

German unity faces towering challenges

by Rainer Apel

In discussions with this news service, Mideast policy analysts who also advise the West German government expressed deep concern about an escalation of the Persian Gulf crisis provoked by an Anglo-American military intervention, and about the immediate effects this would have on the oil supply to Europe and on the general economic perspectives for the next few critical years—years during which an economic recovery must be launched in East Germany, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union.

One may assume that these concerns were passed on to Chancellor Helmut Kohl prior to the beginning of Iraq's military occupation of Kuwait, and that this intersected arrangements for the surprise meeting of Kohl and East German Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere on July 31, which resulted in an unexpected, joint call for moved-up unification of Germany and date of election of a united German parliament on as early as Oct. 14.

The date, actually the day of the first elections for state parliament in the five restored, historic German states on the territory of present-day East Germany, doesn't make sense from a merely internal German viewpoint, especially since Kohl and de Maiziere referenced the grave economic situation in East Germany as the main reason for proposing moved-up elections. Proposing the date reflected a panic reaction, a feeling of "coming too late, otherwise," triggered by something than internal German problems.

Before July 31, neither Kohl nor de Maiziere had endorsed an election date before Dec. 2. Their change of mind came as a total surprise, as did the change of mind among

the Social Democrats, who all of a sudden responded by calling for Sept. 15 to be the date of actual merger of the two German states, but insisted on Dec. 2 as the election date, as before. Both alternate proposals seem to be rather absurd, seen as an issue by themselves, and they caused rather absurd political repercussions in both German parliaments, which were scheduled to hold the final vote on the election law package on Aug. 8-9.

Part of the East German parliament boycotted the decisive session on Aug. 8 before the vote, and thereby upset the entire timetable, so that the West German parliament could not vote on the following day. Both parliaments will have to convene again two weeks later, which means that these same two weeks will still be absorbed with fruitless debates and absurd maneuverings, in a situation which in fact requires a higher level of political debate on the realities of the escalation of crises abroad, and their repercussions on Germany and the unification process.

Cleaning up the economic mess

Meanwhile, only a few weeks before the expected unification of the two Germanys into one nation-state, the nation's political scene gives the impression of mounting, almost unsurpassable problems. Alarming figures on the industrial and farm sector employment have been published: More than 400,000 jobless, and another 500,000 on shortened work time are registered in East Germany, with many more to come in the next few months. Against a total labor force of about 9.5 million, this represents a dramatic development.

Admittedly, the social security system which East Germany adopted along with the German-German Monetary Union on July 1, will ensure that nobody is turned into a homeless person from one day to the next. Everyone will have guaranteed medical treatment, no one will starve, and the effects of the overall austerity policy approach will be eased by additional tens of billions of deutschemarks pumped into East Germany by the West Germans.

But still, there is an economic emergency in East Germany; there are grave problems whose solution cannot be delayed, for the sake of a functioning united German economy and its role in the planned recovery of Eastern Europe and, if possible, of the Soviet Union as well.

Following the collapse of the socialist regime in East Germany, there has developed a state of economic, administrative and political anarchy, fueled by a mixture of incompetence of the new political forces and sabotage of relics of the ousted communist Socialist Unity Party. Compared to the problems facing the population of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the other nations in the East, including the U.S.S.R., are, this "German disease" appears rather small and manageable. But to most West Germans, used as they are to living under stable, secured economic and social conditions, the trouble in East Germany looks most threatening. Fueled by sensational media reports on the situation in East Germany—usually a mixture of truths, half-truths and allegations—many West Germans tend to believe in the scary picture presented.

Vision versus pragmatism

A major problem is the fact that West German Chancellor Kohl and his conservative-liberal coalition government prefer not to rally West Germans behind their policy, but rather are attempting to deal with difficulties in a purely administrative way, and by emergency transfer of additional billions of deutschemarks into the East, while letting West Germans dwell on their mostly unfounded fears. This has opened a vulnerable flank which is being exploited to the hilt by the parliamentary opposition, the Social Democrats, who are acting as the domestic mouthpiece of the international circles which are bitterly opposed to German unity.

The opposition candidate for chancellor, Social Democrat Oskar Lafontaine, has been quite successful in whipping up the mixture of founded and unfounded fears among the West German electorate, and paints a doomsday picture of the future united Germany. Even before the November revolution last year, Lafontaine was an unabashed supporter of the hated communist regime of Erich Honecker in East Germany. And now, it is quite obvious that he is employing his populist rhetoric in accordance with media attacks launched on the German unification process from abroad.

For example, there has been massive propaganda in the Anglo-American media about an alleged German-Soviet accord, sealed by Chancellor Kohl and President Gorbachov in Stavropol July 16, which excludes the other Western na-

tions—meaning Great Britain and the United States. Lafontaine and another Anglo-American asset in Bonn, Count Lambsdorff, chairman of the liberal Free Democrats, Kohl's minor coalition partner in the government, launched a phony fight over the date and conditions of the envisaged all-German elections, thus driving a deep wedge between the different coalition parties in both German governments.

Matters came to a head on July 24, when the eastern Liberals withdrew support to the coalition government of Prime Minister de Maiziere (a Christian Democrat) and pulled out their two cabinet ministers (municipal affairs and housing), over the hair-splitting issue of having East Germany join West Germany one day before the date of all-German elections. The eastern Social Democrats, again, confronted de Maiziere with an ultimatum to declare his mind on this issue by July 27, or else they would walk out from the coalition, too.

De Maiziere countered the operation with statements that the crisis was one "ostensibly triggered from outside, in Bonn, at least from the liberal side"—i.e., from the side of Count Lambsdorff, whom he charged with having given the "marching orders via television" to the eastern Liberals.

But why had Lambsdorff given these marching orders, and on behalf of whom? Lambsdorff is well-placed in senior Anglo-American "free market" lobbying groups such as the Trilateral Commission, the Mont Pelerin Society, and the Eminent Persons Group, a free-market front group recently established that took to the public for the first time at a press conference in Houston on July 10, taking a stand against the Franco-German proposal for a comprehensive immediate Western aid package to the U.S.S.R.

Lambsdorff, ganging up in this new group with former U.S. Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker, among others, called for strict, International Monetary Fund-type conditionalities to be applied to all Western aid to the East. Kohl and French President François Mitterrand opposed that approach at the Houston summit, and Gorbachov added his own opposition at his subsequent meetings with Kohl in Moscow and Stavropol on July 15-16.

More sabotage in the works

While de Maiziere attacked Lambsdorff, an aide to the parliamentary group of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Bonn admitted to this news service on July 25 that the struggle over the election law was "certainly not the real thing. Something else is cooking, and only Lambsdorff and a handful of others at the very top may know. We don't know yet, what the strategy is, but we can be sure it is going against Bonn, not against the cabinet in East Berlin as in the last instance."

As for Oskar Lafontaine's role in this conflict, he has consistently sided with the Anglo-Americans against German unity and Chancellor Kohl. Shortly before Kohl's talks with Gorbachov in Stavropol, Lafontaine stated full sympa-

thy for "fears caused by Kohl's German policy, in London and at the Houston world economic summit."

Since late last year, Lafontaine has been favored as an alternative to Kohl by the U.S. State Department, and has also been the subject of lavish and fawning coverage by the same Anglo-American media that have launched the "Fourth Reich" hysteria against Kohl's policy.

It should also not be forgotten—as Lafontaine's previous support for Honecker attests—that Lafontaine is seen as a useful asset by circles in Moscow that oppose German-Soviet economic cooperation and which favor instead a "Trojan Horse" strategy of destabilizing, and then taking power in a united Germany.

A dangerous constellation of domestic and foreign hostile forces are therefore ranged against the German unification policy of Kohl and de Maiziere. From July 24 to July 27, the two governments seemed to be on the verge of paralysis and collapse.

But at the utmost peak of the crisis, the eastern Social Democrats decided to stay in the government and deserted the Lafontaine strategy of all-out confrontation. The motives of the eastern SPD are not fully clear, but it is said that they felt the issue pushed by Lafontaine was counterproductive to their own reputation among the East German electorate, the large majority of whom oppose this kind of inter-party warfare and rather favor a debate on the pressing economic issues. The desertion of the SPD in the East forced a fuming Oskar Lafontaine to rework his confrontation strategy, this time not so much along the election issue as such, but more along economic crisis issues.

There remains a big question mark on the matter of why the chancellor canceled his address to the West German parliament on Aug. 9, missing a chance of responding to the tirade of Lafontaine which, in addition to the usual attacks, also contained an appeal for all-party emergency dialogue on issues such as a state-run program for investments in infrastructure, energy, and housing.

One may accuse Lafontaine of demagogic intentions with this call for a massive investment program, but in fact, the situation is overripe for an all-party initiative that may help German politics back to the real issues. The chancellor should have taken the chance of testing the mind of his challenger, of nailing him down on something that is useful across all party boundaries, or of exposing Lafontaine's proposal as a phony election ploy. The chancellor also missed a chance to address West German citizens, who usually follow parliamentary debates with great interest, but who are often frustrated about the low level of debate. A great historic task such as the reunification of Germany, in the middle of a deepening international crisis, deserves the appropriate quality of political debate.

It is still possible to change the level and course of politics in Germany; but it seems that the real strategic shocks which will wake up the politicians, are still to come. The current

muddling won't lead anywhere, except to disaster. One may hope that while waking up, some of Germany's senior politicians will realize that what is required at this moment, are proposals like the one made months ago, in expectation of this crisis, by Lyndon LaRouche, for a "Productive Triangle" of industrial recovery, centered around government initiatives in Central Europe.

Another escalation: terrorism

On July 27, something else happened that was peculiarly well-timed with the peak of the parliamentary crisis: In the wee hours of the morning, an automobile being driven by Bonn Assistant Interior Minister Hans Neusel drove into a terrorist bomb trap. Luckily, Neusel survived the attack and suffered only minor injuries. According to a letter found near the site of the detonation, the attack had been carried out by the infamous Baader-Meinhof Gang, the so-called "RAF."

The initials stand for "Red Army Faction," the terrorist group whose members have been sought by West German authorities since the early 1970s, and which, it now turns out, were harbored and assisted by the Soviet Union and the former East German regime. But reading "RAF," one might also think of the British "Royal Air Force," for the following reason: The group's letter explained that they had attacked Neusel because he "personified, through indirect incorporation of the continuity of German fascism from the Third Reich to the Greater Germany that is heading towards the Fourth Reich." The phraseology bore quite a resemblance to attacks that had just been aired against the Germans in certain London and Glasgow dailies and other British publications.

The similarity between the RAF document and the tone of the latest British media propaganda campaigns, was duly noted in a commentary in the London *Sunday Correspondent* appearing on Aug. 5. The newspaper remarked: "Last week, the RAF let it be known that the Neusel attack marked the start of a long period of struggle against the newly emerging Greater German/West European superpower. 'West Germany and the new political elite in the G.D.R. [East Germany] are pursuing the same aims and political plans as Nazi fascism,' it said in a letter. 'The third invasion of Europe by German capital this century will not be carried out militarily, but economically and politically.'

"A year ago such views were seen as absurd. Today they are equally so, but more people may be ready to listen. After all, the content of the remarks of the British Trade Secretary [Nicholas Ridley] in the *Spectator* last month was not so different."

If more than a merely verbal connection exists, it may be most difficult to prove at this point, just as it had been difficult to prove East bloc connections to the RAF until early this year, when the direct involvement of the former East German secret intelligence and other East bloc agencies became known.