

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Debate on SDI in the open

A faction in favor of beam-weapon defense systems has finally begun to assert itself.

After the smashing victory of Ronald Reagan in the Nov. 6 presidential elections, U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger lost no time in publicizing the defense policy at the foundation of Reagan's landslide victory: the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). On Nov. 7, Weinberger exploited the pages of the leading conservative daily of the Federal Republic, *Die Welt*, to call upon the Bonn government to join the effort to develop an efficient defense against ballistic missiles.

Such a system, wrote Weinberger, "would help to create big uncertainties in the mind of the aggressor, and thus help to decrease the probability of a successful conventional attack on Western Europe and even the probability that the Soviet Union may consider such an attack as its first option. An efficient defense against ballistic missiles could improve the security of the Federal Republic of Germany considerably by protecting her against the threat posed by Soviet missiles. . . ."

Concluding the article, Weinberger strongly reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to the defense of Western Europe and Germany by saying that the 325,000 American troops in Europe are here to stay.

With this article, the Reagan administration has intervened most forcefully into a debate on strategic missile defense in the Federal Republic which has become more and more open over recent weeks—after 18 months of fearful silence imposed un-

der Soviet pressure. Franz-Josef Strauss, Bavarian minister president and chief of the Christian Social Union, was the first to publicly suggest German participation in the U.S. research and development program. In the first week of November, the West German parliament discussed the issue, and although spokesmen of all parties in the main warned against "escalating the arms race into space," a faction in support of the SDI also asserted itself.

Most clear was Count Huyn, the defense-policy spokesman of the Christian Social Union. Along the lines of the Weinberger article, he declared it in the interest of the Federal Republic of Germany to participate in the American effort. Count Huyn emphatically made the point that the SDI increased the security of Western Europe and West Germany.

With Reagan's election and the shaping up of a potentially strong pro-SDI faction within the Christian Social and Christian Democratic parties, as well as German military and military-related industry, the Soviets have two choices: 1) open negotiations with the United States on the basis of a joint and concurrent development of strategic missile defense systems; 2) escalate their present confrontation mode against the United States globally. At the moment, the Soviets have chosen the second.

Speaking for the Kremlin, it seems, is West Germany's weekly magazine *Der Spiegel*, whose latest

issue features a cover-story attack on Reagan, picturing him on the cover in the costume of the villain Darth Vader from the movie *Star Wars*. The article makes a number of points almost word for word what Soviet propaganda says about the SDI:

- It repeats the threats first issued by the KGB's chief scribbler, Fyodor Burlatskii, in July 1983, that the continuation of the SDI would constitute a *casus belli* for the Soviet leadership.

- It names Henry Kissinger as the man who inspired President Reagan to offer to share beam-weapon technology with the Soviets.

- It depicts the Soviet Union as a country which is falling behind in the technological arms race.

The last two points represent the wildest form of disinformation. Such claims must be seen as a desperate Russian attempt to get Henry Kissinger into the position of dominant influence over the Reagan administration the Soviets want him to have.

Kissinger's policy is, of course, to kill the SDI altogether, by treating it as one of the "bargaining chips" in new arms-control giveaways to Moscow.

From the standpoint of the Western Alliance, there is no choice. The election victory of President Reagan has shown to the world that the population of the strongest industrial nation in the world stands firmly behind the so-called Star Wars defense policy. The conservatives in Germany should take heart from this.

And, after all, what got the President his landslide victory, after "peacenik" Walter Mondale seemed to be gaining in the polls in the early going, was his decision to go on the offensive around the beam-weapon program—another example Germany's conservatives would do well to follow.