

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Recoupling via space

The German decision to participate in the American space-station project is a severe blow to the decouplers.

While the battle between the pro-decoupling and pro-alliance factions in West Germany is still going on, some positive changes which have occurred recently may indicate that the decouplers face defeat, and very soon. These changes have a lot to do with space—in respect to both the military and the civilian uses of it.

On the government level, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's cabinet has decided to allocate in full the funds for the 20% share the Germans were offered by the U.S.A. in the American orbital space station project—almost \$1 billion. Bonn is leading the consortium of European partners in the space station venture, and the decision therefore helped unblock general European reluctance to participate in the project. Thus, another \$1.5 billion from the rest of Western Europe will flow into the project and tie European and American aerospace efforts together on a very important scientific frontier.

The immense efforts over several months by the arms-control and decoupling mafia in Bonn to slow down, postpone, and sabotage the joint space venture came to naught. For Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who had spared no effort to minimize the German share in the project, it was a severe blow. Genscher feared that once Bonn joined the U.S. space venture, it would be very difficult for him to continue his more general policy of taking West Germany out of the Western alliance.

What caused the change in Bonn

was the political intervention of U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, NASA's James Beggs, and Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) chief Lt. Gen. James Abrahamson. Aware of the crucial role the Germans play in the alliance, Beggs and Weinberger moved during December to convince Bonn that participation in the space station project would yield a healthy share in the new technologies for German aerospace industries. Weinberger used the same argument in respect to the SDI program, offering additional information to Bonn. One of the most active proponents of German support for the SDI, Christian Democratic parliamentarian Jürgen Todenhöfer, was invited to Washington for special, personal briefings Jan. 8-15.

Todenhöfer, said to function as a direct channel to Chancellor Kohl, met with Weinberger and Abrahamson at the Pentagon, and was urged to inform his government that German participation in both the SDI and the space station venture was very much desired by the Reagan administration. This, he was told, was of "utmost political weight" for the alliance. The Reagan administration would grant the Germans a special status within the prospective European share in both projects.

Todenhöfer reported back that his briefings left no doubt "that the SDI is a war-preventing strategy, and what is better than collaborating in such a strategy?" He added that there was "too little knowledge in Germany about the fact that the SDI intends to make nu-

clear missiles superfluous," and would thus create "incentives for real progress in reduction of today's threatening nuclear arsenals."

As Todenhöfer reported, Weinberger convinced him that the SDI in particular would offer technological breakthroughs which the Germans as a leading industrial nation could not afford to miss. The Americans, he added, would go ahead with the program with or without the support of the European, but preferably with them.

All in all, said Todenhöfer, the special overtures made to the Germans by the Reagan administration opened the way toward an "entente cordiale" between the United States and West Germany.

In Bonn, the message was understood. On Jan. 16, Chancellor Kohl brought his cabinet together and gave the green light on the space station venture. Although no formal decision was made concerning the SDI, the way is now clear for German participation in the military side of space cooperation. All the arguments for collaboration in the space station project apply all the more to the SDI.

Since "domestic nuisances" in his own Free Democratic Party and the government coalition (see Report from Bonn, *EIR* Jan. 15) absorb Foreign Minister Genscher's political energies to an increasing extent, the time is politically ripe for an official shift in Bonn's position on the SDI. Chancellor Kohl should be able to state full and active support for the project.

Once all the uncertainties surrounding the SDI are out of the way, the "entente cordiale" envisioned by Todenhöfer between Washington and Bonn can be firmly established, and most of the sabotage potential of the decouplers against the alliance can be eliminated.