

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Is Germany safe as U.S.S.R. collapses?

Instead of being paralyzed by fear of a Soviet hard line and civil war, Germany should launch big economic projects.

The imminent threat of war in the Persian Gulf is still relatively far away in the perception of most Germans. There is far more concern about the crisis in the Soviet Union.

A side-effect of the media coverage of the ongoing campaign for food aid to the Soviet Union, is that the public has been flooded with alarming reports about the disarray and disaster in the Soviet Empire. Media reports from Minsk, Leningrad, Kiev, Vladimir, Odessa, and other cities, have added to fears that a collapse of the Soviet Union would unleash a stream of refugees far outnumbering the 340,000 refugees escaped from East Germany in 1989.

Fearful talk in Germany over the past few weeks about the future of the Empire in the East has ranged from predictions of "mere" economic collapse to open military coup and civil war. But the resignation of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze just before Christmas shocked Germany. Numerous senior figures of German politics expressed their concern about the future of the heavily armed neighbor in the East.

The collapsing Soviet Empire may try a military breakout—striking out at home and abroad—warned Horst Teltschik, the outgoing, longtime national security adviser of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, in an interview with the year-end issue of the German daily *Tageszeitung*. "We cannot be certain," Teltschik said, "that we may not be faced with dramatic tensions in Europe again, in the next years. The economic decline of the Soviet Union is alarming for two reasons: political an-

archy (the Russians have a tradition of anarchism) and the disintegration of the Union along with ethnic tensions between the nationalities.

"These developments could take a violent course. They could become very threatening, since a weak, anarchistic world power could be tempted to solve its problems in an aggressive way, domestically and abroad."

Most other German experts ruled out a military break-out of the Red Army against the West, but expressed deep concern about the likelihood of civil war inside the Soviet Union.

Interviewed on DLF radio Dec. 27, Lev Kopelev, the most prominent Russian exile in Germany, said that the Soviet Union "might move from the current cold state of civil war to a hot one," which would be provoked by "open apparatchik sabotage against the reformers."

On Dec. 20, Heinrich Vogel, director of the government-run Eastern Studies Institute in Cologne, told *EIR* that the West had been trapped for the past five years by the notion of a "Gorbachov reform program." There never was a worked-out concept of reform in Gorbachov's mind. Faced with economic and political disintegration, the lack of a concept made it virtually impossible for the Kremlin to get the situation under control, Vogel said.

An intervention by the Army, the KGB, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs troops couldn't be ruled out, Vogel said, but military rule would never succeed in stabilizing the Soviet Union. More likely was the outbreak of years-long civil war "not in the sense that there is one side fighting against the other,

but rather in the form of many small civil wars," with warlords taking control of various regions.

Vogel and other experts expressed concern that under conditions of civil war, it would be impossible to develop the in-depth economic relations that the Sept. 13 German-Soviet long-term cooperation treaty envisaged. German industry would not invest substantially in the U.S.S.R. as long as the country was unstable and it was unclear if the state would survive the struggles of the republics against Moscow.

But withholding investments is the wrong approach. Faced with the threat of disarray and chaos, the Germans should assist interested groups inside the Soviet Union in building a perspective for development. Long-term, low-interest credits should be issued for select projects that are vital, whether they are governed from Moscow or the capitals of the individual republics.

Infrastructure projects in the sectors of public transportation, food, and energy supply must be given the highest priority because they help to define mutual interests in economic development between the center and the regions, or at least among some of the regions.

Infrastructure projects alone won't solve all the problems, but they would inject some political reason that might help to prevent the expected chaos or outbreak of civil war. The political commitment to, planning, and implementation of projects, preferably ones that could absorb productive aspects of the military—like Pioneer (youth) and engineering units—would contribute a lot to defuse the situation.

Germany has taken the lead on the mobilization on the Soviet food emergency; it must also take the lead on these infrastructure projects.