

Report from Bonn by George Gregory and Rainer Apel

Schmidt's strategy against tension

Schmidt's advice to Washington is to pursue cooperation with the Soviets, not to increase the tensions.

Facing an international escalation of tensions that may help the "hawks" in both Moscow and Washington to gain the upper hand in their countries' policies, the West German government of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt has resorted to a strategy of increased efforts at détente. The preparations for the scheduled visit of Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev to Bonn at the end of 1981, and the exchange of diplomatic letters between Schmidt and East German President Erich Honecker, are public signals for the way Bonn wants to move matters.

This is not to turn West Germany's back on NATO and the Western alliance partners, but rather, as both Schmidt and Honecker have stressed in interviews over the past days, an effort to contribute to international détente and thus to world peace on the basis of relatively unproblematic relations between the two German states.

The Soviet government has indicated that—despite the controversy with NATO on the stationing of Euromissiles and the lack of commitment by the U.S. administration to negotiate with the Soviets on arms reductions—they too want détente and cooperation. On the occasion of a visit to the north German port city of Lübeck, Soviet First Deputy Minister of the Maritime Fleet, V. I. Tikhonov presented a proposal that has received some notice in West Germany: he proposed that West Germany, East

Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union cooperate in the construction of a shipping/railway transport system to transfer industrial goods from the West to Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. This, if pursued, would connect the large harbor of Kiel in West Germany to the Russian port of Leningrad and help intensify East-West trade.

A further idea still in discussion in both Bonn and East Berlin is to have the industries of the two Germanies cooperate in development projects in the Third World.

Chancellor Schmidt, while not having officially addressed these economic proposals, has stressed in recent interviews that arms control and disarmament will play an important role on his agenda for talks with President Brezhnev in Bonn. Addressing the nation on television Aug. 30, Schmidt said, "We believe that the present level of armament in Europe has been exaggerated, and that it is not necessary to maintain peace in Europe to have so many weapons stationed here.

Hitting hard at the so-called peace movement—a leftist effort which some here believe aims only to provide headlines such as *Time* magazine's "Moment of Angst"—Schmidt stressed that "whoever wants to contribute to peace seriously, should do this in the context of my party, the SPD, and of the West German trade unions whom I consider the biggest peace movement there is in this country."

Beginning with the Sept. 1 demonstrations that commemorated the 42nd anniversary of the beginning of World War II, the West German trade-union federation, DGB, will begin a campaign to collect 2 million signatures among workers in favor of Schmidt's policy of military balance at the lowest possible level between East and West.

Schmidt himself addressed this point in an Aug. 21 television interview: "I am for maintaining the military balance; I have had this position for more than 20 years now. But I would strictly reject the West's trying to gain military superiority over the East. I am against the superiority of the Soviet Union, and I am, as well, against the superiority of our own alliance."

West German industry and Bonn have rejected any attempts by the Anglo-Americans to have canceled the planned West European-Soviet gas pipeline deal in favor of rather vague Western "energy alternatives." Though Schmidt is certainly not too optimistic at this point, he advises the United States to opt, as he has, for industrial cooperation with the Soviets, such as helping to explore the vast raw-material resources in Siberia.

Bonn insiders refer to President Eisenhower's 1953 "Atoms for Peace" proposal to remind the U.S. of a policy that, though deteriorating under U.S. administrations since the Cuba missile crisis, have in fact contributed more to peace than all the strategies of tension against the U.S.S.R. With the West German government pursuing a policy of partnership with the East bloc in the tradition of the Eisenhower effort, there are probably better Americans in Bonn than in the Reagan administration.