

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Who's afraid of unmasking 2,000 spies?

Leaks about a secret KGB dossier with names of spies in the West are paralyzing the German political elites.

On July 4, Domestic Security Minister Rudolf Seiters resigned from office, saying that he wanted to take personal responsibility for the political damage suffered by the country's security after an unfortunate operation a week before to arrest two terrorists, which ended in a shootout that left one terrorist and one policeman dead.

Certain missing details in the police report about the circumstances that led to the death of the terrorist Wolfgang Grams triggered media charges that the anti-terror forces had executed him. The "Bloodbath Affair" was the term that the media coined for the incident, within a few hours after it occurred on the afternoon of June 27.

The promptness with which Seiters, one of a few senior Christian Democrats with close contact to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, took the public blame for this action, came as a surprise to people who have inside knowledge about how damage control is usually handled in Bonn. Indeed, the daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* made the cryptic hint in an editorial on July 5 that the Seiters resignation was "just the beginning phase of an earthquake."

What earthquake? Well, the same newspaper had dedicated several articles before to yet another affair that posed a much bigger threat to German security.

The government ostensibly has been in possession for some time of a secret KGB dossier with 2,000 names of heretofore undetected highly placed informants, spies, and other agents for the former Soviet Union

and the East German regime. The dossier reportedly includes names from across the entire political spectrum, as Bernd Schmidbauer, the chief cabinet coordinator of secret intelligence affairs, testified in a parliamentary hearing in Bonn on July 2.

Leaks, though rather vague, about the existence of such a dossier had made it into the media again and again since late autumn 1992, when high-level talks were conducted on the subject between the German and Russian governments.

The sudden release of the former East German communist regime's leader Erich Honecker from jail in January 1993, and the fact that all charges against him were dropped on the "humanitarian" grounds that he was "too sick" to make it through his trial, had triggered a flood of speculation about a deal. It was suggested that Honecker was given his freedom and instant transfer, at the expense of the German government, to political exile in Chile, in return for his silence on "certain things" that, as close associates of his never tired of warning, could turn "very, very inconvenient for many a top politician in Bonn."

The fact that the trial of Markus Wolf, the former spy chief of East Germany, was not opened before May 5 this year—three and a half years after the collapse of the East German regime and more than two and a half years after German reunification—poses questions about why Bonn is hesitant to go ahead with that trial.

In newspaper interviews, Wolf repeatedly intimated what "delicate" things he could tell, if he really wanted

to, and there was also his strange opening declaration to the court in Düsseldorf, which contained the thinly veiled message: Either put me on trial because you accuse me as a head of a foreign intelligence service, and sentence me right away—in which case, I will feel free to talk about certain things—or put me on trial for something else, and be prepared for a lot of trouble. In other words, Wolf said: Let me go, and I shall leave you unharmed.

Another aspect of this secret intelligence warfare on German soil came into the picture with an interview given on July 6 by Klaus Kuron, a former leading official of West Germany's Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution, who is now serving a jail sentence of 12 years for working as a spy for East Germany. Kuron, who did not name any names, stated that he had definite evidence about the existence of at least 30 eastern spies in the German parliament, enough to form a parliamentary caucus by themselves, if they wanted.

Markus Wolf himself told Kuron about this Bonn underground network in 1984, which was strong enough even at that time to have an impact on crucial policymaking decisions.

These are but a few hints that suggest what skeletons are really hidden in the closets these days, including a dossier of at least 2,000 prominent names subject to blackmail. This may explain why there has been such a deep paralysis among the elites of Germany over the past few weeks. A tectonic shock, a "big earthquake" is certain, indeed, as soon as the first names from that dossier are published.

As for Rudolf Seiters: He certainly was in a position to know about the explosive character of the KGB dossier. His resignation may be the first of many.