

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Gorbachov backs East Berlin regime

*Moscow has given explicit approval to East Germany's crackdown on those trying to emigrate.*

**R**ecent developments in Red China, the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary were but a distant peal of thunder for most West Germans. But now, with refugees flooding into West Germany by the thousands, the crisis of the Communist system which many, in their "Gorbymania," had forgotten, is right on their doorstep.

The dramatic occupation and siege by desperate East Germans of West Germany's diplomatic missions in East Berlin and Budapest, Hungary, and the setting up of soup lines and tent camps by the Hungarian Red Cross for the refugees outside the closed West German embassy in Budapest, caught the government in Bonn in a state of deep stupor.

In the midst of the traditional summer recess, with its illusion that the world's problems have faded away, the government's lack of a sound policy for relations between the "two Germanies" became more and more obvious, as the massive influx of refugees and emigrants from East Germany required a rapid official response from Bonn. A public opinion poll by the Wickert Institute indicated that 87% of all West Germans wanted Chancellor Helmut Kohl to cancel his vacation right away and personally take care of the crisis.

But the chancellor, his cabinet, and most parliament members decided to remain inactive, with one exception: Christian Democrat Eduard Lintner called for economic and credit sanctions against East Germany's ruling communist party, the Socialist Unity Party (SED). His call received a hostile official response.

On Aug. 11, Kohl, clinging to his illusion that joint crisis management with the East German regime is still possible, sent a personal message to SED party leader Erich Honecker. Receiving no official response, Kohl sent a second message on Aug. 15. Honecker's response was: There is no need for a change.

One line of wishful thinking in Bonn has it that the SED regime is somehow going out of control, and that since the Kremlin has no way of intervening, the SED is operating "against Gorbachov."

But that illusion was shattered by news that the SED regime's hard line was worked out in close contact with the Soviets, at a special emergency session of the so-called "SED security troika." This innermost body consists of Erich Mielke, the minister of state security (the infamous Stasi); Joachim Herrmann, party Politburo member in charge of state security matters; and Erich Honecker himself. Honecker, who for the past four weeks has been in a hospital for emergency gall bladder treatment, may have delegated his function on the "troika" to Egon Krenz, one of the chosen candidates for the party leadership succession (expected in the early 1990s), and himself an old hand in state security matters.

Herrmann and Krenz were among the SED party leaders who were most outspoken in support of the Red Chinese regime in the days following the cruel massacre on Tiananmen Square this past June. Both Herrmann and Krenz hailed the "crushing of the counter-revolutionary upsurge" by the Beijing regime.

These remarks did not draw much attention in Bonn, but the message was not lost on many East Germans, who drew the conclusion that legal emigration to the West and "illegal" escape will only be possible until Oct. 7—the date of the 40th anniversary celebrations of East Germany as a (Moscow-controlled) state. After Oct. 7, they surmised, the borders would be closed and the SED regime would crush its own opposition, possibly by the same methods used by the regime in Red China.

Then, on Aug. 13, Gorbachov, through a spokesman, dropped his liberal mask, and stated support for the SED. Speaking on the occasion of the 28th anniversary of the erection of the Berlin Wall, the deputy speaker of the Soviet foreign ministry, Vadim Perfiljev, declared full solidarity with the SED regime and the Berlin Wall. Perfiljev—who had threatened Poland only two days before—said that the "building of the wall only reaffirmed the status quo as that which existed then." He expressed "confidence that the government of the G.D.R. [East Germany] will continue its policy of creating a socialist society on German territory."

Two days later, the East German foreign ministry summoned the head of the West German mission in East Berlin, Franz Bertele, and accused his government of "severe violation of international law," by having the West German embassy in Budapest provide passports to G.D.R. citizens.

Meanwhile, the East German regime was telegraphing the coming crackdown in media commentaries, such as the one on Aug. 15 in the party-controlled ADN news agency: "Stability at this highly sensitive border between imperialism and socialism is essential also for the success of the reform process in the Soviet Union."