

Notes on the Ninth Biannual German Political Science Meetings

The 9th biannual German Political Science meeting was held October 4-7 in Bonn at Bonn University. The theme was Political Science and the Practice of Politics—a theme chosen because of increasing concern about the role of political science in the increasingly politicized world of German higher education.

Political science in Germany is now on the defensive. In the beginning, the discipline flowered as it was considered to be the pedagogy of democracy and stability and a partner to politics. Then, as the left student revolt came, political science as well as sociology began to be blamed for its excesses, and as German academia became more politicized, a number of conservative, older political science members resigned from the Association.

Political science in the Federal Republic is now fighting to maintain its place in the social science curriculum of universities, particularly in teacher education. In secondary schools, too, history is coming back and economics and law are moving in, frequently taking the place of political science and social studies.

The meetings in Bonn reflected this defensive. Hardly any practical politicians were present at the meetings which seemed to indicate broken relationships between the two groups. The outgoing President of the Association, Udo Bermbach, in his presidential address, had to publicly deny any relationship of the discipline to the ideological basis of terrorism. Furthermore, the ideological tensions (less dramatically evident in Bonn, but nevertheless still there) resulted in the collapse of the section on International Affairs (the German Political Science Association is divided into various sections and committees).

Nevertheless, despite a decline in consultancies from various ministries and the lack of teaching jobs, student interest in political science remains relatively high. The association membership is currently at about 800 with about 400 present at the Bonn convention. What was missing, however, were most of the big names. Even the keynote speaker, Professor Rudolf Wildenmann, who recommended further American-type specialization of the profession, did not remain more than a few hours. Only Karl Deutsch, from Harvard and Berlin, who praised German political science in a closing panel, was optimistic about the future of political science in Germany.

Otherwise, the meeting resembled an American regional meeting. A variety of panels were held, dealing not only with practical politics but also with reform of public administration, and with some discussion of topics in policy studies such as education, health, environment, welfare and economics. Other panels dealt with international economic relations, constitutional law, local politics, political education, mass communications, development politics, and foreign policy. About 50 papers were prepared whose abstracts are available for \$2.00 (send international postage stamp coupons) from the Secretary-General, Barbara Sindermann, Von-Melle-Park, 15, 2 Hamburg 13, FRG.

The new president of the Association, Professor Thomas Ellwein (Konstanz), will have the major task of revitalizing the Association and improving its image. He will need to involve senior members of the profession in an attempt to promote the advantages of political science as a career preparation for positions in government and industry.

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