

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Back into the Space Age

*Trips to the United States seem to have a positive impact on the thinking of West German politicians.*

**T**he support Chancellor Helmut Kohl has given to the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative has opened a new chapter in German-American relations. Most German politicians might not yet be aware of all the implications, but some who have had the chance to visit the United States in the past three or four weeks have recognized the need to say goodbye to the "limits of growth" ideology which has dominated the past 12-15 years.

It is strange enough that a nation like the Germans, whose scientists and engineers built the first rockets and played a prominent role in the postwar U.S. defense and space programs, took two years to make up its mind whether or not to join the SDI.

The Christian Democratic governor of the German state of Bavaria, Franz-Josef Strauss, in whose state most of the country's high-technology and aerospace industries are situated, naturally had fewer problems in accepting the SDI. Not accidentally, he was the first prominent member of the country's political establishment to come out in favor of the space-defense doctrine.

Strauss has also been the one to most violently attack the Green movement as the enemy of science, technology, and the nation.

Lothar Späth, the governor of the state of Baden-Württemberg, location of the highly specialized engineering and machine-tool industries of Germany and the number-two industrial region, visited the United States twice during February. Späth met with William Taft and Richard Perle at the Pen-

tagon. He returned to Germany to report: "The SDI, even if it doesn't work from a military standpoint, will create a revolution in high technology development of yet unprecedented dimensions. . . . The Federal Republic, as one of the leading industrial nations of the world, can't afford to not take part in this revolution." Späth predicted development of new fields of computer and laser electronics, and even "the development of new materials for industrial processing which are yet unknown to us."

Späth was joined by the Christian Democratic governor of the state of Lower-Saxony, Ernst Albrecht, who supported the SDI as "a big boost for new technologies."

But most surprising was the statement West German Labor Minister Norbert Blüm delivered after his return from a tour through American "high-tech zones." He told journalists in Bonn: "If our country is to play any role at all in the future, it has to change its views. Our politicians, most of our industrial managers, have overslept the future."

Blüm said that during his U.S. trip, he recognized the "profound change all of the industrial production processes will have to go through in coming years." "Within 5 to 10 years, there will be a demand for a larger portion of the labor force trained in electronics, computers, and laser technologies. The experts estimate that about 70% of the total labor force will have to receive additional professional training, in order to meet the requirements. Looking at the situation in our

own country, I see that only 2% or 3% of the whole labor force has these skills." Unemployment, he added, will not be solved by "make-work programs," but "through the establishment of completely new branches of industrial production."

One notes that a "post-industrial" tinge remains on these statements. The Bonn government continues to watch the collapse of "old industries," while everyone is talking about the "new industrial revolution" in high-technology, "sunrise" fields. Irony has it that while all these pro-SDI statements are being made, preparations are also being made to close down the ARBED plant in the Saarland, probably the most modern steel-producing facility the country has. The SDI will need lots of steel.

The kind of economy the SDI will require has nothing to do with "silicon valley" computronics parks with jobs for a couple of hundred white-collar employees. For a country like Germany, a share in the SDI program requires several tens of thousands of engineers, and several hundred thousand skilled workers working on the program.

It will need lots of nuclear energy, too. No other source can provide the amounts and quality of energy required.

German politicians still have to learn how to think big and rid themselves of the residue of 12 years of "limits of growth" nonsense.

This also has a security aspect: The Green Party and the ecology movement, with their hatred of technology and industrial production, are a security risk, and must be treated accordingly.

Since trips to the United States seem to have a positive impact on the minds of German politicians, one can only recommend more of them.