

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Jewish immigration barriers to fall

A Jewish renaissance is about to begin, as more Soviet and Israeli Jews are looking at Germany as a safe haven.

The mission to Iraq of former German Chancellor Willy Brandt, which was launched against strong Anglo-American opposition, indicates that the united Germany is developing a foreign policy of its own. The government has given substantial logistical support to the Anglo-American Gulf force, but has also worked, in parallel, on initiatives aimed at neutralizing the war danger. The Brandt trip is probing non-military options.

Another sign of a new approach in German foreign policy, is a changed view on the role of the state of Israel and its present policies. This change did not really originate in Germany, but in the Soviet Union and, ironically, in Israel. The intransigence of Israel vis-à-vis numerous peace feelers extended from several Arab governments, has resulted in a sobering of relations between Jerusalem and Bonn.

But the decisive factor in the change of views in Bonn has been the increased interest of Soviet Jews in emigrating to Germany. Challenged by this unexpected phenomenon, Germany has been forced to review its position on Jewish immigration, which has been a sensitive issue.

The longtime official view in Bonn has been that the Soviet Jews are an ethnic minority who belong to the nation of Israel; any questioning of Israel's immigration policy was termed "strictly banned." As long as Soviet Jews intending to emigrate to Germany remained only a few hundred each year, there was no problem of interfering with Israeli interests. But since the late spring of this year, and with the prospect of the Persian Gulf crisis de-

veloping into a full-scale regional war, the interest of Soviet Jews in moving to Germany has increased dramatically.

By the end of August, one-third of 210,000 Soviet Jews filing for emigration had registered with the German embassy in Moscow or the German consulates in other big Soviet cities; two-thirds had registered with the Israeli contact bureau (there is no formal embassy of Israel in the U.S.S.R.) and the U.S. and Canadian embassies and consulates. The German consulate in Kiev alone reported that more than 10,000 Jews had declared their intention to emigrate to Germany, and the trend is rising.

This poses a crisis for Edgar Bronfman and the KGB's black propaganda division who have painted a gruesome picture of Germany allegedly being a latent Fourth Reich, a continuation of Nazi Germany. More and more Jews show that they do not believe this propaganda about modern Germans, especially Jews who have lived in Israel for some time after their emigration from the Soviet Union. Confronted with the brutal reality of social, economic, and political life in Israel, and with the daily threat of war, more and more Jews are choosing to emigrate again, this time from Israel to Germany.

It is undoubtedly a cultural shock for most Germans to see Jews, most of whom lost family members to the Nazi Holocaust in the Soviet territories occupied by the German armies between 1941 and 1944, choosing Germany as their future home.

It is also a big challenge to the 30,000 Jews in Germany who have

viewed themselves as a small diaspora compared to the 800,000 Jews who lived here before World War II.

Having come under the influence of the Bronfman networks during the past three years, Jewish officials in Germany had gone on a confrontational course against the government in Bonn; but there is suddenly strong dissent between the German Jewish community and the Bronfmanites, because the Jews here and the government have come to realize that they are forced to cooperate in response to Jewish mass immigration from the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, from Israel.

Following a series of talks between the political parties, the government, and Jewish officials, Deputy Interior Minister Horst Waffenschmidt announced in Bonn on Oct. 25 that the government intended to lift remaining restrictions to Jewish immigration from the U.S.S.R. Waffenschmidt declared that an increase in immigration from the East would "strengthen the survivability of Jewish communities" and have a "positive impact on cultural and intellectual life in Germany."

Various Jewish officials made similar statements. Michael Guttmann of the Central Council of Jews even forecast a return to the size of the pre-war community of 800,000 Jews in Germany.

This perspective was also spelled out on Oct. 31 by Wilfried Penner, a leading member of the Social Democratic parliamentary group in Bonn. Calling for an unbureaucratic handling of Jewish immigration, he said: "Should there develop a renaissance of Jewish cultural life in Germany, it could only be welcomed."

This marks a profound change. Such a statement would have been impossible in German politics only a few weeks ago.