

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

The Moscow faction in the military

Senior officers in West Germany have begun a campaign for the dismantling of NATO.

The U.S. Ambassador to Bonn, Richard Burt, returns to the States at the end of January. At the end of his term in Bonn, one notices a decline in German loyalties to the Americans, and a tide of overtly pro-Soviet views.

This shift of attitudes has to do with Burt in a very direct way. Calling for a "more mature partnership between the Germans and the Americans" in numerous speeches, he played a key role in encouraging intensified political contacts with the Soviet Union. Demonstratively, he also chose to meet with leaders of the opposition parties, the Greens and the Social Democrats, during periods of heightened tensions between Bonn and Washington.

Burt's bad example contributed to a climate shift in the Bonn political establishment which enhanced the impact of the pro-Soviet diplomacy of West Germany's Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Free Democratic Party), and the correlated surfacing of a "Moscow Faction" in the Christian Democratic Union of Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Recent statements on the future of the NATO alliance, launched through the West German media by Admiral Elmar Schmaehling, head of the Bundeswehr Department of Studies and Exercises, since mid-December, mark the drastic shift in West German policy.

In a commentary in the Dec. 29 issue of the KGB-leaning weekly *Stern*, Schmaehling called for a "thorough re-examination of the foundations of our postwar policy." The West Germans should, he wrote, finally stop being Washington's "model child" and

put an end to the "militarization of German foreign policy," which he blamed on what he called "a fundamental conflict" between Germans and Americans: The U.S. sees a strategic conflict with the Soviet Union, but the Germans believe they can live with the Soviets in a neighborly "system of common security in Europe."

Schmaehling accused the U.S. (and NATO as a whole) of pursuing a nuclear strategy against the will and the interests of the Germans on both sides of the Iron Curtain. He called for withdrawing all nuclear battlefield weapons from Germany and a ban also on all sea-based nuclear weapons that could reach Germany. "Nuclear weapons should be allowed to be stationed only on the territory of a country that also has them at its disposal," Schmaehling wrote.

He invoked a new West German defense concept based on "alternate forms of war-avoidance," which would allow the dismantling of the Bundeswehr regular troops, and their replacement by a lightly armed militia. This, he said, would also end the "unnatural situation of foreign troops on one's own territory." "When this is mutually done," Admiral Schmaehling wrote, "military alliances with integrated forces can be dissolved."

Beside sounding as if taken directly from the notorious arsenals of Soviet propaganda, this essay represented a statement of intent for German capitulation to the Red Army. It stands without precedent in postwar West German history, as the first public surfacing of the "Moscow Faction" in the West German military.

A historical parallel comes to

mind: the pro-Soviet propaganda, at the close of World War II and during the next decade, of the National Committee for a Free Germany (NKFD), which the Red Army founded in 1943 with German prisoners of war and German Communist Party cadre. That current was fought ruthlessly by West Germany's first postwar Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, who chose to build up the Bundeswehr and to assume full membership in the Western alliance.

The real scandal is not even Schmaehling's remarks, but the fact that he has been spared any official penalty. While presenting himself as the "Red Admiral" to the West German public, he still heads the crucial Department of Studies and Exercises, which does the outline for the military field exercises of the Bundeswehr and coordinates with the other NATO allies with troops stationed in West Germany.

Rumors in Bonn have it that even if he wanted to, Chancellor Helmut Kohl couldn't intervene, because a larger group of his own Christian Democrats and of the government coalition partner, the liberal Free Democrats, think like, and support the "Red Admiral." Shortly after Schmaehling's essay appeared, Foreign Minister Genscher joined the signal of capitulation, attacking Western mistrust in Mikhail Gorbachov's intentions as a sign of "narrow-mindedness."

Quoting opinion polls on changing defense attitudes, Genscher mocked "old-fashioned defense doctrines [that] no longer find moral support in the people at large." To top it all off, Genscher told critics that his views are "fully in accord with views of the U.S."

The new U.S. President Bush's choice of ambassador to Bonn will tell if he wants to change policy at all, from the virulent legacy of Richard Burt.