

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Will Genscher go, or Kohl?

It is not clear if the Chancellor can survive, but unless he kicks out his traitorous foreign minister, he surely won't.

There is a smell of "Kohl-Gate" in Bonn. It does not have anything to do with scandals, bribery, or the like, but with the American Strategic Defense Initiative.

In his support for that program, Christian Democratic Chancellor Helmut Kohl's main problem has been his foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, whose Free Democrats met on June 1 to pass a resolution formally rejecting German participation in the SDI. The resolution also attacked "certain currents inside the Christian Democrats who cause problems for the government coalition." This, of course, refers to those who favor the SDI and attack Genscher.

What was striking was that the resolution's verbiage resembled that of the opposition Social Democrats.

On June 1, Genscher thus threw down the gauntlet to Kohl: Should the Chancellor overrule Genscher on the SDI question, the Free Democrats would consider the coalition null and void.

On June 3, Social Democratic Party Chairman Willy Brandt, just back from three days of talks in Moscow, stated in a *Der Spiegel* interview, "Even abroad, people have begun to notice that a certain congruity has emerged between positions taken by the Social Democrats and those the foreign minister of the Federal Republic takes."

The Free Democrats, explaining their anti-SDI resolution to the press on June 3, commented: "There is nothing wrong with a certain congruity of positions between Brandt and

Genscher."

Several ranking spokesmen of the Free Democrats, including Genscher himself, came out in praise of Brandt's trip to Moscow as "useful in the framework of the beginning of a new phase in the East-West dialogue." The code-word "new phase" refers to intensified contacts between Moscow and adversaries of the SDI in the West, in which process, the FDP and SPD are closing ranks. The German media have begun to speculate how long Kohl can stay in power, while a new majority builds before his very eyes.

For years, the Social Democrats headed the West German government—until the Free Democrats, then their partners, walked out in October 1982. Brandt himself told *Der Spiegel*: "I recall that in October 1982, I said in the parliament—maybe not to the delight of all of my friends—that I would not take up the term 'treason' [against the Free Democrats], because I know what the laws of domestic politics are—and these aren't always very sympathetic laws."

At that time, Genscher's walk-out on Chancellor Helmut Schmidt heaved Kohl into power. (With his party out of power, Brandt had few problems steering it onto its current pro-Soviet course.)

The chairman of the Free Democrats, Economics Minister Martin Bangemann, has circulated a letter warning that "in case our liberal positions cannot be transformed into political practice inside the government coalition, we will have to leave it to the voters to decide in 1987," the

scheduled time for national elections.

But Bangemann added another, and very revealing statement: "The socialist-liberal coalition of 1969 [when Brandt became Chancellor] was not based on arbitrary considerations, but on consciousness that it was a political necessity to bring the *Ostpolitik* into being. We will try to launch the new phase of dialogue with the East together with our coalition partner in Bonn."

Kohl must face facts: Since this new *Ostpolitik* is aimed at sabotage of the SDI and of European-American defense relations, for the sake of Germany's security, there can be no further cooperation between Christian and Free Democrats. Either Genscher goes, or Kohl himself must go.

The emerging Free Democrat-Social Democrat cooperation extends to other, related areas. The Social Democrats are outspoken in attacking American "imperialism" vis-à-vis Nicaragua. During President Reagan's stay in Germany in early May, Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega arrived in East Germany, accused Reagan of "genocide against the Nicaraguan nation," and attacked Kohl as an "accomplice of Reagan." Kohl responded by freezing all economic and financial aid to Nicaragua.

But Genscher? He invited Nicaraguan Vice-President Sergio Ramirez Mercado to Bonn on May 29 to discuss how to "improve relations." Immediately afterward, he told the European Commission in Brussels that he wanted more economic and financial aid to Managua from European Community funds.

Genscher tries to bypass the Chancellor on every essential question of policy. For Kohl to survive will be difficult in any case, but unless he fires his traitorous foreign minister, he surely won't.