

## A new 'Stalin Note' for West Germany?

by Luba George

The Soviets are now weighing an initiative that might be termed a "new Stalin Note," after the Soviet dictator's famous 1952 memorandum on the reunification of Germany. The Kremlin will probably soon propose a "confederation between the two German states," said Otfried Hennig, state secretary in the West German Ministry of Inter-German Relations Sept 25. He dropped this bombshell at the Frankfurter Forum '87 sponsored by the Kurt Schumacher Foundation. Hennig warned that Moscow's "alternative scenario" for a "new German policy," the idea of a "confederation," with the pre-condition that "all foreign troops" be withdrawn from German soil, was aimed at "decoupling" West Germany from its Western allies.

The conference occurred Sept. 23-27, right after the Shultz-Shevardnadze talks in Washington. The speakers and participants, a non-partisan gathering, included members of the West German government and high-ranking intelligence officials, East bloc émigrés, pro-Western former Social Democrats in the postwar tradition of Kurt Schumacher, and Soviet experts from Germany and other European countries. Facing what they see as unavoidable Soviet-American agreements, they expressed their determination to provide a "strong European front" against appeasement.

The proceedings were vivid testimony to the fact that beneath official European support for the "Munich II" INF treaty now being worked out by the superpowers, a volcano of opposition is rumbling on the continent.

### Gorbachov's 'German card' quartet

Hennig reported that, in January, Gorbachov appointed four leading functionaries to conduct a study on the German question that would lead to a Soviet proposal on German reunification, to be delivered before the end of the year. The four were Valentin Falin, former ambassador to Germany and now head of the Novosti press agency; Georgi Arbatov, director of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute; Prof. D. Melnikov, Germany expert at the foreign policy think tank IMEMO; and Nikolai Portugalov, Germany expert in the Central Committee apparatus.

Hennig made clear that he rejected in advance any Soviet confederation offer. "Should there be a German-question offensive by the Soviets, we will, as is our duty, study and

sort out the chances and risks involved. . . . *But one thing must be clear: Our freedom and security are not up for grabs, they cannot be the price of something else, whatever that may be.*" He explained, "In no way, however, is a serious offer for German unity with free elections and self-determination to be expected." Gorbachov, he said, will "in no way offer that, just as Stalin and the 'Stalin Note' of 1952 did not offer that." What is likely is that Moscow will present "the offer as bait . . . a temptation," part of its "tactical game" to pull West Germany out of NATO. "We must carefully prepare for any such eventuality."

Two days before Hennig spoke, Valentin Falin appeared on German national television and hinted that Moscow, in the context of the arms control process, could make an offer of a new status for West Berlin. He added that the precondition for such Soviet "concessions" would be "withdrawal of all foreign troops from German soil."

Falin's signal was immediately picked up by the sell-out faction in West Germany. Bonn's foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, addressing the United Nations, stated that what must be pursued "with emphasis" after an INF agreement, are conventional troop cuts in Europe. Oskar Lafontaine, being groomed as the next chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), in a Sept. 24 address to the National Defense College in Washington, presented the SPD's capitulationist doctrine of "defensive defense," and called for the "withdrawal of all foreign troops from German soil."

Hennig's warnings, however, stung Moscow. On Sept. 30, in an interview with the *Hamburger Morgenpost*, Falin denied Hennig's statements that he or others were working on a scheme for confederation.

Falin's denial was not very credible. On Sept. 29, East German leader Erich Honecker, interviewed in the party daily *Neues Deutschland*, attacked the Western allies for having "ruined" chances for German reunification in 1952 by rejecting the Stalin Note. Honecker fueled speculation on a coming "confederation" offer by ruling out a reunified Germany modeled on Bismarck's 1871 Reich, but saying that Germany today is "better off" with "only two separate German States," rather than the 25 separate pre-1871 states.

Shortly after Gorbachov commissioned his "quartet," the "confederation" idea was a topic of discussion at the German-Soviet Bergedorfer Circle talks in Moscow in February-March of this year. There, Countess Marion Dönhoff, publisher of the liberal weekly *Die Zeit*, and a leading proponent of a deal with Moscow, asked Arbatov: "Would it be at all thinkable for you, that Eastern and Western Europe could someday merge together in a form of union, under which I for now leave out the division of Germany . . . ?" Arbatov replied: "You are talking about the possibility of bringing together Eastern and Western Europe into a form of union?" Dönhoff: "Yes, or in a type of federation." Arbatov left Moscow's answer open: "I believe, we should think of Europe as one continent."