

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Can Europe still be defended?

The feeling of betrayal by the United States runs deep in the minds of military people in West Germany.

On April 26, Chancellor Helmut Kohl appointed a new defense minister, Christian Democrat Rupert Scholz. He replaces Manfred Wörner who is taking over the post of secretary-general at the Brussels NATO headquarters July 1.

The new minister, a civilian, has a very delicate task: He will have to support aspects of military criticism of U.S. policy that are justified, but will also have to build a barrier against anti-American sentiments, which are growing because of pressure from the United States that the Germans should "pay more, or else" we pull out.

Maneuvering between the many budget-cutters on both sides of the Atlantic, Scholz will have to convince a Bonn cabinet largely favoring arms control, of the need for more and better weapons for the German army.

The demands of the armed forces were made public again at the annual congress of the German Society for Military Technology (DWT), which took place in Bonn the same day the new defense minister was appointed—April 26.

At the DWT congress, the inspector-general of the German ground forces, Gen. Lt. Henning von Ondarza, outlined what is needed, such as a new generation of armored infantry vehicles and tanks with reactive armor. To compensate for part of the demographic drop in available manpower in the 1990s, a far higher degree of motorization is needed. For example, air defense: Germany's ground forces, which would have to hold a 430-km front line against the eventuality of Warsaw Pact attack,

need an "air defense dimension." A surprise attack by air on the 300 main military command and coordination centers in Germany is the likely form of attack to occur, so air defense is vital.

What is needed is a multi-layered system of air defense. Two senior spokesmen for German military industry, Ernst Kraemer of Rheinmetall and Hanns Arnt Vogels of MBB, told the DWT congress that "laser-based systems are best, in terms of speed and efficiency, for air defense." Next to lasers, the electric cannon should be developed into an efficient high-speed air defense weapon.

The one big problem the military industry faces is that the United States has decoupled technologically from the Europeans over the past two years, in tandem with the superpower summitry. Harsh critiques of this pattern of "negotiating over the heads of the European allies" were voiced at the DWT congress.

Vogels voiced deep disappointment at the U.S. practice of not telling its European allies details of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and other U.S. weapons systems, while the Soviets are given this information in the context of summit diplomacy. Ondarza also called it a "scandal," that the U.S. ground forces are now equipped with a new radio communication system that is totally incompatible with the new system the German ground forces are being supplied with. On the front line against the Warsaw Pact in Germany, direct communication between neighboring defense zones of the United States and Ger-

many is made impossible.

Discussing the Ondarza speech afterward, congress attendees guessed that such an absurdity in NATO weapons technology can only mean that the United States is not intending to have its troops fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the Germans in Europe, but to pull them out and deploy them elsewhere.

The feeling of betrayal by their main NATO ally, the United States, runs deep in the minds of military-related people in Germany, and this sentiment is dangerous for the future cohesion of the Alliance.

MBB's Hanns Arnt Vogels linked the transatlantic decoupling in military technology to the basic trend of U.S. security policy over the past 20 years or more. Originally the superior power, the Americans first committed the strategic flaw of accepting equal status, and then Soviet superiority in several areas. INF diplomacy now wants to remove the "risk factor" of the U.S. nukes in Europe that can still reach Soviet territory and deter a Warsaw Pact attack, and meets Moscow's interest in having these same missiles removed. This sanctuary-building diplomacy becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for the Americans: Once nuclear defense of Europe is dismantled, Europe can no longer be defended, and indeed, why defend the Europeans at all, then?

Europe can get out of this vicious circle only by demonstrating its commitment to defense, to have the U.S. re-engage in Europe. Vogels and other speakers at the DWT congress called on the Europeans not to grow desperate and dependent on the seeming good will of Kremlin leaders like Gorbachov, but rather to mobilize their own resources for more intense military cooperation with each other, for example, between Bonn and Paris.