

Report from Bonn By Rainer Apel

Does DGB equal KGB?

The trade union confederation's "autumn of protests" is headed toward becoming a major security threat.

The national German Labor Federation, the DGB, is on the war-path against the government here. For this coming autumn, a wave of mass demonstrations, strikes, and other forms of action have been announced. But the aim of the DGB, which has eight million German workers organized under its banners, is not merely to oppose the admittedly disastrous austerity policy of the government; the DGB is employing the weird argument that the arms race and defense spending are using up funds which could be spent for employment programs—and raising demands accordingly: A reduction in the defense budget.

The DGB has issued a public declaration condemning the American Strategic Defense Initiative as a waste of money, and calling upon the Bonn government to repudiate its support for the program. In short, the labor mobilization in the autumn will be largely directed against the Federal Republic's defense.

The German labor movement, two-thirds of which are Social Democrats or SPD voters, is back on the anti-defense track which characterized labor organizing here in the early decades of this century. This was the period when traditional, "programmatic" socialism in the labor unions was overrun by radical, anarcho-syndicalist, communist, and Trotskyist currents. This was also a period in which large parts of the labor movement were continuously mobilized against the state.

This anti-government sentiment was expressed by DGB executive

board member Siegfried Bleicher, who wrote in *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung* on July 26 that if the government of Chancellor Kohl refused to change its policy (including on the SDI), the DGB would mobilize its eight million members to "vote for another policy in the next elections." In other words, voting for the opposition Social Democrats whose policy is explicitly pro-Soviet and against the alliance with the United States.

Moreover, if Kohl's austerity program is bad, the DGB's own economic program is even worse, basically "post-industrialist." It calls, apart from cutting defense expenditures, for state-funded environmental protection programs to "create jobs"! The DGB has dumped the idea of progress and industrial productivity, and has turned into a political instrument for Germany's economic and, if it need be shown, military destruction.

For the period of September-October, the DGB has announced as yet unspecified actions against industrial companies engaged in defense production, or which have committed themselves to participation in the SDI project. The powerful German Metal Workers Union (IG Metall)—with 2.5 million members, the largest of the country's unions—is also the most radical. It has enormous leverage over most German military industry. It is here, in IG Metall, where most of the 800 shop stewards the German Communist Party (DKP) controls are based, and the DKP has already announced blockades and related actions against the "military-industrial complex of

West Germany, but especially against companies collaborating with Reagan's 'Star Wars' program."

The DKP, although it is on the receiving end of massive funding from the Soviet KGB, is a tiny party, but its proclamations will gain a special weight in the DGB's autumn mobilization. Unlike in 1983, when the DGB leadership still kept its distance from the anti-defense movement controlled by the KGB through the DKP, it has now adopted most of the movement's slogans.

On July 25, the DGB's national chairman, Ernst Breit, and two other executive board members were in Moscow to meet Soviet "labor leaders"—but they also had a lengthy meeting with Andrei Gromyko, the former foreign minister and now State President. Both sides agreed that what they called "the arms race" should be halted, that it was important to have arms reduction and détente, and no American SDI. The Moscow meetings were a signal that the times had grown more favorable to the subversion of the DKP inside West Germany's labor movement.

It is not yet clear what the form or scope of the DGB's actions in the autumn will be; but Chancellor Kohl, whose government is not the most stable, must be concerned. With three million jobless workers, the Chancellor could have a hard time of it this fall. Even if only a minor portion of the labor movement takes part, the unions will be able to close down and paralyze most of the nation's essential industries for weeks, even months on end. A repetition of the confrontation in Britain during the 14-month miners' strike—supported by the Russians—cannot be ruled out.

In this instance, yet again, we see how Western economic policies are the Soviet Union's most powerful weapon.