

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Part II: Genscher, Reagan's adversary

The foreign minister's ties to Libyan radicals and Iranian fundamentalists reverberate in Washington.

While the political position of the United States in the Middle East is being undermined by Muslim radicalism—an unsavory heritage from President Carter's Islamic Card which helped to put Iran's Khomeini in power—the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Bonn is maintaining good, if not friendly relations with the regimes in Iran and Libya. But it is exactly those regimes which are most fanatically oriented in their policy against the United States, and U.S. President Reagan especially. Is the West German minister of foreign affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, not aware of that fact? Or is it, rather, complicity with the U.S. State Department's sabotage of Reagan that is driving Genscher and his staff into the camp of Reagan's enemies in Mideast?

There are many indications pointing to the latter interpretation. The case of the present undersecretary of state in the Bonn foreign ministry, Jürgen Möllemann, is most revealing in this respect. When Möllemann, a personal protégé of Genscher in the Free Democratic Party (FDP), was still president of the German-Arab Society at the end of 1981, he reacted to Reagan's political attacks on Libya's Muammar Qaddafi by taking the side of the North African dictator. At a time when Qaddafi threatened Reagan with assassination by death squads paid by Libya, when U.S. security agencies expressed concern at this threat, Möllemann said that to him, all of this concern sounded like "one of the typ-

ical pre-Christmas Secret Service fairy tales."

This scandal was matched by the behavior of the staff in Genscher's ministry during the "Tabatabai Affair"—behavior that was an affront of the highest degree to the United States and President Reagan. Sadegh Tabatabai, former minister president of Iran and son-in-law to Ayatollah Khomeini, was caught red-handed by German Customs at Düsseldorf Airport at the beginning of January 1983, trying to smuggle 1.7 kilograms of hashish. Tabatabai, who had previously received political protection from Genscher when he was indicted in a case of drugs-and-weapons smuggling, claimed diplomatic immunity under a "special mission cleared with the Bonn foreign ministry."

The judges of the Düsseldorf court who tried to find out about the actual character of the "special mission" were confronted with a series of delays by the Bonn foreign ministry. First, the ministry helped Tabatabai to get out of jail on bail. Then, the former West German ambassador to Teheran appeared before the court to testify on the alleged "special mission"—but he was unwilling to provide any insight into the nature of this "mission."

When the judges decided to no longer permit a delay of the trial and proceeded in their investigation, the Bonn ministry intervened in a higher court to have the whole case dismissed for reasons of "higher state interests."

How was it possible that the min-

istry could speak of "higher interests" overruling a court—interests which would allow a proven criminal and drug-weapons dealer like to escape trial? One reason given was that Genscher stuck to a secret 1980 agreement, when he, and the former ambassador to Teheran, and U.S. Undersecretary of State Warren Christopher succeeded in having the U.S. hostages in Iran released. Although never proven, it has been said often that their release involved tacit agreements to have military materiel shipped to Iran through drug-weapons smuggling networks. The required monies for the transactions are said to have come from Teheran's large international drug dealings.

By the time Düsseldorf judges became fed up with all these special arrangements, and proceeded to sentencing, Sadegh Tabatabai had skipped bail and fled the country.

But what shocked the nation even more was that the Bonn foreign ministry had helped Tabatabai escape trial aboard a Lufthansa airplane to Teheran in a *Nacht-und-Nebel* action. The action was later, and scandalously, justified with reference to the 1980 "agreements in the release of the U.S. hostages," which were said in Bonn to "involve sensitive aspects" which did not permit the Iranian to stay in West Germany.

This strange deal has several juicy aspects connecting Genscher to international networks of organized crime. It has been mentioned often by people with insight into West German politics that it might not have been a matter of mere coincidence that the Free Democratic Party started its campaign for drug legalization after Genscher had become chairman of the party in 1974. Genscher himself is said to have links to organized crime.

To be continued