

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Revival of the social-democratic card

*An amazing, but risky activation of the West German Social Democratic Party in international politics.*

A "spring offensive" in international diplomacy has been launched by the Social Democrats of Germany (SPD). Capitalizing on a deepening paralysis of U.S. politics during this election year, the SPD plans to broaden the wedge between the Americans and the Europeans.

The new activity of the SPD is developing in close consultation with friendly circles on the American side. SPD party Chairman Hans-Jochen Vogel, for example, began his four-day visit to the United States March 22 with an address to the prestigious Chicago Council on Foreign Relations on world economic problems. What was the CFR's interest in having Vogel give this address?

Vogel's remarks in Chicago gave the answer, because his message to the audience was: "The United States has to adjust its consumption, step-by-step, to its own productive capacities." The Americans, he said, were "living far beyond their means." Budgetary cuts, especially in defense, found Vogel's sympathy, and he also welcomed the debate on a "new share of NATO burden between Americans and Europeans."

This was an advertising job for Gramm-Rudman and an American pullout from Europe. Vogel had been invited to pretend that the Europeans wanted this new share of burden, that the Americans were right to go ahead with their decoupling from Europe.

On March 23, Vogel addressed an event in Washington, D.C., organized by the SPD's Friedrich Ebert Foundation, where he also proclaimed a new era in economic relations between the United States and Europe: "The time is ripe for a European cur-

rency and a European monetary institution, both being part of a stronger self-assertion of Western Europe inside the Atlantic Alliance which we have long been calling for. This is also in the interest of the United States, because it takes a burden from America."

During his stay in Washington, D.C., Vogel told President Reagan that his summit diplomacy was most welcome among Social Democrats in Germany, that the idea of reducing the number of U.S. troops in Europe and Germany in connection with the INF treaty found the full support of the SPD. Vogel also met with George Bush, James Baker, Frank Carlucci, Paul Nitze, and other senior administration officials, as well as with Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan and select representatives of the big banks.

Back in Bonn March 26, Vogel said he got the impression in Washington, D.C. that a significant troop withdrawal of the Americans from Europe was indeed on the agenda for "the time after the elections." Apparently, he was told so by his U.S. hosts, which proves that when acting Bonn Chancellor Kohl was in Washington four weeks earlier, the Americans only paid lip service to their defense commitments.

Parallel to Vogel's U.S. visit, another ranking SPD politician, the "international trouble-shooter" of the party, Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski, was touring Central America. In close consultation with the U.S. State Department and involved intelligence agencies, Wischniewski was the chief arbiter in the talks between the Contras and the Junta in Nicaragua, met

with adversaries of Noriega's in the ruling PRD party in Panama City, and arranged for the return to Panama of PDC party Chairman Arias Calderón, whom he met personally in Miami. Wischniewski conducted three missions as "special envoy," between mid-March and Easter.

The Wischniewski mission was kind of a mini-summitry along lines of the "regional crisis" talks of the two superpowers. This comes as no surprise, because he maintains good contact to the "Irangate" faction of what are also called the "State Department Socialists," as well as to the Cuban and Nicaraguan proxies of the Kremlin. It is said in Bonn that Wischniewski took this special assignment on Central America (which is not finished yet) as a courtesy for the two superpowers' favors to the SPD in German politics.

This means that should there appear obstacles against a return of the SPD to government power in Bonn, the two superpowers will help to remove them through their various agencies.

But there is a missing card in this game. The Vogel and Wischniewski missions were arranged on the rather unrealistic assumption that while the U.S. was paralyzed, at least the situation in Moscow would remain stable.

It did not, and this became clear when past SPD chairman Willy Brandt and his longtime strategic policy adviser, Egon Bahr, visited Moscow April 2-4, meeting Mikhail Gorbachov to discuss his project of a "European roundtable of Communists, Socialists, and Social Democrats." Right in the middle of the raging power struggle inside the Kremlin hierarchy, Brandt and Bahr came to recognize that their favorite game partner, Gorbachov, was not in a position to give clear marching orders. Therefore, the ambitious spring offensive of the SPD runs at a very high risk.