team to be returned. And some 60% of the electorate, when asked during the campaign whether they would prefer Schmidt or Strauss as Chancellor, regularly opted for the former. In the run-up to polling day I did not meet anyone in the SPD who thought that they would lose, or anyone in the CDU/CSU who thought that they could win; and there were few who doubted that the FDP (despite, or perhaps because of, their unexpected failure in the North-Rhine-Westphalia Land elections in May) would obtain the 5% of the vote necessary to achieve representation in the Bundestag.

5. The events surrounding Strauss' nomination inevitably strained relations between the CDU and CSU. Although differences between them receded as the campaign progressed coordination remained poor, and there were several occasions in the run-up to polling day when the Union found itself speaking with two voices on one issue or another. Moreover the Opposition had the unenviable task of finding chinks in the armour of a Government whose track record was impressive in both foreign and domestic policy fields - a Government led by a widely respected Chancellor who had developed into a statesman of world stature. Spurred on by the crisis in Afghanistan the CDU/CSU first tried to take Schmidt on on his own chosen ground, that of foreign and security policy. The Soviet invasion proved, they argued, the correctness of

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their theory of Russian expansionism and put in question the whole philosophy of Ostpolitik, which had been the major achievement of ten years of Social/Liberal coalition. But the electorate was not convinced. Rather than turning to Strauss the "strong man" they preferred in a time of crisis to stick with Schmidt the proven crisis manager. The Chancellor's visit to Moscow in June paid off handsomely in electoral terms. The Soviet agreement to TNF negotiations which he obtained in Moscow almost certainly set the seal on the electorate's conviction that he was the right man to isolate the problems of South-West Asia and prevent them from spilling over into Europe, thus threatening their material security and well-being and their psychological desire for peace and quiet.

6. Foreign policy remained a theme throughout the campaign, particularly for the Government parties, and would perhaps have retained a central position if Schmidt's planned meetings with Gierek and Honecker had not been swept off the agenda by events in Poland. But by the Summer the Union had in any case decided to change its tack. Frustrated by the clear popular vote of confidence in the Government's policy towards the East the Opposition attacked on the domestic front, criticising specifically the high (for the FRG) level of state indebtedness and the government's policy on pensions. Yet here again they were able to make little impression. The German citizen was not prepared to believe that his Government, headed by a formidable ex-Minister of Finance, was borrowing

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irresponsibly. And the Opposition's attack on the Government for having failed to fulfil its pensions promises during the previous election carried little weight with an electorate who had seen pensioners' standard of living rise to an all-time high under the Social/Liberal coalition.

7. In the absence of real issues much attention focussed on the degree of invective being bandied about in the campaign. The language was, by British standards, distinctly unparliamentary. Typical of the Opposition's rhetoric was their description of Schmidt as a "pensions swindler". Typical of the Government's was a remark by Schmidt himself allegedly describing Strauss's statements on worker co-determination as "like a bull pisses - now this way, now that way". I should perhaps add for the benefit of the sensitive, that Germans and the German language are robust in their references to bodily functions and such remarks would not normally bring a blush to the cheek of a young German person. The role of the buttock in German humour is also worth a modest monograph. A watch-dog committee chaired by a retired Bishop was set up before the campaign, as part of an election agreement signed by the major parties in which they committed themselves to campaigning without character defamation and personal insults. But the committee failed to censure many of the more extreme statements; its role was abused and exploited by all sides, and its existence served merely to magnify the impact of the language it was designed to check.

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8. Religion also entered the campaign. For the first time in over ten years the Catholic Bishops' pre-election pastoral letter singled out for critical comment certain issues (notably state-indebtedness) which the Opposition had also been criticising. By using language similar in places to that of the Opposition they gave the impression of endorsing the CDU/CSU and encouraging Catholics to vote for them. The SPD, including Schmidt himself, reacted angrily and suggested that the Bishops' "intervention" was likely to do long-term damage to relations between Church and Government. The SPD Minister-President of Hessen, Börner, told me that the repercussions would be felt for ten years. It may indeed have done some damage: the strained relations between the Catholic Bishops and the Government showed themselves in the long and drawn out negotiations over the arrangements for the visit of The Pope later this month.

The Results

9. The detailed results of the election are enclosed as an Annex. They show that, in comparison with 1976, the CDU/CSU vote fell by 4.1%, the SPD's rose by 0.3% and the FDP's by 2.7%. The small parties increased their share of the vote from 0.9% to 2.0%, thanks largely to the 1.5% polled by the Greens (environmentalists); but the 5% hurdle has prevented any of them from being represented in the Bundestag.

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10. There was a certain amount of regional variation, particularly between North and South. Whilst the CSU managed to keep its losses to 2.4% in Bavaria the overall CDU vote (ie excluding Bavaria) dropped by 4.5%, with the sharpest reduction in the two most northern Länder, Schleswig-Holstein (-5.2%) and Lower Saxony (-5.9%). As expected, Strauss became steadily less popular the further North he campaigned. In Schleswig-Holstein the SPD managed for the first time to win all the constituencies on the first vote, which meant that under the Federal Electoral law, an extra seat for the Land had to be created in the Bundestag. The FDP did well everywhere, but particularly so in the North where they clearly picked up a great number of second votes from the CDU.

11. The CDU/CSU are the clear losers of the elections. Their performance was their worst for over thirty years and their second worst ever. Their task was clearly an uphill one from the start. Very few in the Union camp ever believed they had a real chance of toppling a Chancellor who was at the height of his popularity. And the nomination of Strauss had the inevitable effect of alienating the young (less than 30% of first-time voters voted for the Union) as well as the more liberal elements of CDU opinion, particularly in the North of the country. But there were two crumbs of comfort for Union supporters. First the CDU/CSU remains the largest party in the Bundestag, a result which in the early Summer had looked in doubt. And second, having now exorcised the

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spectre of Strauss, they have cleared the path for a more attractive leader in 1984, by which time the political constellation may well have changed in their favour.

12. For the SPD the result was undoubtedly a disappointment, despite the return to power of the coalition they lead. With Schmidt at their head and the pivot of their election campaign they had expected to reap a substantial "Chancellor bonus". But they scarcely improved their position at all. A number of explanations have been put forward for their relative lack of success. There is certainly something to the view that they were knocked out of their stride by the cancellation of Schmidt's meetings with Gierek and Honecker. They may also have lost some ground as a result of the Opposition's attacks on state debt and pensions. But the most significant factor in the stagnation of their performance was, I suspect, that in the early Summer they looked like sweeping the board and gaining an absolute majority. This bred over-confidence, and undoubtedly led to a number of party supporters simply failing to vote because they were sure of the result in advance. Moreover the prospect of an overall SPD majority was worrying to a considerable number of voters who feared that Schmidt would be unable to keep his left wing in check if the SPD were allowed to govern by itself. Whilst they wanted Schmidt as Chancellor they wanted Schmidt plus Genscher rather than Schmidt alone, and used their second votes accordingly.

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13. If the CDU/CSU were the clear losers of the election there is equally little doubt as to the main winners: the FDP, who achieved their best result for nearly 20 years. It had been evident for some time that the Free Democrats would draw support from two sources: from those in the CDU/CSU camp who could not stomach Strauss and from those in the SPD ranks who were concerned at the prospect of a Social Democrat absolute majority. Their whole campaign was directed at these two blocks of opinion. Few people, least of all the FDP themselves, expected it to be so successful. As Genscher himself has stressed, the electorate voted for a strengthening of the centre of German politics, rejecting both the right as personified by Strauss and the left as personified by the left wing of the SPD.

14. As expected the small parties did badly. The Greens (environmentalists) failed to repeat their success at regional level over the past couple of years. For the time being at least they appear to have shot their bolt. Both the right-wing NPD and the various Communist splinter parties failed to achieve the 0.5% required to qualify for financial aid from the State.

15. The new Bundestag will be much like the old. The only significant change from its predecessor is that a number of the new SPD members are known to be further to the left than the deputies they replace. It remains to be seen what effect this has on voting discipline. Of the 497 elected members 139 are new, a rather higher turnover than in 1976. The number

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of women in the Bundestag, although still low, has increased by two to 44 (including two from Berlin) or 8.5% of the total. As before the largest single group in the Bundestag, some 36% of the members, will be civil servants. If party and trade union officials are added to these, nearly half of the Bundestag will consist of functionaries of one sort or another.

Conclusions

16. The elections tell us a lot about the nature of democracy in this country. The Germans are fundamentally an unpolitical people and there is a broad consensus among people on this side of the inner-German border about the sort of place they want the Federal Republic to be: a social market economy, where private enterprise creates the wealth and where the taxation and insurance systems provide good defence and good social services. And a country which is firmly anchored in the Western Alliance and the European Community, but with a face open to the East. Above all the Germans want security, within and without: in the intervals between elections they expect the politicians to conduct their business efficiently and leave ordinary people to get on with theirs.

17. Schmidt and Genscher now have the task of providing that security and of proving that they can conduct their business efficiently for the next four years. I shall examine in a further despatch shortly the programme which they agree in

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the current coalition negotiations, and the prospects for the new Government.

18. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Ambassadors in Washington, Moscow, EEC Posts and East Berlin, to the UK Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council, to the UK Permanent Representative to the European Communities, to the UK Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, to the Commanders-in-Chief BAOR and RAF(G), to the General Officer Commanding Berlin, and to Her Majesty's Consuls-General in the FRG.

I have the honour to be,
Your Lordship's obedient Servant

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to be "Cherwell" followed by a flourish.



FEDERAL ELECTIONS 1980: FINAL OFFICIAL RESULTS

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1976</u>
Registered voters	43,231,741	42,058,015
Turn-out	38,292,176	38,165,753
%	88.6	90.7

Second Votes

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1976</u>	+ -
SPD	16,260,677 (42.9%)	16,099,019 (42.6%)	+ 0.3%
FDP	4,030,999 (10.6%)	2,995,085 (7.9%)	+ 2.7%
CDU	12,989,200 (34.2%)	14,367,302 (38.0%)	- 3.8%
CSU	3,908,459 (10.3%)	4,027,499 (10.6%)	- 0.3%
Greens (environ- mentalists)	569,589 (1.5%)	- (-)	} +1.1%
Others	180,057 (0.5%)	313,599 (0.9%)	

First Votes

(Constituency Candidates)

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1976</u>	+ -
SPD	16,808,861 (44.5%)	16,471,321 (43.7%)	+ 0.8%
FDP	2,720,480 (7.2%)	2,417,683 (6.4%)	+ 0.8%
CDU	13,467,207 (35.6%)	14,423,157 (38.3%)	- 2.7%
CSU	3,941,365 (10.4%)	4,008,514 (10.6%)	- 0.2%
Greens (environ- mentalists)	732,619 (1.9%)	- (-)	} + 1.3%
Others	135,999 (0.4%)	374,969 (1.0%)	