

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Brandt's pro-Green policy under fire

The Social Democratic Party's drive for a "red-green coalition" may not survive the current dispute in Hesse.

It is not just historians who complain today that Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Stalin's writings were not read in time. People experienced a terrifying awakening only after the proclamations of these writings had been put into political practice."

This statement was not taken from a new book on the history of the Nazis, but from an urgent warning issued in Bonn on Nov. 16 by a Social Democrat who has decided to buck his party's tilt toward an alliance with the fascist Greens, today's equivalent of the left wing of the Nazi party. The writer was Horst Niggemeier, the official press spokesman of the German Mineworkers' Union who has opposed the pro-Green policy of Social Democratic Party (SPD) chairman Willy Brandt for some time.

Niggemeier and others from the labor wing of the SPD have been exposed to immense pressure and blackmail coming from Brandt's circles, and hitherto any public opposition to the SPD's alliance with the Greens has been stifled. The national leadership of the Social Democrats is courting the Greens in order to form a majority that could topple the government of Christian Democrat Helmut Kohl—installing an anti-NATO and anti-industry "red-green coalition."

In many private discussions, conservative Social Democrats have described the arm-twisting from Brandt and company as "an atmosphere of pogrom or witch-hunt."

In an attempt to break this conspiracy of silence, the Schiller Insti-

tute called a "Day of Resistance" to the Green fascists on Oct. 17, and its members and supporters distributed over a million leaflets throughout the Federal Republic, warning of the danger from this Soviet-backed movement. The institute's mobilization broke the atmosphere of political containment which had surrounded people like Niggemeier.

When his article appeared, it hit the Brandt current at a vulnerable moment: The "trial run" for a national red-green coalition, the SPD's unofficial alliance with the Greens in the Hesse state government, was in deep trouble because the SPD and Greens were not able to bridge certain remaining differences of views on nuclear energy policy.

The Greens had demanded that two Hessian companies, Nukem and Alkem, which produce most of the nuclear fuel used in Germany's nuclear power sector, be closed down because of alleged "production of nuclear material for military use." While major parts of the leftist-dominated SPD in Hesse were willing and eager to make the required concessions, the labor wing refused. The Greens remained intransigent.

Brandt's people saw the danger: If the alliance with the Greens—which allowed Gov. Holger Börner (SPD) to rule despite his lack of a parliamentary majority—were to break up, Brandt's plans to make Hesse a model for a red-green coalition on a national scale would suffer a set-back. Numerous prominent Social Democrats hurried

to stress that "the minor issue of two nuclear companies should not put our alliance in jeopardy," and Börner himself wrote an open letter to the Greens urging them not to desert the SPD.

The left-wing Metalworkers' Union even responded to Niggemeier's statement on Nov. 18 by dispatching a board member to tell the press that "there is no conflict of basic interests between labor and the ecologists."

But there was a very real conflict of interests, and it was felt on Nov. 20, when the Greens made a last blackmail attempt against the SPD. It failed because Börner did not dare to make any further concessions. The Greens announced that "the collaboration with the SPD will be stopped from this hour on."

Although prominent spokesmen of both the SPD and Green party hurried to emphasize at press conferences that "the last word on the affair has not been spoken yet," the altercation could not be covered up so easily. It is widely seen as a personal debacle for Börner, who had denounced the Greens as "eco-fascists" before the elections of 1982, but was the first to open the door towards coalition talks with the same "eco-fascists" one year later, and praised the agreement as a "model of political counterpole to the government in Bonn."

It can now be expected that new orders for the Hesse Social Democrats to get back to the negotiating tables with the Greens will come soon from Willy Brandt's office in Bonn. But if the attack by conservative Social Democrats which has been launched by Niggemeier can survive Brandt's coercive tactics this time, there is reason for hope that the plot to install a red-green government was buried on Nov. 20, the day the Hesse coalition split.