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## Western Europe

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# Germany's spy scandals: a script for the Kohl government's overthrow

by Rainer Apel

The so-called spy scandals in West Germany have begun to unfold after the fashion of America's famous Watergate affair. The first round of public revelations, reaching their high point in the German parliament's debate of Sept. 3, displayed nothing so much as the short-sightedness of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU). Like the setup Richard Nixon, they have chosen the path of cover-up and down-playing in their confrontation with the opposition Social Democrats—a game that must lead to defeat, because the dimensions of the scandals are simply too big to be contained.

Those dimensions are as follows: With the defection of the West German counterespionage chief, Hans-Joachim Tiedge, to East Germany on Aug. 19, most, if not all of the Federal Republic's "human intelligence" and informant apparatus in the East can be considered "burnt." Many of these people happen to be agents of the East who have been "turned." Should even most of them somehow escape arrest, they must now be considered of dubious reliability. It is impossible to base any sensitive intelligence evaluation on sources whose cover is most likely blown, and whose moves are under tight observation.

For West Germany, brutally exposed to the heart of the Warsaw Pact's military might in Europe, the loss of "human intelligence" input at a time that 400,000 Soviet troops stationed in East Germany are undergoing drastic command restructuring and maneuvers, is potentially lethal.

No effort to play the affair down in official Bonn can conceal this reality, because the Tiedge case has had serious repercussions among the allies of the Federal Republic. A Christian Democratic member of the parliamentary defense committee commented: "The damage caused by the Tiedge defection is much larger than officially admitted—it is catastrophic! Leave aside the loss of our own agents in the East. What also has to be taken into account is the reaction among our allies. There are people who have a good pretext now to say that the German agencies are too unreliable to be given any secrets. We are virtually cut off from the intelligence flow among our own allies, and we, the most important ally of the U.S.A. in Europe, are probably getting less secret

information now than the least reliable ally, the Greeks. If this situation cannot be repaired during the coming weeks, it means the end for us. We are decoupled on the intelligence level—a catastrophe."

### The State Department's gain

That the Germans can no longer be trusted has been the battle-cry of all the pro-"decoupling" media in the United States and Western Europe, from the *Washington Post* to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Their line is essentially: "They've given our secrets to the Russians, so let's give them to the Russians."

The loss of remaining West German intelligence channels into the East also comes as a welcome introduction for Richard Burt, the new U.S. ambassador to Bonn, who took office at the beginning of September and represents those who favor American military desertion of Europe ("decoupling"). The less professional the intelligence available on the East, the more Burt and his cohorts, like John Kornblum, will be able to run the "back channel" to the East, without fear that their "situation reports" will ever be cross-checked by non-traitors. The U.S. State Department will take these reports, and those of "Social Democratic sources," as a basis for its foreign-policy recommendations concerning Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R.—another catastrophe.

Then, there is the case of Mrs. Margarete Hoeke, the secretary who worked for 21 years in the offices of the German State President. In her function as chief secretary for the Department of Presidential Affairs, which gave her access to top-secret communications, the protocols of the German National Security Council passed over her desk, as well as all the coded dispatches and wireless situation reports sent to Bonn from German embassies abroad. She also had access to classified biographical data on the chief personnel in the presidential office, and took part in several of the "Wintex" staff-exercises of NATO.

The "Wintex" maneuver series rehearses the functioning and cooperation of the various government staffs during states of emergency and armed conflict. Mrs. Hoeke even had occasion to gather intelligence from the inside of the radiation-

proof government bunker in Ahrweiler. There is no doubt that her reports were of extreme value for East German and Soviet secret intelligence. Unlike Tiedge, Mrs. Hoeke was arrested before she could defect, and has already admitted to having worked for Eastern agencies for at least 15 years.

### **The role of the Free Democrats**

How was it possible that these two, and others, were able to make it to the very top of the Bonn administration? Weren't there any security checks for government personnel at the higher levels? Even if official explanations that "no one could have known they worked for the East" are considered credible, the question remains: Why weren't there any routine security checks?

Here one comes across some very striking facts: Continuously, from the late 1960s on, security procedures in Bonn have become more and more lax. From 1969 on, the access of intelligence agencies and the police to data banks and other files on German citizens was restricted by special legislation. The main impulse for this "liberalization" came from the Free Democrats, who also occupied the interior ministry in every government between 1969 and 1983—Hans-Dietrich Genscher (1969-74) was followed by Hans Maihofer (1974-78), and Gerhard Baum (1978-83). It was under Baum that most of the security breaches developed which made it easy for spies to move up the administrative ladder.

Besides Tiedge and Hoeke, there may be 10, or 50, or even more top spies inside the governmental apparatus now. Most of them would have been promoted during the past 5 to 10 years, and each promotion should have been occasion for another thorough security check. Thus, most of the falsified biographical data the spies filed with the administrative records should have been discovered long ago. Because of the Free Democrats' "data protection," it was not.

Yet, now, even after the Tiedge and Hoeke affairs, no such general biographical check will occur in Bonn; it won't occur, because the Free Democrats continue to block it under the pretext of "data protection." They have threatened to bring down the Kohl government if anyone tries to reverse the "liberalization" responsible for the breaches of security procedures. Interior Minister Friedrich Zimmermann, a conservative Christian Social Union member who took office in October 1982, became the target of harsh FDP attacks, whenever he tried to turn back the tide of liberalization.

To give the Free Democrats the power to make their threat of bringing down the Kohl government real, the Social Democrats launched a vote-of-no-confidence in the parliamentary debate on the spy scandals on Sept. 3. Everyone held his breath: Would the FDP pull out of the government coalition?

No. They backed Zimmermann, and blatantly advertised what the terms of the "deal" were: Free Democrats actually praised Zimmermann for having "continued the policy begun under your predecessor, Mr. Baum." Christian Democrats,

of course, then refrained from any criticism of the policy of the three FDP interior ministers of the period 1969-83.

In short, the FDP, which obviously has a lot to fear from a public debate of the spy scandals, successfully struck a deal whereby its CDU/CSU coalition partners would not bring up the sins of the past, and would not insist on tightening security, and the FDP would protect Zimmermann from SPD attacks.

The situation becomes even more delicate with the fact that the Christian Social Union (CSU) has made Zimmermann's remaining in the interior ministry a condition for the CSU staying in the coalition. It has been from the CSU that most of the attacks against the FDP's domestic security policy of the period 1969-83 originated; but in the parliamentary debate on Sept. 3, the CSU, too, refrained from criticism of the FDP.

Even worse: CSU chairman Franz-Josef Strauss declared that the spy cases were no obstacle to his scheduled meeting with East German leader Erich Honecker on Sept. 1, and he even added the cryptic comment that "90% of all intelligence produced by our agencies isn't worth a penny anyway."

The fact that Zimmermann's hands are tied by the coalition-blackmail, and that the CSU is not attacking the liberal foundations of the policy of "open door for Eastern spies," provides additional leverage to the opposition SPD. The SPD has already announced that it considers the dismissal of Tiedge's former superior, Heribert Hellenbroich, who had just taken over the presidency of the German Foreign Intelligence Agency (BND) on Aug. 1 and was fired on Aug. 27, to be "just the first of the personal consequences to be drawn from the scandals." Minister Zimmermann and his under-secretary, Carl-Dieter Spranger (CSU), may be the next heads to roll.

With the Christian Democrats blackmailed into a defensive and passive posture by the FDP, the SPD will have an easy target in Zimmermann and Spranger. Spranger, more than Zimmermann, has been the key opponent of the FDP's policy, and he has also kept an eye on Soviet infiltration of the terrorist scene in Germany. The first target of the SPD may be to force sufficient pressure on Zimmermann to make him fire Spranger, and then target Zimmermann himself for overthrow. The main instrument for this may be the parliamentary investigative committee the SPD is now demanding.

With Zimmerman may go the government. His dismissal will almost certainly create a government crisis.

Thus, the spy scandals are turning into a soap-opera script for the overthrow of Kohl, whose government is the chief target of the Kremlin, the U.S. and European decouplers, and the pro-Soviet SPD opposition in Bonn.

Might this not be behind that cryptic remark Richard Burt made in his Aug. 16 interview with West German journalists? "The American administration could also get along with a Bonn government led by the Social Democrats."