

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Cutting Genscher down to size

*The anti-SDI faction around the foreign minister has suffered a severe setback, not to say major political defeat.*

**T**he embittered factional warfare here over the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) came to a peak after the U.S. delegation led by Robert Dean and SDI chief Lt.-Gen. James Abrahamson left Bonn on March 28. On that same day, numerous German parliamentarians and defense experts left Bonn, too, to attend the Atlantic Bridge meeting in Dallas, Texas.

Although the cabinet agreed on a formula of "no decision on participation in the SDI for the foreseeable future"—a compromise with the strong group of SDI adversaries around Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher—in the wake of Caspar Weinberger's 60-day deadline on the question, this can't hold up for very long. As numerous newspaper editorials noted: "The time has passed beyond a situation which would allow any further indifference on the SDI—it has to be 'yes' or 'no' now."

The Dallas meeting was certain to bring some of the basic differences to the fore—and it did!

German Defense Minister Manfred Wörner took a cautious but clearly positive position on the SDI and re-emphasized the "basic German commitment to participate in the program—provided this means participation not only in the technologies, but also in the political and strategic aspects the program has." The opposition Social Democrats present in Dallas, as expected, fumed about a "costly arms race in space," and alleged that the SDI would destroy the system of deterrence and, at the same time,

wouldn't work. Social Democrat Horst Ehmke called the SDI an "aggravation for the NATO Alliance."

Then came the big surprise: Richard Burt of the U.S. State Department responded to this barrage of anti-SDI propaganda with the weird statement: "I consider this debate a healthy exercise, but not a sign of disloyalty." This tells something about the support the German Social Democrats have inside the U.S. State Department.

But Richard Burt must also take note of the fact that the situation has changed. Obstructionism will not go over so easily any more. Look at what happened to Jürgen Möllemann, assistant secretary to Genscher, who had been sent to Dallas to monitor Wörner and, as it turned out, intervene against him. Known as "Genscher's sniper," Möllemann wrote a "clarification statement" after Wörner's remarks, characterizing them as a "deviation from the official position of the Bonn government." "The decision is still open whether Germany will participate in the SDI," he wrote.

This statement was distributed among the press in both Dallas and in Bonn. It was like throwing down a gauntlet to Chancellor Kohl himself, who supports the SDI, but has compromised in public under his foreign minister's pressure.

Would Kohl swallow the Möllemann statement and risk an open government crisis with Genscher's Free Democrats? Kohl's Christian Democrats decided not to swallow it: Several parliamentarians back home in

Bonn called for the immediate dismissal of Möllemann, but Franz-Josef Strauss, the chairman of the influential Bavarian section of the Christian Democrats, went directly to the point, "Everybody knows that what Möllemann said was just what his superior Genscher thinks anyway. He is against supporting the SDI." Government spokesman Peter Böhnisch got on the phone to Möllemann, who had left Dallas for a "vacation" in Spain, and demanded a clarification on the clarification.

Leading German newspapers fired salvos directly at Genscher. The leading conservative daily *Die Welt* dedicated two half-page feature articles on April 2 and 3 to portraying the foreign minister as a liability to the government and to Chancellor Kohl's reputation in the U.S.A. More and more people in Washington, D.C., wrote *Die Welt*, are getting angry over Genscher and asking themselves how long the Chancellor will go on swallowing his escapades. Chancellor Kohl, said *Die Welt*, must cut him down to size now.

On the afternoon of April 2, Genscher cancelled a press conference in Geneva, where he had given a speech to the Arms Control Panel of the United Nations. Sources said he wanted to avoid questions about Möllemann—i.e., about himself.

On the evening of April 2, Genscher went on German national television to announce that he would "have some words with Möllemann." That was like throwing in the towel. For someone who had just publicly challenged the Chancellor on a vital question, the sudden "damage control" posture is a major setback. With Kohl facing the choice he does—the SDI and good relations with Reagan, or no SDI and good relations with Genscher—the foreign minister is not a good bet.