

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Can the angry Russian bear be tamed?

Appeasement of Gorbachov will not ease the expected Soviet crackdown, as Social Democrats here seem to think.

Deputy U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger got big applause in Bonn Sept. 6, addressing a predominantly Social Democratic audience at a panel of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation on the "future of East-West relations." He said that the U.S. is looking forward to "future West German governments that will no longer apologize for having views different from the Americans."

The Social Democrats (SPD), having launched a broad campaign for the renegotiation of all German-American military alliance and other cooperation treaties, knew that Eagleburger referred to an SPD-led "future West German government."

Eagleburger had come to Bonn to convey the following message: The strategic thinkers who are shaping the policy of the Bush administration toward Europe, think that the Social Democrats with their good relations into the East bloc are best fit for the coming period of profound internal crises in the Soviet Empire.

Indeed, the SPD would meet certain requirements defined by Henry Kissinger in his conspicuous Jan. 28 encounter with George Bush at the White House. Kissinger said then, that special East-West shuttle diplomacy, on the condition that the Kremlin's rule over Eastern Europe not be challenged by the West, would be needed in a situation of deepening and potentially exploding crises in the East bloc.

The Social Democrats have their party executives constantly traveling to East bloc capitals, and maintain close relations to all ruling Warsaw Pact parties. Though currently the

parliamentary opposition, SPD diplomatic activity into the East far exceeds that of the government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Bonn, or any other Western government.

The crisis situation Henry Kissinger spoke of is near. A Soviet crackdown on political opposition movements, from the southern Transcaucasus region to the Baltic in the north and in Eastern Europe is widely expected now. At the Munich International Wehrkunde meeting at the end of January, several German SPD representatives told *EIR* that in their view, the situation in Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, and other regions would likely lead to such challenges to the Soviet position of power, that the Red Army would have to intervene.

"We can be glad if it is only the bayonets of the national army, and not of the Soviet troops, that are used, then," an SPD member of parliament said, referring to the situation in Poland and Hungary. His recommendation was that the West should abstain from any direct support for these rebellious movements. If at all, the West should utilize political channels to these opposition movements, to slow down their organizing pace.

Western signals in the direction of far-reaching troop and matériel cuts would contribute a lot, the SPD man said, to preventing Moscow from using the military against the opposition. "If the Soviets fear that the West will exploit the crisis, they may be convinced not to use the army, then," he said, echoing some other SPD politicians.

The key elements of "crisis time"

policy of the SPD are thus laid out: 1) The situation in the East bloc is threatening to get out of control, challenging Moscow's rule; 2) Moscow will always be suspicious of Western intentions; 3) the West has to appease Moscow, assure the Soviets of absolute Western neutrality "in case" of a necessary crackdown; and 4) only this will convince the Soviets that a non-military solution can be found.

Egon Bahr, the SPD's key East bloc specialist, with good connections to Henry Kissinger over at least the past 20 years, expressed this appeasement approach in an interview with the liberal West German weekly *Die Zeit* on Sept. 1.

With specific reference to East Germany, Bahr said: "Change must not transform into anarchy or open rebellion. I wouldn't test out whether it is really true that the tanks won't roll. . . . Let us be clear about that: If something terrible happens that recalls the events of 1953 or 1968 or 1956, or even comes close to that, the same would happen as then. We would be shocked, no doubt. We would protest, justifiably so. But we would not do anything."

Eagleburger, addressing the Friedrich Ebert Foundation panel in Bonn, used almost the same words as Bahr. He said he wouldn't rule out that "tensions in the East bloc, caused by nationality problems in the Baltic or the Central Asian regions, may lead to the outburst of massive violence."

"There is not much the West could do, in such a case," Eagleburger said, adding that "but at least in Western Europe, war can be ruled out." One thing could be done, though, he told the Germans: They should be prepared to take the flow of refugees from the East which would result from such an "outburst of violence," over the next 20 or 30 years.