

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Peace through economic development

*A senior politician thinks bread and hospitals are more effective than guns as the basis for security policy.*

Proposals for the creation of a German Peace Corps, or a non-military service recruited from Army personnel, have been launched repeatedly in the context of debates about what role united Germany should play as a new power entering world politics. There are overlaps with arguments for U.N. "blue helmet" peace-keeping missions, but this debate goes more in the direction of "blue overalls." The first prominent proposal for a non-military task force for relief and development missions in the Third World was made by Jürgen Warnke, former minister for Third World affairs, in October 1990. He recommended that united Germany should become a "great power for peace," and play a leading role in Third World development. At the time, referring to the broad protest of German youths against the Gulf War, Warnke put forward the alternative of a Peace Corps—even that term—which would draw on the fundamental commitment of the nation's youth to help and to build up, rather than to destroy.

Warnke's alternative received little attention from official politics in Germany, at that time, but the idea hasn't died in the meantime.

Almost exactly one year later, a similar proposal was launched from a rather unexpected corner of German government politics: In an interview with the illustrated magazine *Quick* which sells more than 2 million copies every week, Deputy Defense Minister Willy Wimmer, coined the slogan, "Bread instead of Battle Tanks!"

Responding to a question, wheth-

er Germany still needed an army since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Wimmer said: "We have to develop a new interpretation of security policy. Security will no longer be defined in military terms. It includes all areas of inter-state relations: economic policy, culture, technology and many other things. The most urgent task for us at this moment is to reduce the discrepancy of wealth toward the East and the South, in order to contain migration movements. We have to do that to make people stay in their home regions. This is an acute security problem for the decades ahead."

It is most interesting to see that Wimmer, who had criticized the protesting German youths during the Gulf war buildup, has apparently changed his views, at least to a certain extent.

He went on to tell *Quick*: "We have to ask ourselves what we are spending our money on. The funds of the state can only be spent once. Now, will I spend it on tank divisions which will be challenged less and less by an enemy? Or do I spend it on the economic stabilization of neighboring states that are in deep trouble? Once I do that, I contribute to the stabilization of the democracy there. That is active security policy, too. If I don't do that, the people will come here for the deutschemark, as they came for the deutschemark from the former G.D.R. [East Germany] two years ago.

"I am not a lobbyist for battle tanks or Tornado jets. I am looking for the best way to guarantee the security of our own country," Wimmer continued, "and the military component is

only a part of that. But it will gain an even greater role in a specific area."

This area is non-military emergencies, where, Wimmer explained, "only a military organization is qualified for providing international technical aid. The anti-famine mission in Ethiopia, the building of a hospital in northern Iran, the flood relief mission in the Bavarian Forest during the heavy rains this summer—these are all things that can be done best by the Armed Forces."

The example of that "hospital in northern Iran" is apropos, because it demonstrates what a team, organized as a military-style force, can achieve, once given a constructive purpose. When a severe earthquake devastated the mountainous Elbrus area of northern Iran, in August 1990, Germany deployed, in close coordination with the government in Teheran, a team of Army pioneers to build a field hospital in Rudbar, right in the middle of the Elbrus Mountains.

The small relief team, consisting of eight German Army pioneers and 30 Iranian workers, built a modern field hospital with prefabricated components from idle Army stocks. Some 2,100 square meters of medical facilities were built this way in no more than 14 weeks. Without certain administrative delays that occurred for the most part on the Iranian side, the project could have been completed even earlier.

The perspective of the Rudbar model being used on a broader scale, is exciting: A relief organization like that, recruited from committed Army personnel but manned with capable civil engineers, physicians, and others, as well, could carry out major emergency projects like the restoration of vital rail transport routes and water supply systems in eastern Africa, in the Middle East, or in eastern Europe.