

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### German politics beset by smallness

*To make things more difficult, Paris is throwing an apple of discord in the midst of its German partners.*

**T**he scene in Germany is presently characterized by what one may call 'driving at a very low gear,' a senior policy analyst told this news service when asked for a comment on the German situation in mid-May.

Indeed, there is immense activity in Germany around petty issues of domestic politics, at a moment which requires greater designs to overcome the paralysis and degeneration of the international policy scene.

Horst Teltschik, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's national security adviser until his abrupt resignation last December, is one of those senior politicians trying to publicly address the problem of pettiness. In a series of interviews in early May, Teltschik tried to get across his idea that Germany's refusal to act according to its economic and political weight ruined chances for vital initiatives in three crucial areas of international politics.

Teltschik recommended: First, new efforts have to be taken to increase the weight of Europe in international politics, and the Germans should play the pioneer role because it takes a big European nation to launch the decisive impulse. Second, Europe should intervene in the Middle East with peace proposals, and not leave the field to the two superpowers; unlike the other Europeans, Germans have no colonial past in the region, and their military wasn't actively involved in the Gulf war. Third, Germany should upgrade its efforts to organize an all-Western program of economic aid to the Soviets and Eastern Europeans. As next-door neighbors to the eastern nations, Germans

had a genuine, deep interest in the consolidation of reforms in the East.

One may add to Teltschik's advice the call for a broad German initiative for the development of the Third World, which should begin with a crash effort against the many catastrophes threatening millions of human lives. True, Germany will not find much support for such a policy among its bigger foreign policy partners. But good ideas always find good flanks.

The biggest problem, of course, is the hostility the Germans face on the Anglo-American side. Another big problem is the protracted Soviet blockade of progress in economic relations with Germany. Many eastern German firms are still waiting for contracts with Moscow of more than DM 10 billion—firms largely depending on the Soviet market.

The French have deserted various joint Franco-German initiatives of the past 12 months. Not much is left of the autumn 1990 moves for political and economic integration of Europe, the Feb. 4 call for a genuine European defense system organized around the Western European Union (WEU), or the July 1990 initiative for an all-Western concerted assistance to the economic reforms in the U.S.S.R.

Also, the Gulf war has alienated France from Germany. Apparently, the French elites find it more attractive to play a role at the side of the two other big Western nuclear powers, the United States and Great Britain, than to make steps towards expanding the cooperation with the Germans.

The deep disappointment expressed in Bonn over the French has

been fed by a pattern of discords with Paris. There is, for example, the project of joint Franco-German meetings of ambassadors in a particular region; the German foreign minister proposed a gathering of the French and German ambassadors to Eastern Europe in Prague, to send a positive signal to the East. The French foreign minister originally seemed to approve, but then declared Prague "not appropriate." The ambassadorial conference was reset for a compromise site—the eastern German city of Weimar—in mid-May.

The French refused to support the original Czech proposal, backed by the Germans, to make Prague the seat of the EBRD, the new European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. France decided to go along with the Anglo-American plan to have that bank seated in London.

The Germans also proposed in the late summer 1990 to keep the 52,000 French troops that were stationed in southwestern Germany in the country to provide a basis for future defense cooperation. The French government decided to pull all the troops out within the next two or three years. This created the paradox that while Paris was still pushing for a joint Franco-German WEU initiative, it was undermining the project by pulling troops out of Germany.

Special Bonn efforts are required to reactivate its partner in Paris and to break the overall policy containment. But watching the scene in Bonn, one may find an occasional interesting proposal, but also a lot of pragmatism and definitely no comprehensive concept. Nor are ideas coming from Paris or Moscow that the Germans could take up. That makes the LaRouche proposal for the "Paris-Berlin-Vienna Productive Triangle" the only viable incentive for new policy initiatives now on the table.