

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Germans can support Lithuanians

A tripartite deal could easily be worked out among Bonn, Vilnius, and Moscow—if Gorbachov decides it's to Moscow's advantage.

The West German government is afraid of intervening on behalf of the Lithuanians in their confrontation with the central Soviet leadership. This came out in a discussion this reporter had with a conservative member of parliament on the day when the first Soviet sanctions against Vilnius went into effect. "We are only a mid-sized power," he said "We would like to do more for the Lithuanians, but we can't, because among all Western nations, we are in the most delicate position in respect to Moscow. There are certain political-strategic implications."

"We would like to have diplomatic relations with Lithuania, but we cannot make the first step, and have to wait for the Americans to take the lead. Unfortunately, they haven't done that yet, and most likely won't, before the [Bush-Gorbachov] summit is over."

He added that Bonn could take the first step, however, giving economic support for Vilnius long before the summit. A group of West German Christian Democrats, a minority in their own parliamentary group, has called on the government in a letter to launch a national emergency aid program to help the new government in Vilnius. The group, one of whom, Claus Jaeger, attended commemorating events in Riga of the 50th anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin Pact last August, has three main reasons for believing that the West German economy can intervene in this conflict:

1) The Soviets are interested in intensified economic cooperation with the West Germans, having the largest high-tech economy in Europe. In view

of the East German revolution, Moscow knows (but wouldn't admit publicly) that it has to make certain concessions to Bonn in order to get this cooperation going.

This puts the mid-sized power of West Germany in the picture with the Soviet superpower, and although there is a big discrepancy between the two in terms of size, strategic muscle, and political conduct, the potential for deals is there.

One potential deal would be to create favorable conditions for West German and other Western investors on Soviet territory for producing commodities for the Soviets under a Western-style management, and for training workers and engineers in modern industrial skills.

An April 5 article in the Soviet journal *Moskovskye Novosti* pointed in the direction of such an experiment: "There is a necessity to create kind of economic enclaves in our country, where the Germans can lead a developed economy in cooperation with us. Such zones shall be created in areas that offer especially favorable conditions, like Kaliningrad, where a more developed infrastructure exists."

Kaliningrad, the region around the pre-1945 German city of Königsberg, is right next to Lithuania.

2) Close but clandestine contact has been established between West Germany and Lithuania on potential aid programs that can be negotiated, upon Gorbachov's consent, with Moscow.

In a discussion with this reporter on April 18, Prof. Alfred Schueller of Marburg University reported that

various aides to the Lithuanian leaders Landsbergis and Prunskiene have been spending up to several weeks at West German universities and foundations studying perspectives of converting the Lithuanian economy into a Western-style system.

Prunskiene, who herself studied economics in West Germany, is very interested in West Germany's plans converting the East German economy late this spring, including the monetary aspect, as a potential model for Lithuania.

The idea that West German support for the East Germans is proceeding with Moscow's consent, is envisioned as a way also for the Lithuanians.

Prof. Schueller said: "It ought to be in the interest of Gorbachov to make the three Baltic states the showcase for a new type of successful economy which, once it works, can serve as a model in other parts of the Soviet Union. It cannot be in his interest to ruin the Baltic economies and the Soviet one as a whole—at least I would say it isn't."

3) The Kremlin is desperately interested in West German industry giving guarantees for a continued flow of commodities from East Germany to the Soviet Union, already before a formal reunification of the two German states. During the past 12 months, East German industrial exports to the Soviets dropped by 6.4%, while Soviet exports to the East Germans went down by only 13.1%. So who is going to guarantee what?

The upcoming May 21 session in Moscow of the joint West German-Soviet commission on economic cooperation will have this question on its agenda, and it will also play a central role in the series of "2 plus 4" talks on German reunification between the two German and the four allied governments.