

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

No phony autonomy, but real freedom

Demonstrators from the Soviet-occupied Baltic states rallied in Bonn, denouncing the Hitler-Stalin Pact.

Like other Western capitals, Bonn saw an impressive political rally on Aug. 23, held by the freedom movement of the three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) in protest against the infamous Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939. The pact led to Soviet occupation of the three states (1940-41), and again since 1945.

The movements inside the Baltic states sent prominent representatives, among them Eduard Berklavs, one of the founders of the Latvian National Independence Movement; Mavriks Vulfson of the Latvian Popular Front; and K. Moteiko of the Lithuanian organization Sajudis.

One of the aims of their visit to Bonn was, as Vulfson said at a packed press conference at the Tulpenfeld Restaurant here shortly before the rally, was to meet with officials of the government and the parliamentary parties. The Baltic envoys insisted that the West German government go beyond declaring the Hitler-Stalin Pact null and void, and begin to support openly the movement for independence of the Baltic states from the Soviet Union.

Berklavs tore apart the Russian myth that in 1940 the Baltic states had joined the Soviet Union voluntarily, allegedly seeking protection from Nazi Germany. Historic truth, he said, was quite different.

Given the go-ahead by his pact with Hitler, Stalin occupied the three Baltic states in the spring of 1940. Stalin did not trust the national Communist Party organizations in the three states to carry out his political march-

ing orders, however, so he set up new pro-Soviet front organizations, composed of youths who could be turned out for mass rallies. This provoked anti-Russian sentiments, and the Red Army sent in its tanks, on the pretext of guaranteeing a "free" referendum, which took place with Russian tanks pointing their guns at the Balts—and at the original Latvian Communist Party.

This proved, Berklavs declared, that Stalin never wanted (as the Russian rewriting of history alleges) to "support a social revolution" in Latvia, but always planned military occupation. One-quarter of the population was deported from Latvia deep into Russia. When Berklavs mentioned this fact to Soviet General Secretary Nikita Khrushchov some 15 years later in the 1950s, he found himself deported and put in a Siberian prison as well.

K. Moteiko of the Sajudis group then addressed the press concerning the origins of the Lithuanian independence movement. He said that the West seemed to have forgotten about the world war and its results: The Lithuanians led an armed struggle against continued Russian occupation, losing 50,000 freedom fighters until the revolt ended in 1953.

Charges against the cowardly West were also raised at the rally of 500 around the Bonn Cathedral one hour after the press conference. A representative from Estonia said that the legion of statements from Western governments to the effect that the Hitler-Stalin Pact was "null and void"

were "rather cheap statements of solidarity." What the Baltic states need, he said, was open support for their fight for complete independence from Soviet Russia.

The West, the speaker said, has always pointed at the Helsinki Accords of 1975 on European Security and Cooperation, as the preferred framework for "progress on the Baltic question." This is, however, just another way of saying that the Baltic states were to remain under Soviet rule. As a matter of fact, the speaker from Estonia said, this posture of the West was an *ex post facto* recognition of the results of the Hitler-Stalin Pact.

While he spoke, a huge banner was displayed that read, "Why do the Baltic states still have to suffer from the results of a pact that is null and void?"

In private discussions, numerous participants expressed their disappointment with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, for his failure to even send a statement of support to the rally. "Well, what can one expect from a man," one Latvian said, "who doesn't even take a stand on the Germans living in East Germany."

During the rally, students from the Latvian center at the West German city of Muenster entered the stage dressed as Hitler, Stalin, and an aide to Stalin. They reenacted the negotiations between the two dictators on Aug. 23, 1939—how they pored over the maps, carved out their respective spheres of influence, drawing the lines of imperial division of Eastern Europe. Finally, a bottle of champagne sealed the unsavory pact.

Concluding the rally, Baltic speakers said the movement would keep on fighting, not for some phony "autonomy under Russian rule," but, as Berklavs put it, "we'll not let down in our struggle before real freedom, real independence is achieved."