

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

An 'open door' for Eastern spies

The Interior Ministry, occupied by Christian Democrats since March 1983, should introduce security screening.

Since early August, the rumor kitchen in Bonn has been buzzing with spy stories. On Aug. 5, Mrs. Sonja Lueneburg, longtime personal secretary of Bonn Economics Minister Martin Bangemann, did not return to her job. She has been missing since, and an initial police search of her apartment produced evidence that she might have worked for East Germany's espionage network.

The Lueneburg case was quite an embarrassment. She worked as a personal secretary for numerous Free Democratic Party leaders since 1966, which means that for almost 20 years, she was able to monitor that party's policy-making. Since the FDP was a coalition partner in all Bonn governments since 1969, she was also able to monitor discussions in the cabinet. This alone was of high value for East-ern secret services.

The second spy case, which broke on Aug. 19, involved Mrs. Ursula Richter, who had worked at the national headquarters of the German Expellee Organization for about 12 years. She had access to all fundraising and financial files, and biographical data on the membership. The organization, which represents the interests of about 12 million Germans expelled from Germany's previous provinces in the East by the Red Army in 1944-45, has always been a prime target for Soviet propaganda against alleged "German revanchism."

The third spy case is that of Manfred Rotsch, whose trial officially opened on Aug. 19. Rotsch was an engineer in charge of the German share in the Tornado jetfighter project at

Germany's most prestigious aerospace producer, Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm Corporation in Munich. When his cover was blown in October, he had worked for the KGB for at least 15 years.

All three cases have one thing in common: Each of the three worked at his important post for a long time, and none had ever gone through a tight security clearance procedure, in spite of a biography which should have alerted the relevant agencies. Mrs. Lueneburg's official resumé was that of a woman who had resided in East Germany, and then moved into West Germany via France in 1966. Mrs. Richter's life history was the same, except that she came in through Canada in 1964. The case of Rotsch is even more striking: Working as a young airplane engineer in East Germany until 1955, he moved to West Germany in May 1955, and immediately started to work on projects of new airplane technologies. Rotsch has worked at all prestigious aerospace corporations since then.

Once the covers of the three were blown, police and the agencies' investigations produced some very interesting stories. Mrs. Lueneburg, for instance, turned out to be somebody else, who had taken the identity of a woman with the same name, who lived in West Berlin until 1966, moved to Colmar in France, and disappeared. The current "Mrs. Lueneburg" entered West Germany from Colmar, in 1966.

Ursula Richter apparently took the identity of another woman with the same name, who moved back to East Germany in 1966 after years in Cana-

da. Rotsch's case is simpler, since he turned out to have been recruited by the KGB in 1954, and to have worked for the KGB ever since.

Since 1969, when the first socialist-liberal government coalition was formed in Bonn, the traditional security clearance procedures have been steadily eroded. Especially the Free Democratic Party, which held the Interior Ministry from 1969 to 1982, forced through an extensive "liberalization" of counterespionage procedures. With few exceptions, the various agencies dealing with security affairs were not able to exchange data on suspected spies. It was ideal for foreign agencies to plant agents and spies in prominent positions. In 1974, when the scandal of Günter Guillaume, the personal aide to Chancellor Willy Brandt, forced Brandt to resign, some light was shed on this dark aspect of politics in Bonn. Also in spring 1979, when several ranking aides to Bonn politicians moved back into East Germany, and about 40 agents were detected afterwards, the alarm bell should have been rung. But it didn't, due to the FDP's insistence on "liberalization."

It was Interior Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (in that office from 1969 to 1974) who personally intervened against a security check of Mrs. Lueneburg in 1969 and 1972, when her boss, William Borm, was under scrutiny. Borm has contacts to East Germany, and there was evidence that he and his staff were tied into some kind of high-level East espionage operation—passively, or actively. Borm's case was turned down, and so was Mrs. Lueneburg's. Even in 1976, when two years of debate after the Guillaume affair produced some tighter security screening in Bonn, Mrs. Lueneburg was not checked thoroughly, nor was Mrs. Richter.