
Profile: Baden-Württemberg Governor Lothar Spaeth

A politician groomed to be German chancellor in the INF era

by Rainer Apel

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl is in deep trouble. After five years of government, the political record of his "march of change" is a shambles: on the economic and social front, on defense, on science, on culture and formation of elites. Throughout these five years, Kohl has been hostage to Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Finance Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg—both leading figures in the German "Irangate" connection.

Kohl's popularity is at its lowest now, and this works to the advantage of Kohl's main intra-party rival, Lothar Spaeth, the 50-year-old governor of the southwest state of Baden-Württemberg. It is not ruled out in Germany that Spaeth may replace Kohl in 1988, perhaps after the next big monetary crash, expected some time between this coming spring and autumn. Spaeth has made himself kind of a propagandist for Keynesian austerity demands and critiques of the Kohl administration.

In this context, Lothar Spaeth is mooted as a choice for a crisis management government, a new Grand Coalition between the two big political parties, the Social and the Christian Democrats. As a matter of fact, he has friends even among left-wing Social Democrats like the pro-Soviet Saarland state governor Oskar Lafontaine.

But before eventually going to Bonn, Spaeth has to first face elections for parliament in his own state of Baden-Württemberg on March 20. What kind of politician is this man who wants to become chancellor in Bonn?

A man of the Bush-league, and of Moscow

Lothar Spaeth has prominent friends in the West, across the Atlantic, and in the East. He is the choice of those elites in the United States planning to turn Germany into kind of supply sector for Gorbachov's "new economic policy" in the Soviet bloc. He is their choice for political supervisor of the transformation of Germany's military-industrial complex into a supplier of high-technology to the East.

Lothar Spaeth is a leading proponent of the "CoCom rules reform" faction in Germany, and his role here is fully acknowledged by the Soviet media. Recently, *Izvestia* praised

him as one of those politicians in the West who first called for abandoning the CoCom bans on high-tech goods in trade with the East. When the CoCom executive met in Paris Jan. 27, to review the rules, Lothar Spaeth renewed his call for far-reaching abolition of the technology transfer restrictions, adding that in his view, German high-tech industry is "an ideal partner for the Soviet economy."

The upcoming Feb. 8-11 trip of Spaeth to Moscow was arranged as a political supplement to the INF agreement signed between Gorbachov and Reagan Dec. 8, 1987, and it is not his first trip to the Soviet Union. On March 22-29, 1985, Lothar Spaeth visited Moscow and pre-negotiated industrial joint ventures with Soviet industry. As he said then, this visit "opened a new chapter in German-Soviet relations." This was true, but in a very cynical sense: Spaeth also set up, then, a sister-state partnership between Baden-Württemberg and the Soviet province of Tadzhikistan, which borders on Afghanistan. Soviet troops for Moscow's "scorched earth" policy in northern Afghanistan deploy into the occupied and embattled territories from that same province of Tadzhikistan; but this does not bother Spaeth.

When in October 1986, folklore and propaganda teams from Tadzhikistan toured Baden-Württemberg and met strong and partially violent protest from exiled Afghans, Spaeth apologized for the "unfortunate embarrassment."

Spaeth is more concerned about economic deals, and he is very proud that of six current joint ventures between German and Soviet industries, four are based in Baden-Württemberg. He is very proud that at the end of his Jan. 17-19 visit to Bonn, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze met him in Bonn, to discuss his upcoming visit to Moscow, with more such joint ventures on the agenda. This is certainly a diplomatic gesture, compared to the humiliating and arrogant treatment Shevardnadze gave to Chancellor Kohl only a few hours before; for Spaeth, it is the "crowning of the Bonn visit of Shevardnadze," as his office told the press.

Lothar Spaeth is reportedly fascinated with the "new Russia of Mikhail Gorbachov," although very cautious with public statements on the issue. But he has always put himself on

the Soviet side in big international controversies. For example, around year's end 1979, when there were worldwide calls, also among Germany's Christian Democrats, for sanctions against the Soviets after their invasion of Afghanistan, he publicly rejected sanctions. When Soviet fighter pilots shot down the KAL-007 airliner over Sakhalin in September 1983, Spaeth was again among those who downplayed the issue. He was also among the first prominent voices welcoming the INF agreement.

Spaeth has many co-thinkers in his administration and in the CDU party machine of Baden-Württemberg. For example, Bonn parliamentarian Bernhard Friedmann has surfaced as the leading proponent of a pro-Soviet "grand arrangement" between Moscow and Bonn in the age of the zero option. Right after the 1986 Reykjavik summit, Friedmann went public with a scenario of a reunified or federated Germany, militarily neutralized or at least with a largely reduced status in NATO. He said that behind the INF treaty, there was American disengagement from Europe motivated by economic-budgetary problems in the United States. For the Germans, Friedmann wrote, the zero option diplomacy offered a big chance for upgraded German-Soviet cooperation: One could possibly attain reunification of Germany for the price of German industry producing large quantities of high-quality goods for the Soviets.

Having said that, in late October 1986, Friedmann was visited not only by senior Soviet officials, but also Americans, who encouraged him to continue his campaign. It was said at the time that Friedmann, who emerged as a strong critic of Kohl, was heralding Spaeth's march to power in Bonn.

There are others who work for Spaeth, like the Minister of Cultural Affairs in Baden-Württemberg, Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder, presumably a conservative Christian Democrat with not necessarily pro-Soviet views, as far as actual politics are concerned. His sympathy for Russia is deeper, more "culture-based." Said Mayer-Vorfelder on Nov. 6, 1986: "The fact that Baden-Württemberg does exist, is actually owed to the Russians. At the [1815] Vienna Congress the Czar took into consideration that one of his daughters was married to the Württemberg King, and that kinship relations also existed to Baden. Thus, he said: Everything can be changed in Central Europe, with the exception of Württemberg and Baden."

This was quite a statement, made at a time when Gorbachov's propaganda was hammering into Bonn that Germany should accommodate to the INF treaty and the strategic changes it meant for Central Europe. If Spaeth becomes chancellor, Mayer-Vorfelder is a top candidate to replace him as state governor.

In the anti-republican tradition

Baden-Württemberg is traditionally a hot-bed of neutralist Conservatives and pro-Soviet Liberals in German politics.

After the Vienna Congress, the Russian Czars intervened heavily into the state, demanding an end to the activities of republican-democratic circles who fought oligarchical rule and tried to defend the 1820-22 quasi-parliamentary constitution of the Duchy of Baden. The political suppression set into motion then, under the guidelines of the infamous Holy Alliance's "stability act," provoked revolts, revolutionary military actions, but ended in defeat in 1848-49. Many of the surviving German republicans emigrated to the United States, helping in the Lincoln presidential campaign and also in the 1860s Civil War on the Union's side.

Spaeth's political forefathers in Württemberg and Baden, the Liberals and Conservatives, apologized for the republican's "unfortunate embarrassment" and worked with the oligarchy, including the Russian oligarchs, after they had helped to restore "law and order" compliant with the Vienna Congress of 1815, which was, as one might say, the Yalta Agreement of that historical period.

During the American War of Independence, Württemberg and Baden were main areas of recruitment for Britain's colonial mercenary in Germany, citizens sold by their feudal masters to the British Crown. It is this slave-trading that the great German poet, Friedrich Schiller, a child of the same region, attacked in his drama *Kabale und Liebe*.

Spaeth's 'high-culture': counterculture

Lothar Spaeth likes to present himself as a proponent of "high-tech," a rational man and representative of "high culture." But in July 1984, Spaeth opened his mind to an interviewer of *Playboy* magazine (one of the first prominent German politicians to do so!), confessing that he is a passionate card player: "Whenever somebody pulls out the cards, I simply have to play." He also confessed to *Playboy* that he likes rock: "My favorite music is the music of the [Swedish rock group] ABBA." Spaeth revealed that his favorite painter is none other than the contemporary Vienna mystic Friedrich Hundertwasser.

Spaeth is pursuing two main projects in the sphere of culture and science. One is to get the art collection of Baron Thyssen from Lugano, Switzerland, into Baden-Württemberg. It is not so much Thyssen's Renaissance paintings that have aroused his interest: He would like to have the huge collection of the modern paintings which originally belonged to the Hermitage in pre-1917 St. Petersburg. It is a matter of prestige, and the whole transaction may actually serve Raisa Gorbachova's Soviet Culture Fund. Peter Ustinov, prominent "Western" member of that fund, toured Baden-Württemberg in 1987, and is said to be a great admirer of Spaeth.

The other project is "Technopolis 2000," a gigantic think tank being built near Ulm for post-industrial and "information society" concepts. Nearly all German high-tech companies have pledged a share in that project, the central task of which is to produce what is called "artificial intelligence," however.

Spaeth's 'high-tech' works for Moscow

Spaeth has repeatedly hinted that his state is to replace the traditional center of industry in Germany, the Ruhr region. While the Ruhr's steel and metal industries are collapsing and are being "phased out," Baden-Württemberg turns into the promised land of the "new industries." There is a brain and labor drain from other parts of Germany into Baden-Württemberg, which raises concern because this state is so pro-Soviet.

Also inside the state, the transformation of industry and production is proceeding. Especially in 1987, many of Baden-Württemberg's traditional machine and machine-tool producers, which depend on export markets in the dollar zone, have run into deep trouble. They are being told now by the Spaeth administration that there are big chances in joint ventures with the Soviets and the East bloc. The administration is arranging industry exhibits in Moscow, to help in the marketing of products, and is inviting Soviet industry delegations to tour Baden-Württemberg. Spaeth further plans a training center in his state for Soviet engineers who want to learn all about "high-tech." Details of this are to be discussed during his Feb. 8-11 trip to Moscow.

Lothar Spaeth will be accompanied by representatives of key high-tech companies of Germany, and this trip is expected to produce a sizable share for German industries in the 1988 Soviet budget of 7 billion rubles for buying Western machinery. What the Soviets are interested in most, are sec-

ond- or third-generation computerized machines, and Spaeth believes these can be provided by German industry.

The financial side of these prospective deals is also being secured. In the recent placing of a Soviet bond, the first since 1917 on Western capital markets, through Switzerland, the BAKOLA (Badische Kommunal-Landesgirobank) played a direct role. The BAKOLA, which has been in the credit business with the East for a long time, is one of two dominant banking groups in Baden-Württemberg, which Lothar Spaeth is about to merge into one big bank.

Against the background of mounting criticism by German industries and banks of Chancellor Kohl in Bonn, this Spaeth banking-industry project deserves some special attention, because it makes him kind of a rallying point for post-Kohl policy perspectives. A very important backer of Spaeth among Germany's big industry is Edzard Reuter, chairman of Daimler-Benz Corporation and a prominent right-wing Social Democrat, who surfaced recently as the foremost critic of Chancellor Kohl's economic and monetary policy. When in mid-January, Reuter called for a quasi-Keynesian policy of state deficit-spending, wage-freeze, and eventual wage cuts for labor, Spaeth applauded. No wonder: His own state budget for 1988 will be burdened with additional debts of 2 billion deutschemarks, for similar programs of "conjunctural incentives." Behind the scene, Lothar Spaeth says he'll be able to pay the money back to the banks—through extended trade with the Soviet Union.

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