

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

The strange great hurry in Bonn

The new policy of the Kohl government toward Moscow carries some very high risks.

It is certainly true that many in Bonn are afraid of a future without U.S. nuclear weapons in Western Europe, that many are concerned about the dramatic increase of military might on the Red Army side, once the U.S. missiles are pulled out. But not even the so-called conservatives in West Germany raise their voice anymore, when reservation and skepticism would be an adequate response to Gorbachov's diplomatic overtures.

Instead, so-called "historic opportunities" get a higher rating than strategic facts in Bonn. The most shocking example of this new outlook was given on March 4, when Franz Josef Strauss, the conservative politician with the most pro-American image in Germany, welcomed Gorbachov's reform policy (of making the Soviet military sector more efficient) as "a new springtime for Europe and mankind." Strauss saw a "great historic opportunity" in Gorbachov's reforms—namely, German reunification. Strauss's remarks underline the degree of strategic disorientation ruling Bonn these days.

Many Bonn officials believe that once the missiles are gone, U.S. troops will soon follow. Deals with Moscow gain, therefore, the weight of safety contracts "in case of U.S. withdrawal." But the Red Army has never respected any contracts; at best, agreements between Bonn and Moscow under conditions of anticipated U.S. withdrawal from Europe are a "bad deal."

The idea that an orderly reunification of the two Germans could be

peacefully arranged between Moscow and Bonn, indicates the disorientation among West German diplomats. It is like turning the clock back to March 1952, when Josef Stalin offered reunification to Bonn, if it stayed out of NATO and the alliance with the Americans. Now, with the zero option, U.S. troop withdrawal and a dim future for NATO in Europe on the horizon, Bonn's diplomats dwell on dangerous nostalgic memories of Stalin's 1952 offer.

Exactly such reunification schemes are systematically circulated by Moscow's diplomats in Bonn these days. While reunification is not very likely, Soviet and East German control of German policy in Bonn is definitely increasing.

There must be more behind this rapid collapse of Western positions in Bonn than just the combined effect of appeasement vis-à-vis Moscow, anticipation of U.S. disengagement and dreams of German reunification. Whence comes this peculiar interest and hurry in reaching a strategic understanding with Gorbachov?

The key to the problem may be found in Irangate, its effects on the whole Eastern Establishment of the United States, and the effects on the many junior partners of that same establishment in the foreign policy departments of the West. As a matter of fact, the "foreign policy" of the Bonn government has, as long as there has been a foreign ministry in Bonn for the past 32 years, depended on tips and leaks from the Eastern Establish-

ment, automatically also hurts what is called "foreign policy" in Bonn.

The other dominating element of foreign policy in Bonn, and especially so since the beginning of the first phase of détente—Ostpolitik—in the mid-1960s, has been the good or bad will of Moscow, the Red Army, that is. Since West Germany's first postwar chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, a staunch pro-Western conservative Catholic, left office in 1963, there has been no independent foreign policy impulse from Bonn. Virtually one hour after Adenauer left office, foreign policy in Bonn was under the total control of McGeorge Bundy, Robert McNamara, and Henry Kissinger. There has been no such thing as "West German foreign policy" in Bonn since 1963.

With Irangate shaking up the Eastern Establishment in the United States, Bonn's foreign policy—currently impersonated by Hans D. Genscher—turns to Moscow as to a life-saver. Reassurance agreements are sought, before West German heads roll in Irangate.

Take the case of deputy foreign minister Jürgen Möllemann, who was in charge of most of the Libya-Iran contacts in Genscher's foreign ministry. He was just appointed minister of public education; this is viewed as equivalent to demotion. Möllemann, probably the most exposed politician on the German side of Irangate, is the first casualty inside the Bonn government. Before the envisaged dangerous deals with Moscow are actually signed, some more prominent heads in the Bonn foreign policy establishment may roll, indeed. And for Gorbachov, it may even appear too risky to sign deals with such dead ducks. The strange great hurry in Bonn has a reason: It is a race for time against Irangate.