

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### The defense budget debacle

*The defense minister is blaming the Social Democrats for trying to "decouple" from the United States—but his own party is going along.*

**A** turbulent session of the budgetary committee of the West German parliament decided on Oct. 30 to impose cuts in defense expenditures for 1985—against the pledge of NATO member countries to raise their budgets 3% per year in real terms. The cuts of 250 million deutschemarks (about \$83 million) will hit German air-defense capabilities in particular, at a time when German defense ministry officials have publicly revealed that Soviet maneuvers have been rehearsing a surprise attack against the Federal Republic.

The cuts were "moderate" compared to the original demands by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) for slashing the budget by 1.8 billion deutschemarks.

The Tornado jetfighter purchasing program will receive 100 million deutschemarks less than planned, while the development program for the Jetfighter 90 will be reduced from a planned 180 to 60 million. The long-term purchasing program for the Jetfighter 90, which requires 3.4 billion deutschemarks total through 1996, was frozen for the time being. In addition, the West German air force will have to reduce air exercises in 1985 because the fuel budget was cut by 60 million deutschemarks.

Defense Minister Manfred Wörner angrily denounced the budget committee's decision and the demands of the Social Democrats for even steeper cuts. "There are clearly visible tendencies on the side of the SPD to say farewell to the Western alliance," he said. "He who cuts the planned budget reduces not only our

own security, but also that of the alliance as a whole."

Wörner warned that "the SPD is working toward substantial cuts in our country's defense budget. Less defense expenditures mean less defense, and less defense means decoupling from the U.S.A."

But it was not only the Social Democrats who were to blame. The ruling Christian Democratic Union and Free Democratic Party possess a solid majority in all the committees of the parliament, so they can vote down every motion coming from the opposition SPD and the Greens. This they refused to do—a dangerous indication of the extent to which the arguments of the "peace movement" have penetrated the ostensibly "conservative" parties.

Many Christian Democrats have become the special victims of disinformation spread by networks in the Lutheran and Catholic churches about the danger of the arms race, the Soviet desire for peace, etc. The government itself adopted a slogan last year modeled on that of the disarmament movement—"Make Peace With Fewer and Fewer Weapons."

These issues came to a head during the debate on Oct. 30, when the budget committee had to decide on funding for some of the costlier projects, such as air defense and upgraded participation in the U.S. space research program. The SPD and the Greens had presented motions calling for drastic cuts: The Social Democrats, for example, wanted to freeze all funds for the Tornado, which they claimed was of no use any longer, since a chief

executive with access to top-secret files at the MBB company in Munich, co-producer of the plane, had been exposed as a KGB spy. The SPD's line of argument was quite peculiar, since the Social Democrats have gone along with most of the KGB's propaganda against the United States and NATO. Why are they suddenly so concerned about a KGB spy?

Other arguments were brought up against German collaboration in space research efforts with the United States. Some said that these projects, including the Cosmos space station, were "too costly" and "too much centered on military rather than civil research."

The vote is a dangerous blow to Western defense. Air defense is generally recognized to be one of the weakest pillars of Western military capabilities in Germany, and the Jetfighter 90 project is particularly important, because it aims at the development of a new jetfighter which needs no more than 500 meters of airstrip for takeoff and landing, can be refueled in the air, and is equipped with sophisticated electronics that allow the pilot to attack eight targets simultaneously up to a distance of 90 kilometers. NATO believes that this kind of plane would be the best option for "launch-on-warning" defense against any surprise attack from the East.

This project has now been placed in jeopardy, along with the special budget of 55 million deutschemarks that the Bonn Research and Technology Ministry wanted to have for German participation in the U.S. space station program in 1985. U.S. Lt. Gen. James Abrahamson, the director of the Strategic Defense Initiative, went to Bonn personally to try to convince the Germans of the importance of space cooperation, including the need for joint development of space-based ABM systems.