
The Battle for Europe

Will European nations survive 1986 as allies of the United States?

by Philip Golub

Lulled into a false sense of security by the recent superpower summit in Geneva, most European governments are heading into a period of East-West crisis, during which important electoral tests will occur. In consequence, the elections appear certain to inaugurate a period of growing instability:

- National legislative elections will be held in France in March 1986, or earlier were President Mitterrand to decide in favor of a dissolution of the National Assembly.

- The test regional election in Lower Saxony in the Federal Republic of Germany is scheduled for spring or summer 1986.

- National legislative elections will be held in the United Kingdom over the course of the new year.

The underlying issue in all these elections, though only likely to appear as such in the campaign platform of the West German Social Democratic opposition, is the Russian drive for domination of Europe by the end of this decade or sooner—and the collaboration of elements in the United States, as well as Europe, to ensure that result. There will be plenty of meddling by the “decouplers” on both sides of the Atlantic.

West Germany is the key, and the Lower Saxony election remains the unknown factor.

In France, assuming no major crises or radical shifts, the conservative opposition to President Mitterrand's Socialist Party, led by the neo-Gaullist RPR of Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, will win with a large margin in March. The only real question is how large. Similarly, leading British observers believe that Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher will manage to defeat both the neutralist British Labour Party and the Social Democrats of David Owen.

The Lower Saxony elections, however, are anyone's guess at the present time.

Seen as a trial run before the national legislative elections in 1987 in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Lower Saxony vote will indicate the level of strength of the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU), whose support has steadily eroded for the past two years, as reflected in the large victory of the SPD's Johannes Rau in North Rhine-Westphalia last year. The reasons for the defeat are largely economic policy. Should the CDU continue to lose in state-level elections—and no change in economic policy is contemplat-

ed—the already extremely fragile CDU/CSU coalition with the liberal party, the Free Democrats (FDP), is likely to break down before 1987.

The stakes are by the far the highest here. Contrary to the propaganda of the CDU, which presents a merry picture to the public based on assurances of a mythical economic upswing and a “new era of détente,” the political struggle between now and 1987 will be bitterly fought out amid a continuously deteriorating international strategic and economic situation. A coalition crisis followed by either an SPD victory or a new coalition arrangement between the SPD and FDP, would totally shift the Federal Republic's strategic commitments. However soft the Bonn government's present position toward Moscow and East Berlin—the permanent preoccupation over a visit by East German party boss Erich Honecker is a good measure—the Social Democratic opposition is pro-Soviet outright. An SPD victory would imply a qualitative shift in West Germany's East-West alignment.

Hence, the beneficial effects of an RPR-led victory in France would, in this scenario, be entirely neutralized by a strategic reversal in West Germany. Just as Kohl and the CDU have had to contend with a socialist administration in France which has opposed most if not all of the major strategic initiatives of the past years—the Strategic Defense Initiative and the European Tactical Defense Initiative, in particular—an RPR-led majority in France favorable to such initiatives may have to face an entirely new, hostile government in Bonn in 1987 or earlier.

Though the collapse of the CDU government is by no means a certainty, political circles in Bonn point out that the growing rift between Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Chancellor Kohl makes it increasingly likely.

Should the Kohl government survive the next year and a half until the legislative elections of 1987, then it is possible that the new French majority and the Kohl government will have a limited, mutually stabilizing effect—all the more so because Genscher has based his European policy on his close ties with the French Socialists. The French Socialists in turn have sought the help of Genscher in pushing their policies in Bonn.

The complicating factor, besides Soviet actions, is the

evolution of matters in the United States. Paris, Bonn, and other European governments are faced with the most unpredictable problem of all—the weakening of President Reagan and his policies at a crucial moment of European history. Since 1984, the West German SPD, the Mitterrand regime, and their liberal and socialist international allies have awaited the moment that President Reagan would be made into a “lame duck.” That moment seems to have arrived, and has seriously confused the political-strategic debate in Europe.

Britain's recent government agreement to join in SDI masks the fact that while individual industrial contracts have been allocated to European firms in the fields of optics, robotics, lasers, and guidance systems, there is no European consensus on this question. The level of British agreement is itself suspect—whether the U.K. adheres to the global concept initially brought forth by Reagan in 1983, merely to aspects of SDI, or, as is known to be the case with some leading Englishmen, seeks to sabotage the program from within. It is said that Margaret Thatcher “has gone a long way” toward understanding SDI, but how far has she really gone?

At the same time, the government debate in Germany over SDI is becoming interminable, the FDP attempting to drag out any government agreement until “the next U.S./Soviet summit.” The present French government is entirely hostile. The next will be favorable, but France will be confronted with a dual power situation, an RPR-led legislature, but a Socialist President, which will not make for a quick resolution of the debate.

And, Europeans, like Americans, now wonder if the Strategic Defense Initiative is actually real? In one sense, it is real, of course: The year 1985 saw amazing technological breakthroughs in a whole number of areas. It took over two years for the U.S. Department of Defense and all the talents of Lt.-Gen. James Abrahamson to achieve these results. But now, even these are threatened by the recent weakening of President Reagan and the budgetary cuts imposed on the U.S. defense budget by the Gramm-Rudman bill.

Should Europe strongly commit itself to something the U.S. government appears unable to commit itself to?

Europe will follow America's lead, not the other way around, and were the United States to fall back to mere development of a limited point defense system, as political pressures and “budgetary constraints” may well produce, the past two years of effort will have been largely in vain. Europe cannot financially afford to develop an SDI on its own, nor do Europe's present governments have the will to confront the Soviet Union at a moment of U.S. retrenchment and vacillation. This is true of all areas of policy, not merely SDI.

The political instability factor inherent in the European election years 1986-87 is thus only a feature of the instability of the West as a whole. Seen from Moscow, where the new leadership under Gorbachov is firmly entrenched—perhaps for decades—the picture of political agitation in the West is a welcome and entirely anticipated development.

In West Germany, a new policy voice

by Vin Berg and Rainer Apel

As 1985 drew to a close, the hottest issue in Bonn, West Germany, was the emergence of a new policy voice on the scene. It appeared as if out of nowhere, but suddenly was growing rapidly. “Patriots for Germany” is the name of the new citizens' organization, and it first announced its existence by placing two political advertisements in West Germany's major newspapers, Oct. 15 and Dec. 4. The ads stressed the deadly dangers posed to the country by the Soviet Union and its “decoupling” agents in the West, and by the global austerity policies of the International Monetary Fund, echoed in the economic policies of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's government.

“Artfully formulated,” was a not-too-happy Christian Democrat's description of the first, Oct. 15 advertisement. It had its most immediate impact among traditionally Christian Democratic voters and activists.

Overall, the response to the non-partisan call to political action was electric, for two reasons:

First, the signatories constituted an impressive cross-section of prominent Germans—political figures, engineers, farmers, professional people, etc. They included: Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute and the Club of Life; Prof. Emil Schlee, president of the Mecklenburg Expellee Organization and vice-president of the Organization of Expellees from Central Germany; Vice-Admiral (ret.) Karl-Adolf Zenker, former Inspector-General of the West German Navy; Brig.-Gen. (ret.) Friedrich August Freiherr von der Heydte; Robert Becker, chief editor of *Reichsbanner*, the monthly magazine of the anti-fascist resistance organization, Reichsbanner Black-Red-Gold.

Together with some 60 other signatories, as seasoned observers of German politics noted, these individuals are capable of commanding the support of some 15-20% of the West German electorate—a formidable political force, if translated, for example, into parliamentary seats.

Second, their intervention into the German policy debate came as fresh air rushing into a vacuum—and the result was a shock wave.

Only a minority of Germans can support the economic policy of Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats, which is crushing all productive sectors of the German economy. On the other hand, only a minority can support the pro-Soviet policies of Willy Brandt and Johannes Rau's opposition Social Democrats, which would mean subjugating Germany