
Interview: Helmut Ulke

'What's lacking are political decisions'

Interview with Dr. Helmut Ulke, president of Dornier-Systems Inc., one of the leading German aerospace companies. The interview was conducted in German.

EIR: For two years, there have been discussions in the Federal Republic, in which politicians have taken the position of a definite "maybe yes, maybe no." What influence has this lack of resolution had on the planning by German and other European industrial firms?

Ulke: Industry can actually respond only if politicians decide for participation in the SDI. When this decision is made, when the politicians and military strategists participate, only then can we act. This does not concern merely the political frame of reference. The military requirements must also be clear, then those responsible for contracts in the Ministry of Defense can respond, and then we can respond in turn. Of course, this is an interactive process; we can submit certain ideas to those responsible, and they can then examine them.

EIR: Concerning participation in the SDI, there are three possibilities: First, there could be cooperation between American and German firms, with no political influence of any sort involved. Such influence would be limited merely to delivery of components. Second, there is the possibility that German firms, in the framework of an international treaty, still to be created, would work on the SDI. Third, the European nations—or some European nations—could create their own SDI and work together with the United States on a complementary level. Which of these possibilities do you prefer?

Ulke: I believe that your three possibilities are not quite right. Alternative 1) and 2) are coupled together since, even if German or European firms work together with American firms, there must be an overall agreement concluded on the transfer of know-how. If it is not merely a matter of component delivery, but rather a higher level of cooperative work is desired, then the general boundary conditions must be worked out between governments. Profit will be gained from know-how; new technologies will be invented, patents registered, and appropriate protection can be provided only on a governmental level.

EIR: Without an overall agreement, you would thus exclude any possibility that German firms would cooperate on the development of the SDI technologies?

Ulke: In so far as it goes beyond merely a matter of delivering components, *only* with the agreement of the appropriate

government! Investigation of the rough overall agreements was the whole purpose of the visit of the Teltschik Commission to the United States.

EIR: What is your response to the third possibility?

Ulke: I consider that possibility promising if European nations, or at least some European nations, would decide that they would work independently in certain sub-areas because of the high technological content of those areas.

For the next few years, the SDI program will still be pure technology, not yet the defining of concrete systems. The surrounding technological areas still need to be explored which will allow a possible definition. And when it is seen what content the SDI program has as a whole, then I believe that the purely scientific implications will be so great that Europeans will unconditionally join in.

The attempt to reach that is being done now with Eureka, which is not an anti-program but rather an alternative. The question is really quite simple: If we do not directly participate, then we must still identify the technological tasks which arise from the SDI and which have economic relevance. Only in that way could we be competitive during the next 20 years if the United States uses \$100 billion to get the research and development started.

EIR: Do you consider it realistic that a program as undefined as Eureka can generally compete with the task-and goal-oriented SDI program, with its deadlines?

Ulke: I personally consider it completely unrealistic that the governments of Europe will decide on anything which can be competitive. But perhaps I am a pessimist; it could be, that, for the first time in the last 20 years, a simply defined program, not restricted to specific applications, might come about, a major program with a technological content similar to the SDI. It is well known what sensitive technological areas the SDI encompasses, and that those will have all kinds of applications in other areas.

However, I certainly doubt that anyone in Europe will spend the billions merely for the sake of the technology. That can already be seen in the debate in the Federal Republic, where not one mark has been allocated, not even for a definition of what the program could be.

EIR: How then would you see the state of European industry in 10 to 20 years if we do not participate in the SDI or if we don't manage to set up something comparable?

Ulke: I think that our not undertaking something similar, to raise ourselves to a higher level of technology, would be a catastrophe. You can certainly see today the areas where we have lost out to the Japanese or the Americans—say with computers, with micro-chips, where we are dependent on imports. If these gigantic investments in these fundamental technologies come about, the entire machine-tool sector, its production and control, will be revolutionized. Laser technology, applications to software, etc., all these are the technologies which will be available to the participants in the SDI. And so I consider it very risky if similar programs, which will raise our level for the future, are not undertaken in Germany.

Whether our future is certain is arguable. Previously there weren't such programs, or, I have to make one reservation, there is a research ministry with a grand total of 7 billion deutschemarks per year. But these funds are in part so tightly tied to existing programs that Minister of Research Riesenhuber is afraid to start something new because he will then have to remove something else from his list of priorities.

EIR: In Professor Felden's talk today, he stated that the first SDI systems and technologies could be available in the United States in only a few years. If we consider that, plus what is already going on in the United States, then there can be no time for further protracted discussions. Otherwise, we miss the boat.

Ulke: That is our problem. I have visited all major American firms, and every one already has \$100 million in contracts for current SDI research. And what do we have? Well, political discussion of whether or if!

If we put aside the military question—and on this, opinion even in the United States is divided—it is certain that America will receive this technological stimulus, whatever the motivation behind it all is. Every American understands the necessity that, following the Apollo Program, this stimulus is significant and rational. And with that, they have a technological push of \$100 million, while we have been discussing for two years whether to in general, whether there is an alternative, whether we can do something which is motivated in a somewhat different way. There hasn't even been a cabinet level decision on whether we can start anything.

EIR: Can't there be some help in the decision-making process from the side of industry here, with a group from industry, science, and perhaps also the military, defining what the specific tasks and requirements in Europe are, which technologies are necessary, and what the firms could contribute to that?

Ulke: That proposal is old hat. Every systems firm, every firm in Germany which could make a contribution, has made proposals on which technologies are relevant to and impor-

tant for the future to the Federal government. For the Eureka program, the Ministry of Research has prepared collections of the papers we delivered, and even in the Ministry of Defense there have been discussions over which technologies should be supported in the firms making the proposals or which should be made the focus of the future.

We have gone through these exercises; what's lacking now are the political decisions.

EIR: Is there a basis for a quick decision present?

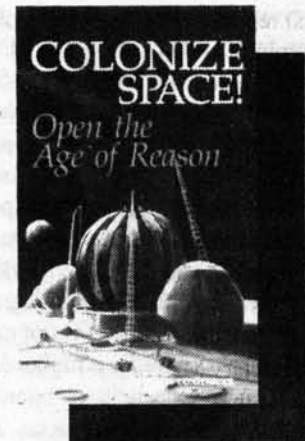
Ulke: The Americans have made it clear, and General Abrahamson has made it clear in all of his speeches, that they see a clear definition of tasks in connection with the tactical threat—similar to the definition of tasks which the United States sees in connection with defense against missiles launched from submarines. The basis for a political decision or the posing of a problem which the Europeans could solve, is unambiguous and clear. Only now the politicians must make a decision that we do something. It is not that industry was simple minded and had no good ideas on what must be investigated and carried out.

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