

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Reluctance in the war on terrorism

Without German assistance, France won't be able to get terrorism under control.

To succeed in crushing the challenge of terrorism, France's Premier Jacques Chirac depends on full support from the governments of neighboring countries. The most important ally in the French war on the terrorists must be Germany. Since there are no passport controls between France and Germany, this border is one big escape door for terrorists from either side.

Meeting over the weekend of Sept. 20-21 in Bonn, West German security officials stated their concern that "French terror groups may escape the police by entering German territory." Since about 3,500 exile Arabs working with extremist groups, plus another 2,500 activists from the various Iranian, Kurdish, and Armenian extremist organizations, are known to live in West Germany, terrorists from France would have no problem disappearing into this exile underground.

Security experts fear that under these conditions, heavy terror attacks on Germany's civilian population will be "imported from France." A similar type of terror has already been applied by terrorist groups in Germany, however. For example, the bomb attack weeks ago against the training center of the German border police (BGS) near Bonn featured three bombs: The first went off, causing considerable damage; the second was timed to detonate while the anti-bomb experts searched the site; and the third, which was defused, fortunately, was filled with thousands of metal splinters, to

have a maximum killing effect.

Another such vicious bomb trap was placed at the Institute of Optics Research, near Tübingen. Again, a smaller bomb detonated, causing minor damage on an instrument-pylon. Anti-bomb experts, checking the place carefully, found a second bomb nearby, which detonated while it was being investigated and almost killed one policemen. While the first bomb caused minor material damage of only the equivalent of about \$2,500, the second bomb caused \$50,000 in damage, with great killing potential.

This is apparently what future terror attacks will look like in West Germany. These are professional methods, the sabotage and terror methods of irregular war. Does this mean that the country's extremist "scene" has achieved such a high skill in professional mass killing, or could it mean that "experts" in irregular warfare, like the Soviet Union's spetsnaz, have been activated?

This question itself marks the gray zone that has developed in West Germany: The level of terrorist and other extremist activities is such, that one cannot say with certainty that this specific terror attack was carried out by German extremists, or by spetsnaz.

The targets of the terror attacks are the same. According to a new report which all of the member-governments of NATO received in September, the existence of Soviet spetsnaz units—specialists in sabotage, terror, and disruption techniques—among the

Red Army troops stationed in East Germany is a proven fact. Trained to hit targets in Western Europe, and predominantly in West Germany, they are even deployed "in peace time, just for rehearsal." Rehearsal targets are, among the obvious military ones, also nuclear power stations, the railway and transport system, radio and television stations, and the electricity grid, as well as "leading personnel in military and political life."

These are the targets which were hit by terrorist attacks over the past few months and weeks in West Germany. This pattern will not have escaped the attention of the German security service; it may not even have escaped the attention of the relevant politicians in Bonn.

But there has not been one politician, not even from the most anti-Soviet currents, to pose questions on Moscow's role in the Western underground. There is a pact of silence in Bonn, because the liberal partner in the government, the Free Democrats, thinks that such questions "do not fit in the present landscape of East-West relations." Such questions would, thinks Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, a Free Democrat, have ruined the East-West Security Conference in Stockholm, which just signed a multilateral "commitment to fight terrorism"—the Soviets being among the signatories.

The Germans, whose country is hit almost by daily terrorism and sabotage at all levels, should have raised in Stockholm the issue of Soviet spetsnaz operations in the West. Because of its intensity, the terrorist situation in Germany is the best for studying the East's role. And in the war on terrorism, it would help a lot if the French-German border were tightly controlled. One does not fight criminals at the back door, while keeping the front door wide open.