

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Pop-front tactics and black propaganda

Communists and opponents of united Germany see their chance to make a comeback in the eastern economic depression.

Socialism is alive in the minds of former communists who survived the collapse of the regimes in the former East bloc. They harbor the idea that the economic depression in the West may offer a second chance for a return to power.

They have money, which they managed to smuggle into the West, and political backing: In the case of the former East German communists of the SED party, among their backers are enemies of united Germany such as the World Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, and policymaking circles in the U.S., U.K., Israel, and in the East, where KGB networks are still running penetration, disinformation, and espionage operations into Germany.

Gregor Gysi, the chairman of the PDS, the successor party to the SED, has been meeting political leaders of the anti-German faction during trips to Moscow, London, and Jerusalem.

On July 11, Gysi and other party officials of the SED (now members of the PDS) announced the formation of a so-called Committee for Justice. The list of 69 signers of the pamphlet included leading exponents of the SED cultural warfare against West Germany: Stefan Heym, Stephan Hermlin, and Heiner Müller.

The list also included notorious persons like Heinrich Albertz, the Protestant minister who has been a spokesman since the early 1970s for the alleged "political aims" of terrorists, and Eugen Drewermann, the would-be Martin Luther of today and a left-wing cultist who is a rallying point for anti-Vatican sentiments.

Leaders of the committee, which

aims to establish local subcommittees throughout Germany that would be a catalyst for a "broad protest movement of citizens" against Bonn, said the time was favorable because "public discontent" with Chancellor Helmut Kohl's economic policy in the East was growing to an extent that a "real mouthpiece" was needed to increase the pressure on Bonn.

Indeed, labor discontent is building in the five eastern states of Germany, where 70% of the pre-1989 industrial capacity and labor force have been "phased out." There have been protest marches, strikes, and other labor actions in the past months, and 26,000 shipbuilders in the five Baltic ports launched a strike earlier this year protesting Bonn and European Commission plans to close the shipyards.

Shipyard workers in Rostock on July 19 announced plans for an "autumn of protest" which would feature a rally of workers from 250-300 eastern industrial plants in front of the chancellor's office in Bonn Sept. 7. Several hundred labor leaders in the eastern states will meet for a demonstrative congress on Oct. 3, the national "German unity day," debating alternatives to Kohl's policy of "phased" foreclosure of east German industries.

This is not a labor initiative originating in the PDS-led "committee," but with the former communists who, in the mid-1980s, had 2.3 million card-carrying members. In the most recent municipal elections, they have been able to consolidate about 20% of the vote in the bigger cities of east Germany. The PDS ranks third in most precincts and second in numer-

ous urban areas. The "committee" is an attempt to employ classic popular-front tactics to rally other political currents behind the PDS.

On paper, the potential is there: Polls show that opposition to Bonn is growing in all parties, and discontent with the "western way of making politics" has led to developments such as the decision in late April of 63 eastern deputies of the Christian Democrats in the German Parliament to form their own lobbying group inside the party.

"The east Germans have to speak up on behalf of and realize their own interests," said the "committee" founding pamphlet. It remains to be seen, though, whether the former communists benefit from the anti-Bonn sentiment, as the memory of the SED regime that ran East Germany into economic and political collapse in the summer of 1989, is still fresh.

The chief beneficiaries of the black propaganda will be among anti-German circles abroad, for the time being. The founding pamphlet pointed in this direction, when it said: "In the Federal Republic of Germany and beyond that throughout Europe, fears of the European process of integration are increasing, because the unification of Germany is seen as a worrisome example. . . . Extreme right-wing and racist sentiments are dangerously gaining ground in this situation."

Such drivel is printed daily in the British press, but the fact that the PDS made it an important issue leads us back to the talks between the SED and Edgar Bronfman's Zionist group, the World Jewish Congress, in the 1980s, and even beyond the fall of the Berlin Wall. The agenda then included prospects of joint steps to block or at least slow down, defame, and sabotage the unification of Germany. Klaus Gysi, a ranking SED official and the father of PDS chairman Gregor Gysi, played a role in these talks.