

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

An anti-NATO chancellor for Bonn?

The Social Democratic Party's candidate, Johannes Rau, is playing a double game.

The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) is preparing itself to take power in Bonn after the January 1987 elections for national parliament (Bundestag). Capitalizing on the programmatic and organizational weakness of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democrats, Johannes Rau, the SPD's chancellor candidate, is convinced he can win. The next government, Rau hopes, will be run by the Social Democrats.

The media here have already run coverage of Rau's shadow cabinet. The names circulated indicate that Rau is going for a straight anti-NATO ticket. According to internal SPD sources, the appointee for minister of defense in the desired Rau cabinet would be Andreas von Bülow. He is the author of the notorious "Bülow Theses" of November 1985, which advocated a far-reaching demilitarization of Germany and the withdrawal of all U.S. troops, equipment, and missiles from the Federal Republic.

Bülow, undersecretary in the defense ministry under former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, is the head of the official party commission on defense policy, which was established at the 1984 SPD convention in Essen. The Bülow commission was given the mandate to work out "alternatives to current NATO policy."

This is exactly what Andreas von Bülow did, when he presented his paper in November 1985. He called for replacing NATO's deterrence doctrine with a set of treaties with the

Soviets, all of which would be combined in what he called "security partnership"—which amounts to moving West Germany into the Soviet sphere of influence. The armed forces of West Germany, wrote Bülow, should be replaced by a less heavily armed militia, and Germany as a whole should become the center of a Central European zone free of all nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

Seen against the background of the SPD's general anti-Americanism, it was clear that Bülow meant primarily U.S. weapons when he spoke of withdrawal from Central Europe. His theses have been endorsed by many of the SPD's party sections. Some of the party's prominent figures, such as ultra-leftist Oskar Lafontaine, have already speculated publicly about a German withdrawal from NATO.

Johannes Rau himself, especially during his recent U.S. trip, has denied that Bülow's policy will be his own campaign platform for 1987. Rau tried to create the impression that the SPD's position is still as much in favor of NATO membership as under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. But Rau does not define policy in the SPD; the "decouplers" around party chairman Willy Brandt set the themes for their chancellor candidate. Rau therefore is playing a double game. He wants to make the pro-defense majority in West Germany and NATO believe he is their best choice, while his party plans the dismantling of defense and an exit from NATO.

The same double game is played on the issue of the Green Party. The official line coming from the SPD's headquarters is that a coalition with the Greens is out of the question. Irony has it that party chairman Willy Brandt refers to the anti-defense sentiment among the Greens as the main obstacle to such a coalition. The SPD, however, is changing its position to the Greens on Brandt's personal promotion.

Rau, for his part, has maintained the line—for the public—that he rules out a coalition with the Greens. Sometimes, however, during trips abroad, this pose is dropped. This is what happened during Rau's recent trip to Israel, which was intended to build his image among the Jewish community in the United States—via Israel.

Meeting Knesset President Ben Dov Meir, Rau was asked about his view on the Greens. There is a strong sentiment against the neo-Nazi Greens in Israel, because of their alliance with the radical Arabs and the extremist currents in the Palestinian movement. Rau told Meir he would rather ally with any other political party in Germany than the Greens. Rau rejected any form of coalition with the Greens.

The Israelis took Rau at his word, and the media ran headlines on his remarks to Meir. This kind of public relations, however, was not what Rau's campaign staff had in mind, and a denial that he had ever rejected the Greens as a potential partner was issued immediately.

This is exemplary of Rau's two-faced posture. Why would he publicly deny he said what he had just clearly said? The first statement was his personal politicking. The denial came from the party, which is now intervening in the internal debate in the Green Party, to shift the balance towards a pro-SPD orientation.