

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Decoupling drive gains momentum

*"Brutal Soviet pressure" has led the Christian Democrats to lobby against the U.S. beam-weapon policy.*

**O**ur Feb. 28 report, "The Odd Decouplers," which warned that a cross-party alliance in Bonn was demanding a strategic decoupling from the United States, was met with skepticism by some of our readers. Could the conservative government of Christian Democrat Helmut Kohl really join forces with the left-wing Social Democrats and the radical-fascist Greens to demand a break with the United States?

Developments of the first two weeks of April prove that our warning was more than justified: The "grand coalition" for decoupling has gained full momentum in West Germany. It gained particular impetus from Henry Kissinger's March 5 call in *Time* magazine for a U.S. troop withdrawal from Europe, and from the April 1 meeting of the Trilateral Commission in Washington.

The decouplers are focusing their fire against President Reagan's beam-weapon anti-ballistic missile defense policy, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Despite repeated efforts by U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger to assure the allies that the SDI is intended to provide security for the Western alliance as a whole, the line is now circulating in Bonn that the beam-weapon program would signify a U.S. abandonment of Europe—and therefore that Europe must look to its own defense, and its own "arrangements" with Moscow.

Chancellor Kohl himself briefed the British press April 10 on his intention to launch what *The Guardian* called "a European campaign to dis-

suade Washington" from going ahead with its space-based ABM program. Kohl's rejection of the U.S. program was applauded by Christian Social Union leader Franz-Josef Strauss and numerous Social Democrats.

The government's policy shift was spelled out by Christian Democratic parliamentarian Jürgen Todenhöfer, known as one of Chancellor Kohl's "mine dogs," who sniffs out the public's reaction to controversial issues. Todenhöfer wrote an essay in the leading German conservative daily *Die Welt* on April 17, criticizing the U.S. beam defense program and calling for the creation of an "alternative," a European Nuclear Strike Force.

Todenhöfer wrote that while the United States might draw some advantage from a beam defense system, "for the West Europeans, the situation looks quite different. We live on the same continent as the Warsaw Pact countries. . . . Even if the U.S.A. offered participation to the Europeans in their defense system, it would—given our geo-strategic conditions—increase our security only marginally."

Todenhöfer went on to demand what Kissinger had demanded the month before—the creation of a European-controlled NATO executive which would "merge American, British, and French nuclear systems under a European prefix." The Americans would have only one seat and one vote.

What could have persuaded Todenhöfer—one of the best-reputed right-wing Christian Democrats in Bonn, who had led public campaigns against Soviet brutalities in Afghani-

stan and warned of Soviet aggression in Europe as well as in the Third World—to make himself mouthpiece for Kissinger's decoupling game?

The chief reason is raw Soviet blackmail. A researcher at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, a Social Democratic think tank, explained: "The Christian Democrats have begun to recognize the threat behind the U.S. beams program—it would make the United States safe against missile attacks and leave us Europeans defenseless. The Soviets have told us that if the U.S.A. developed the new defense system, it would mean a return to the 1950s, when they held Europe hostage with their own nuclear strike force."

This Soviet posture, which the researcher described as "quite brutal," forced the Bonn government "to voice its protest against Washington's plans for its own sake."

The Soviet pressure, however, intersects a strong latent anti-Americanism among German conservatives, which has been nourished by the Soviets in recent months. Moscow is encouraging a European break from the dollar, and has allowed certain minor improvements in relations between East and West Germany.

The oligarchical Paneuropa Union, has been lured by Moscow into the delusion that Europe were better off if less closely linked to the United States.

Finally, the whole crowd of "arms control specialists" who made their careers in Bonn during the "Kissinger Years" opposes the U.S. beam-defense initiative, just as their American counterparts do. These are the people who have defined the brand of "détente" which dominates the foreign ministry apparatus of Hans-Dietrich Genscher, a friend of Kissinger's and the mastermind behind Chancellor Kohl's policy.