

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Heads to roll over Libya arms deals

Investigative leads point toward Hans-Dietrich Genscher's Free Democratic Party and his foreign ministry.

Investigations in the United States of illegal weapons delivery to Iran are expected to reach into West Germany soon. Foreign Minister Genscher's role in helping the Iranian arms dealer and weapons trader Sadegh Tabatabai escape trial in a German court three years ago has not been forgotten, nor have people stopped wondering why Genscher and his ministry insist on maintaining good contact with Iran and Libya, and oppose sanctions against these regimes. The illegal channels between Iran, Switzerland, and the United States, which are being looked into now, are the same ones which were used by Tabatabai, a son-in-law of Khomeini with good relations with West German arms traders.

Meanwhile, another weapons scandal is beginning to hit Genscher and his political cronies. Shortly before Christmas, the Federal Prosecutor of West Germany opened an official probe of the illegal export practices of a set of small high-tech companies, which have delivered sensitive military technologies to Libya.

The case of former Siemens Corporation engineer Helmut Lang, specializing in military electronics, is the most interesting. Helmut Lang is co-owner of the companies Helasystem and Orbit, which supply the Ariane space project and Spacelab with sensitive missile technologies. The same technologies they also delivered, however, to Libya's Qaddafi, who wants to modernize his missile strike force, which is now based on the Soviet Frog and Scud missiles.

Since the late 1970s, Qaddafi has

tried to gain access to Western missile technology through contracts with the West German Otrag company, then run by a certain Lutz Kayser. The affair was made public in 1981, and shortly after the above-mentioned Helmut Lang made contact with a Dr. Salah Farkash at the Libyan Ministry of Energy Supplies. Farkash, a brother-in-law of Qaddafi, specializes in illegal deals which bring sensitive military technologies to Libya. Lang's contract was to provide Libya with missiles of a wider range than the Soviet missiles Qaddafi already has.

Was this "business contact" possible without political promotion? Certainly not, and the case of a certain Mrs. Johanna Gertrud Rech, one of three shareholders in Lang's Orbit company, is indicative. Mrs. Rech worked for the Free Democratic Party's parliamentary caucus, and revealed to the press in late 1980 that illegal money transactions had supplied the ever-wanting Free Democrats with the funds the party needed. The Free Democrats, then chaired by Foreign Minister Genscher, were about to break from the coalition with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (Social Democrat), a risky operation certain to cost the small party supporters, members, and funds.

The revelations to the press cost Mrs. Rech her job with the party, but she found a new career in the "private industry sector," as could be learned in early 1981. It is not yet clear how she got into Lang's Orbit, but one theory is that the department of the Free Democrats she was working for until

late 1980 was also involved in contacts with Libya and Iran. During the several years of investigations into the illegal party funding scandal in West Germany, the Free Democrats have failed to document the origins of several million deutschemarks of party funds. Rumors have always had it that much, if not all, of that money actually came from Iran, or Libya.

Hints that most of the Free Democrats' contacts in the two regimes ran through the office of Jürgen Möllemann, then vice-president of the German-Arab Society, have been given repeatedly, but hard evidence of the specific character of these contacts has never been provided. The case of Mrs. Rech may shed some light now on these affairs, because her share in Lang's Orbit company may be traced back to the kind of job she was doing for the Free Democrats before.

Möllemann's "Arab relations" have been turned into official government policy in Bonn in the meantime: Genscher made him, who was always considered his personal "troubleshooter" for difficult missions, undersecretary at the foreign ministry, when the Bonn coalition government broke up in late 1982. Möllemann is good friends with Libya's number-two man, Col. Abdal Salam Jalloud, whose secret intelligence apparatus runs most of Libya's drugs-weapons-terror network into the West.

Jalloud is also in charge of contacts with Moscow on the military and secret intelligence level. Libya's interest in Western weapons technologies may well be Moscow's interest, too, therefore. This congruence of interests between Libya and the Soviet Union makes the case of Lang and Mrs. Rech, and their transferring missile technologies to Libya through the Orbit company, even more interesting.