

## Report from Bonn by George Gregory

### Some promising news

*Despite efforts to undercut the Kohl regime and to split off Germany from the U.S.A., Bonn is showing signs of fight.*

**T**he West German government cannot claim to have weathered all the storms churned up to destabilize it, but a refreshing air of initiative has taken hold. This goes for Chancellor Kohl, and especially for his defense minister, Manfred Wörner.

Senior military officials say that the Bonn defense ministry is regaining its former influential status once again, and the attempt to shatter the West German component of the NATO military command with the affair around Gen. Günther Kiessling, is being "handled." For one thing, Wörner has begun to do what former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt did when he became defense minister back in 1969—make sure that officers and officials in key positions are really "his people."

The most dramatic shift, which goes hand in hand with the shuffle at the defense ministry, is a new interest in pursuing the Western European dimensions of the U.S. beam-weapons commitment, known as the Strategic Defense Initiative. One senior official put it this way: "The old reticence to even deal with beam-weapons defense here has been replaced by the recognition that this is where science is going, and you just cannot stop scientific progress." Other sources report that the defense ministry has now set up the apparatus to work on the full strategic dimensions of beam defense against ballistic missiles in West Germany and Western Europe. "It is fairly obvious that we cannot be caught sitting in between all the chairs on the deck," said one official. "If the United

States is committed to developing beam weapons, and the Soviets do it too, then we have to take a look at what has to be done in the short- and medium-range missile area."

The recent visit to Western European capitals by a U.S. team led by the President's scientific adviser, Dr. Keyworth, "certainly helped to overcome the strategic and technical information deficit," an official close to the chancellery pointed out, "although our thinking has been developing in this direction in any case." He added that "we are, however, somewhat disappointed" in the mildness of the Reagan administration's rebuff to Dr. Kissinger's *Time* magazine advocacy of a U.S. decoupling from Europe.

It has often been difficult to tell the difference between the Kohl government and its Social Democratic predecessor, primarily because it was difficult to figure out whether Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who served under the Social Democrats too, really knew there had been a change in Bonn. When Foreign Ministry State Secretary Dr. Alois Mertes (a Christian Democrat) shot back against Kissinger for his "irrational pessimism," it was a refreshing sign that someone in Bonn did not have to mull over his legal textbooks before voicing sound judgment. Mr. Genscher's own reaction was deafening silence.

Well, Genscher has invested a good deal in his back-channel relations to Moscow. Then, too, he has cultivated peculiar relations to Khomeini's Iran, which includes protect-

ing diplomats without diplomatic passports like Sadeg Tabatabai, caught smuggling drugs into West Germany.

During Kohl's trip to Washington, D.C., he insisted that West German sales of defensive weapons to Saudi Arabia neither meant nor required a change in policy toward Israel, a "moderate Arab country." He pointed out Israeli hypocrisy in attacking West Germany, "since Israel sells arms to Iran." The Chancellor's statement would be a "no-no" unless someone had clipped his foreign minister's claws. And, when Kohl pointed out that he too thinks Western Europe should do more for its defense, and he therefore puts great emphasis on German-French cooperation—not to exaggerate the point, but there was a flavor of Konrad Adenauer-Charles de Gaulle.

The only people in Bonn nowadays who love Henry Kissinger are Social Democrats, and maybe Hans-Dietrich Genscher (so conspicuously absent during Kohl's trip to Washington). Social Democrat Egon Bahr, an old-style neutralist, says Kissinger's analysis of the miseries of NATO is right, and that there is no difference between Kissinger and Helmut Schmidt. And people like former Social Democratic Research Minister von Bülow have been complaining privately that it is extraordinarily difficult to talk to the French (if you are working to break Europe from the U.S. alliance), "because Mitterand just has 'Star Wars' on his mind. That is something for the French soul, but not for us."

Sources in Bonn say there are indeed far-ranging discussions under way between Bonn and Paris on beam defense as well as space research efforts. And military cooperation between Bonn and Paris is generally closer, as the Soviet press complains.