

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Kohl makes it official

But as long as Genscher remains atop German foreign policy, the cacophony of argument over the SDI will continue.

The parliamentary debate on the Strategic Defense Initiative here on Thursday, April 18, heard Chancellor Helmut Kohl, whom pressures from Moscow and inside his own government had made hesitant to state his clear support, finally commit Germany to participation in the U.S. research program. The declaration came in a formal address to the parliament, which carries more weight than his Feb. 9 pro-SDI speech at the Wehrkunde Gesellschaft in Munich.

The reason he was officially extending support to the program, declared Kohl, was that it offered a way out of the current Mutually Assured Destruction, into a regime of Mutually Assured Survival. The Soviet campaign to stop the SDI comes as no surprise, he said, because the U.S.S.R. has been doing research on space-based ABM systems for more than 10 years. The huge radar facility at Krasnoyarsk, moreover, violates the ABM treaty.

Kohl turned to his opposition: The Social Democrats, in their campaign against the SDI, just serve as a mouthpiece for the views of Moscow.

This was tough talk—especially since a delegation of visiting Soviet parliamentarians, plus Moscow's ambassador to Bonn, Vladimir Semyonov, were sitting in the guests' lounge listening.

Kohl also emphasized the vast spinoffs the SDI would have for civilian industry. An industrial nation of the status of West Germany could not afford to remain aloof from research on which the U.S.A. alone would spend \$26 billion.

In the parliamentary debate that

followed, Horst Ehmke, the Social Democrats' foreign-policy spokesman, attacked the SDI as a policy which would hurt Geneva talks, militarize space, and provoke the U.S.S.R. into deploying an even greater offensive nuclear arsenal. He accused President Reagan of trying to use the program to make Europe a mere appendage of the "American military-industrial complex." He called for European "self-assertion," and demanded that the continent work on a non-military space program. Europe's answer to the SDI should be a clear: "No!"

Alfred Dregger, head of the Christian Democratic parliamentarians, replied: The U.S.S.R. mobilizes the peace movement, the Easter Marches, the Greens, and the Social Democrats to stop the SDI, while doing its utmost to develop a space-based ABM system of its own. The West cannot trust the Kremlin, but must develop a defense before the Soviets present a fully operational defense, just as they surprised the world with fully operational SS-20 missiles in 1979. To the SDI, Europe must say: "Yes!"

Dregger's statements have special weight these days. He is likely to succeed Defense Minister Manfred Wörner, who did not speak at all. The fact that Wörner associated with 18 months of stalling on the SDI indicates that he may be out rather soon.

However, Kohl's main problem all along has been his foreign minister, the Free Democrat Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Genscher, having come under some pressure recently, was careful in the debate not to make his opposition to the SDI too obvious. He said only that "preventing an arms race

in space" is the main point to observe. He also deemed it necessary to have "more information, more consultation, more discussion"—as if SDI head Lt.-Gen. James Abrahamson's visits and briefings had never happened.

His act was halted by Social Democrat Karsten Voigt, who rudely declared that everyone knew he was against the SDI: "So why don't you say it openly, without beating around the bush?"

Given Bonn's fence-sitting for two years, that such a debate would occur at all is an important step. Still, none of the speakers went beyond statements of "support in principle" for the SDI, and none talked of Europe launching a complementary Tactical Defense Initiative (TDI)—to defend against medium- and short-range missiles.

It was left to one who did not speak in parliament to call for this policy: Franz-Josef Strauss, head of the Bavarian Christian Social Union, wrote a commentary in the weekly *Quick* the day of the debate, asserting that the U.S.A. would push forward with or without the Europeans, so why not participate? Then, he added: "There is the chance that Europe could do research on options for intercepting medium-range missiles, the primary threat to it in the first place." Official Bonn should end the "cacophony" around the SDI and get down to serious business.

One might say that with Strauss, Germany's military-industrial complex raised its voice. Most of it is located in Bavaria, where Strauss is governor.

But the cacophony will continue as long as Genscher remains at the top of foreign policy. Should the unfortunate Defense Minister Wörner have to go in coming weeks, he should have company.