

London Scandalmongering

Hits Schmidt Government

A handful of West German media, in alliance with parts of the Christian opposition parties, is responsible for whipping up an assortment of scandals and exposés in recent weeks, all of them aimed at halting any improvement in West Germany's relations with its Eastern neighbors, and rekindling the Cold War. In some cases, the scandals are directly aimed against members of the cabinet of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. There is little evidence, however, that any of these ploys will succeed.

WEST GERMANY

The first assault came in the first week of January when the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* published a "manifesto" allegedly drawn up by "the first organized opposition" in East Germany (DDR). A series of reprisals and counterreprisals quickly ensued between East and West Germany when DDR authorities closed down *Der Spiegel's* East Berlin offices and excluded a number of other West German journalists.

In this atmosphere, a special committee of the West German parliament (Bundestag) commenced its investigation of Defense Minister Georg Leber for alleged negligence in handling the case of Irwin Lutze, an East German spy who had stolen top secret NATO documents from the Defense Ministry archives. During the hearings, Leber was accused by certain leading military officials of having underplayed the potential danger to NATO defense planning now that the documents were in the hands of the Warsaw Pact. *Der Spiegel* prominently rumored that Leber was just about to resign over the affair.

Next, it was "anonymously" revealed to the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that Franz Josef Strauss, the neo-Nazi leader of the Bavarian Christian Social Union, had illicitly ordered the destruction of documents pertaining to his relation with the U.S. aerospace firm Lockheed. Strauss proceeded to accuse the federal government of being involved in procuring this information from illegal phone taps, specifically pointing to Defense Minister Leber as the culprit.

This week, it was further revealed by *Quick* magazine that the military intelligence service, MAD, had illicitly bugged the telephone of a secretary working in Leber's office.

The scandals reached the height of outrageousness early this week when *Der Spiegel*, along with Reuters New Service, leaked out a bogus story that Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski, Chancellor Schmidt's assistant on East-West affairs, was going to East Berlin for a meeting with President Erich Honecker. *Der Spiegel* alleged that relations between West Germany and the DDR were getting so close that the Soviet Union has been con-

sidering a military intervention into the DDR.

In fact, as Wischniewski explained later in an interview, he had been planning a discussion with lower-level officials on current topics of East-West cooperation. He added, however, that the bogus leak had now caused even this meeting to fall through.

Christian Opportunism

All these incidents would have gone largely unheeded if spokesmen from the opposition Christian Democratic Union (CDU) had not played along with them. But the CDU's Chairman Helmut Kohl went ahead to demand economic and other "reprisals" against the DDR over their closing of the *Der Spiegel* office, and he has called for Defense Minister Leber's resignation. Kohl thereby has moved a long way toward disrupting the CDU's cooperation with the Schmidt government around the questions of nuclear development and Mideast peace — cooperation which by the end of last year had assumed the proportions of an informal "Grand Coalition" between the CDU and Schmidt's Social Democratic Party.

The impetus for these assaults on the Schmidt government comes from Great Britain. *Der Spiegel* magazine, for example, has been a major conduit of British policy ever since it was founded in 1946 by an intelligence agent of that country. The attacks against Defense Minister Leber are specifically motivated because of Leber's insistence that Britain must relinquish part of its control over NATO policymaking bodies.

The CDU's recent policies are being swayed by the influence British intelligence networks run through the Conservative Party. Nowhere was this more evident than at a recent meeting in Kiel, West Germany of the CDU on security policy. Among those attending was Christopher Bertram of the London International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), while the conference was dominated by Manfred Wörner, CDU defense policy spokesman and member of the IISS. Proposals floated at the conference ranged from Wörner's call for Europe to build their own "neutron bombs" and "cruise missiles," to a proposal by Sir Julian Critchley for NATO to shift from a "flexible response" to a "retaliation" policy modeled on Israeli blitzkrieg methods.

The Schmidt government has held up remarkably well under these assaults. With the exception of the cancellation of Wischniewski's visit to the DDR, there has been no worsening of West Germany's Eastern relations. In fact, an address last week by Chancellor Schmidt on the necessity for détente and the rejection of all provocations, received wide acclaim in the Soviet and Eastern European press. Even regarding the CDU, a recent issue of the Soviet party daily *Pravda* acknowledged the existence of a "moderate" current in the CDU which wants nothing to do with a worsening of East-West cooperation, especially on economic issues.