

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

An all-Europe economic community

Eastern Europe and the former U.S.S.R. republics are looking westward for a new economic association.

Infrastructural development in the former U.S.S.R. in energy, transport, agriculture, and nuclear reactor safety would be most productive, declared Chancellor Helmut Kohl in a parliamentary address here Sept. 4. Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher in the same session endorsed the creation of an "all-European transport grid and a common energy and telecommunication structure."

Bonn supports a "league of sovereign states" among the former Soviet republics, but insists that they continue to cooperate closely at the economic level, which could follow the model of economic integration within western Europe.

This seems to correspond to ideas presented by Russian Federation Prime Minister Ivan Silayev on Sept. 3 in a press conference in Moscow. Repudiating any "shock therapy" economic policy for Russia, Silayev said that a transformation in steps and in concert with sustained, close, and well-ordered economic cooperation among the individual republics, was a better approach.

Silayev said this cooperation should not be exclusive to republics which signed the "league" union treaty, but should include those which did not sign—like Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—as well as Poland and other east European states.

Poland has already indicated its receptivity to this approach, in a statement issued by Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubishevski in late August. He said the rise of sovereign republics implied new perspectives for the creation of a "community of eco-

nomic and political cooperation in eastern Europe."

Referencing bilateral agreements signed with Russia and Ukraine in October 1990, Skubishevski called for their reaffirmation and recommended that Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Byelorussia, and Czechoslovakia enter cooperation agreements as well. Put into practice, the Skubishevski plan, which is apparently compatible with the Silayev plan, would form an eight-nation zone of cooperation.

The input of Germany and France, working together, is crucial to the creation of an east European economic community.

The French elites have had grave problems in the past two years adjusting to the changes in central and eastern Europe, and to the fact that Germany is now unified, with 80 million citizens—the second-largest nation on the Eurasian continent after the former U.S.S.R., with 290 million. France has 53 million citizens.

French industry has had less of a problem. The entrepreneurs of France have not been enthusiastic about the recent changes in Germany, but have been much more positive compared to the government in Paris. French industrial investments in the five eastern German states have ranked second or third among foreign investors, and are relatively sound, being made in basic construction, power generation, and electrical equipment. Those firms that invested had an understanding of east Germany being a bridge into eastern Europe and the former U.S.S.R.

Jacques Perigot, president of the French Industry Association, charged

Aug. 28 that France had not realized the potential of the developments in eastern Europe and east Germany in the past two years, and was about to miss out again with the birth of the new republics in the East. He implied that with more government support, French industry would do much better.

One of the reasons, some experts in Bonn believe, that the government of President François Mitterrand has been reluctant toward the East, is his orientation toward a renewed imperial French role in post-colonial Africa. In this context, revelations about Panamanian money in Mitterrand's 1988 reelection campaign, and the involvement of his son, Jean-Christophe, in the affair, deserve attention. Jean-Christophe Mitterrand is a special envoy of the government on African affairs.

The scandal has already had a positive effect on French foreign policy: Foreign Minister Roland Dumas has rediscovered the importance of close relations with Germany.

Along with Skubishevski and Genscher, Dumas signed a joint resolution in Weimar, Germany Aug. 29 which stated that "Poles, Germans, and French have crucial responsibility for the success of future-oriented structures of neighborly relations in Europe."

"France and Germany support all efforts to lead Poland and the new democracies into the European Community," it read.

"The challenges of the industrial age are calling for answers that may only be found jointly in the European area; we want multiple cooperation in a European unified economic zone. It is necessary to jointly launch concrete and useful projects of immediate benefit to the people. This includes areas of the environment, technology, infrastructure, of communication, energy, and culture."