

Report from Bonn by George Gregory and Rainer Apel

The shadow of the March elections

Facing mass unemployment, the unions are offering denunciations of technology, and threats of violence.

Heinz Oskar Vetter, the former head of the German Trade Union Federation (DGB), threatened in an interview Dec. 29 that the unions will join forces with the peace movement and the "Greens" to unleash a wave of mass violence in the Federal Republic of Germany if the rapid growth in unemployment is not stopped. Vetter's warning feeds a political situation that is already highly polarized and explosive, as the country heads for new elections March 6.

Unemployment is now officially expected to reach 2.5 million in the next few months (approaching 10 percent of the labor force), but pollsters are privately anticipating that this rate will triple or quadruple by 1985-86, bringing the country to "conditions such as those which brought down the Weimar Republic," as one pollster put it.

Vetter and the unions are demanding an end to technological progress as their only "solution" to the crisis. "Will the responsible gentlemen in politics and business only wake up when the dissatisfied, the unemployed, the peace movement and the environmentalists are in the street together?" Vetter asked in his interview to the popular daily *Bildzeitung*. "Then we will be threatened with violence and democracy will be endangered.

"The most important reason for the crisis is that rapid technological progress is killing more jobs than it creates. New investments do not help the un-

employed. We must control technological progress simultaneously worldwide. At the world economic summit in the United States in May, a binding agreement to control technological progress must be reached. . . .

"If we finally reach a comprehensive national and international concept to overcome the crisis and unemployment, then we will support it. Then I would agree—if it is necessary and if this helps—to lower living standards. This must be socially just and must affect everybody."

While Vetter, the unions, and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) are demanding a revival of Keynesianism and "share-the-poverty" schemes, their "free market" opponents insist on more and more austerity and deflation, even up to a crash of the banking system. Both "left" and "right" agree, however, on the need for a restructuring of the economy away from basic industry (like steel) and high technology, toward the "Aquarian" ideal of the post-industrial society.

One expert from the Kiel World Economics Institute, asked about the plans of those bankers who want to engineer a crash to reshape the world economy, had this to say: "Oh yes, there are a lot of people thinking that way. The danger of this scenario is that while they are right that a profound crisis is required to shake up people's minds and force them back to economic reason, such a crisis could give rise to new fascism, like in 1932."

The analyst predicted that Social Democratic Party Chancellor candidate Hans-Jochen Vogel would gain a majority in the coming elections, supported by the Green Party; German businessmen would then take their money out of the country by the suitcase-full. "There is a vital threat of a new fascism emerging," he said, "and there should be no illusion as to the stability of Western societies."

Since the fall of the Bonn government of Social Democrat Helmut Schmidt in a "cold coup" which placed Christian Democrat Helmut Kohl in the chancellery, the traditional, growth-oriented wing of the unions and the SPD has collapsed.

The standard bearer of the "new," left-controlled party, Hans-Jochen Vogel, is campaigning for a corporatist "solidarity pact"—a share-the-poverty scheme along the lines outlined by Vetter. Vogel arrived in the United States Jan. 5 for discussions with American government officials and AFL-CIO head Lane Kirkland—discussions which will include the "solidarity pact" as well as the issue of arms control.

Helmut Schmidt himself has abandoned any pretext of leadership for a pro-growth policy, and is instead devoting himself to efforts toward "European unity"—a code word for British political, economic, and especially ideological domination over the continent.

While in office Schmidt had intermittently battled the British on key issues, and it was banking circles in London that led the successful effort to oust him from office.

In a commentary in *The Times* of London Jan. 3, the apparently brainwashed Schmidt pathetically declared that "it is time we stopped talking about the so-called 'British problem'" and praised British partnership in Europe.