

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Honecker plays German card

Is it any accident the East German media have suddenly switched to praising Henry Kissinger's beloved Chancellor Bismarck?

The West German government has had almost daily reasons to protest the escalating Soviet propaganda campaign around the alleged "resurfacing of German revanchism." But official Bonn has preferred to not take notice (at least not publicly); instead, debates here have centered on the Sept. 26 visit of the leader of East Germany, Erich Honecker, to the West German capital.

Talk has been that while the Soviets were undoubtedly playing the wild man, the East Germans were different—they are Germans. A "common German partnership of responsibility" was bandied about; its main task was to be "to prevent war from ever starting again from German soil."

Honecker showed on Aug. 19 what he thinks of this "common partnership." In an interview to the East German party daily, *Neues Deutschland*, he attacked the West German republic as a stronghold of "militarists" who were blowing "the rusty trumpet of revanchism" and planning to annex East Germany by military force at the next chance. The Federal Republic of (West) Germany was called a "fundamental expression of the aims of imperialism to revise the results of the Soviet victory over Hitler Fascism and the result of the postwar developments to its own advantage."

Why would Honecker plan to travel to a country which, by his own verbiage, was probably the most threatening place in the world? What about the "sensational and tempting offer" the Soviets would make to Bonn "on

the German question around the upcoming visit of Erich Honecker"—the offer experts and all the back channels between Bonn and Moscow have been talking about for months now? This offer has been said to address the "issue of the German nation or of reunification" in such a way that it would be "very hard for the conservatives in Bonn not to consider it."

Now, here is Honecker making an offer indeed, but one that smells of the old alliance between German nationalists and communists which led right into the signing of the Aug. 23, 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact.

Only days before the 45th anniversary of this abominable agreement, a Mrs. Sigrid Wegner-Korfes wrote an article with the striking headline: "He Wanted the Balance of Power—Thoughts on the Russia Policy of Otto von Bismarck," in *Nationalzeitung*, the official magazine of the National Democratic Party of Germany. The NDPD is a party founded by Soviet intelligence after the war to rally former members of the Wehrmacht into support for the Soviet regime in East Germany. Mrs. Wegner-Korfes sketched a historic Chancellor Bismarck "whose policy with Russia was characterized, in spite of all its bonds to the interests of reactionary classes, by a certain reason," and which should be taken as an example by "politicians in the imperialistic states of today."

The article portrays Bismarck as a politician of the late 19th century whose prime motive was to reach agreements with the Russians in order

to prevent a war between Germany and Czarist Russia. This propaganda piece is all the more striking because it shows a drastic shift in official East German historiography on Bismarck. The issue of Bismarck is, first of all, very prominent among conservatives in West Germany. A large portion of the latter, especially the monarchists, have always resented the American republic and the westward orientation of German policy. They admire the *Mitteleuropa* system of the reactionary, anti-republican 1815 Congress of Vienna, which Bismarck cultivated by driving Germany into a special continental pro-Russian deal. Bismarck's system might be summed up as a liberal version of the old Byzantine despotism, of which the Russian Tsars have inherited the brutal version.

If prominent East German publications present a positive view of Bismarck's historic role, the aim is obviously to foment new illusions among West German conservatives about a new strategic settlement in Europe with Moscow—and without Washington.

Even more revealing, the author of this propaganda piece turns out to be the daughter of Maj.-Gen. Otto Korfes, one of the prominent former Wehrmacht generals who joined the "Association of German Officers" in the communist-dominated "National Committee for a Free Germany" in July 1943. This group was set up by Stalin and exile German communists in Moscow in order to prepare a National-Bolshevist regime to rule Germany after the war, a regime like those which took power in all the other states in Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1948. They failed when the Federal Republic of Germany, tied into a firm alliance with the United States after 1949, was created instead—the very state Honecker attacked in his *Neues Deutschland* interview.