

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Reagan demotes Brandt

The President's refusal to meet with the Eastern Establishment's favorite German marks a turning point in postwar history.

President Reagan's trip to Germany, and especially his speeches, mark the beginning of a new period in history—and not only in respect to German-American relations. When Reagan's staff told Willy Brandt on Sunday, May 5, that the President had "no time to meet" with him, an end was put to the arrogance of the Socialist International, which had been campaigning against the U.S. President since the moment he entered office. Reagan was now, finally, retaliating against the libelous and vicious propaganda launched against him and his country by Europe's socialists.

Moreover, the humiliation of Brandt, a former German Chancellor and the Socialist International's president, was also a humiliation of the U.S. Eastern Establishment; Brandt has been their favorite "boy" in German politics and in East-West affairs for decades.

Brandt himself fumed with rage: He demonstratively canceled his attendance at a gala dinner for Reagan in Bonn on the evening of May 5, upsetting even his East Coast friends, like Eleanor Dulles, who were present. Then, he began to wildly attack Richard Burt, State Department undersecretary for European affairs, whom he held responsible for the cancellation of his planned encounter with Reagan. Burt, on his part, expressed wonder at these accusations, because of his own "very close relations to the leadership of the SPD." He would never have given any advice to cancel a meeting with Brandt, he said.

But Brandt became more and more

enraged: On May 6, he predicted "severe troubles for Burt should he become the next U.S. ambassador to Bonn," and one day later, he used his speech at the SPD's "international peace workshop" in Nuremberg to characterize Reagan as a "peace risk." Brandt accused the American President of trying to exterminate the Nicaraguan people, and of ruining the world by his personal arms race against the Soviet Union.

The Social Democracy's leadership came out in support of Brandt. Johannes Rau, number-two in the SPD and its probable next candidate for the chancellory, said Reagan's military policy was simply insane.

The whole Socialist International leadership was mobilized in defense of its humiliated president. On May 6-7, as 200,000 demonstrated in the streets of Madrid against the visiting American leader, Spain's Felipe González, clearly under pressure, berated Reagan over the American posture against Nicaragua, and urged him to reduce U.S. troop contingents in Spain.

On May 8, Bruno Kreisky and Jesse Jackson appeared at the site of the Struthof concentration camp (south of Strasbourg) to denounce Reagan. Jackson portrayed himself as a representative of "the other, the better America," and Kreisky said, "The people of Texas and California don't know what détente really is." Those Americans should, therefore, not try to tell the Europeans how to treat the Soviets.

Left-wing Socialists, along with

the Communist and Green-Alternative deputies to the European Parliament, tried to interrupt and heckle Reagan's address before that body on the afternoon of May 8—with little success, however. When a group rose and ostentatiously walked out during the President's talk, he quipped that now he knew how to deal with his opposition in the U.S. Congress: "Just talk long enough and they'll leave."

Willy Brandt escalated further. Also on the afternoon of May 8, he informed the press in Bonn that he would "definitely meet with Gorbachov in Moscow before the end of May," to discuss "disarmament and security partnership in Europe, and new initiatives in the dialogue between East and West."

Finally, after two days of paralysis in the face of Reagan's offensive in Germany, the KGB's propaganda apparatus launched attacks on the President. Gorbachov, in his Kremlin address on May 8, accused Reagan of "now openly giving support to revanchists in Germany," and jeopardizing peace in Europe again, 40 years after the last war. He pointedly praised the accomplishments of Josef Stalin in the war. At this point, his speech was interrupted by roaring applause for Stalin, lasting several minutes.

The time of *Ostpolitik* is past, and so is the time of Willy Brandt. Reagan's visit to Germany, and especially his address to 5,000 youth at Hambach Castle on May 6, injected cultural optimism and patriotic pride into the minds of the people of this, "the most creative nation in history"—something Germans have not been permitted for 40 years, something too good and powerful for Brandt and his entourage to destroy. Brandt is now one of those "useful fools" grown useless. When he goes to Moscow at the end of May, he would do well to seek his pension, and stay there.