

## Report from Bonn by George Gregory

### The 'dual command structure'

*The Social Democrats are using old assets in the army and government to sabotage participation in the U.S. SDI.*

What would the headlines look like if Jimmy Carter marched into the Pentagon nowadays for "closed door discussions" with General XYZ on the Joint Chiefs of Staff—perhaps a general who owes his stars to the Carter administration—and then gives a press conference to say that the general is "skeptical" about the Strategic Defense Initiative, and President Reagan should drop the whole thing? That is just what West German Social-Democratic Party chairman Willy Brandt has done with General Inspector of the Bundeswehr Altenburg—and the West German minister of defense, Manfred Woerner has uttered not a peep.

Since Chancellor Helmut Kohl endorsed West German participation in research for the SDI at the Wehrkunde (Military Strategy) conference in Munich on Feb. 9, many people in Bonn are thinking through what kind of research organization West Germany and Europe require to get the job done; others are thinking hard about such detailed matters as how to design systems for defense against Soviet medium- and short-range missiles in Europe, where the warning time would be 3½ to 4 minutes.

But the Social Democrats under Willy Brandt, Egon Bahr, Horst Ehmke, and Andreas von Buelow have issued executive committee proclamations that the SDI itself, and any German participation in the SDI, has to be rejected. Furthermore, the Social Democrats' weekly newspaper, *Vorwaerts*, says that Chancellor Helmut Kohl's endorsement of West Ger-

man participation in the SDI would be "complicity in a crime."

That sort of language is dangerous in West Germany, where it is tantamount to naming targets for terrorist attacks. So, when other spokesmen of the SPD in the past weeks began using the Soviets' own propaganda verbiage, alarm bells rang.

A defense-policy spokesman of the SPD parliamentary group, Hermann Scheer, claimed recently that "the SDI will militarize research to an extent not seen since the days of Hitler." The chairwoman of the public-sector trade union, OETV, Wulff-Matthies, chimed in that "40 years after Hitler, all workers know that the militarization of space has to be stopped."

This is the kind of language the Soviets use to threaten an "intervention" into West Germany; and it is the kind of language used by terrorists who claim to be the "freedom fighters" and "resistance" against totalitarianism.

Party insiders say that there were pitched battles within the SPD before the Brandt/Bahr wing decided to go on an all-out offensive against the SDI. No one denies that the Soviet Union agreed to go back to the Geneva negotiating table after walking out primarily because they know they have to take the strategic defense strategy of the Reagan administration seriously. So, several people in the SPD argued that the party should not undermine the main incentive for the Soviets to negotiate.

For a party whose base at least was in the trade-unions, the rejuvenation

of West German industry, the industrial spin-offs of the program, and West German participation in the program, would have been heavy ammunition against the anti-technology, environmentalist faction of the SPD that is making deals with the fascist Green Party wherever possible.

The problem for the Bonn government, however, is not merely that the SPD has launched a rabid Jacobin campaign against the SDI. The real problem is that the SPD still pulls the strings of many government officials, including ranking military officers.

This problem has been discussed within the West German Army since the Kohl government replaced the Social Democratic/Free Democratic Coalition under Helmut Schmidt: The military command is concerned about a "dual government command structure," which can paralyze decision-making in a crisis.

So, when Willy Brandt met with General Altenburg the first week of March, and took it upon himself to report that General Altenburg is "more sympathetic with SPD ideas about a nuclear-free zone than the government," the real shock in Bonn was that the SPD was openly flaunting the existence of such a "dual command structure."

Not a few leading officers frowned at the new demonstration that Defense Minister Woerner does not seem to have a grip on his ministry of defense. Even before Willy Brandt met with General Altenburg, the chairman of the SPD parliamentary faction, Jochen Vogel, visited Brussels and likewise reported that he found "much more sympathy for SPD ideas about a nuclear- and chemical-free zone in Europe than in the Bonn government."

Some sources indicate that a shake-up in the Bonn defense establishment may be coming.