

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Caught in the Persian Gulf trap

The West German government's sympathies for the Teheran regime will cause diplomatic disaster.

Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher's tilt toward Iran in the current Persian Gulf conflict, is setting up the Bonn government for a policy disaster of far-reaching consequences.

The situation is comparable to that of 1965, when Chancellor Ludwig Erhard, giving in to blackmail from the Zionist lobby, hastened to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. The ham-handed way in which this was done, wrecked relations between Germany and 17 Arab countries—moderate and radical alike. Trade ties and billions of deutschemarks worth of prospective contracts were lost in this diplomatic brawl, and it took Germany about 10 years to repair the damage.

This time, the German foreign ministry's siding with the Teheran regime will create tensions not only with the moderate Arab countries that are threatened with war by Teheran, but also with France and the United States.

Genscher has been under attack by the governments of Iraq and Turkey, among others, for some time, for his pro-Iranian policy. Baghdad charged that Bonn has been withholding export guarantees for German industrial deals with Iraq, while promoting German-Iranian deals.

In December 1986, Turkey's President Kenan Evren charged Genscher with allowing an Iranian-run extremist sought by the Turkish authorities, Cemalettin Kaplan, to build a network of anti-Turkish terrorists on West German territory.

The French government also criticized lack of action in Bonn against networks of Islamic terrorists on Ger-

man soil, which have been operating against France.

Diplomatic tensions escalated after Genscher's scandalous official meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati in Bonn on July 23, discussing "improvement of relations between Bonn and Teheran." French government circles expressed "profound shock" at this gesture, at a time when France was heading for open conflict with Iran, after the decision in Paris to cut relations with Khomeini's regime. French Foreign Minister Jean-Bernard Raimond found "absolutely no time" to meet Genscher in Paris on July 29.

On July 24, Genscher stated in a radio interview that Iraq was to blame for "this terrible war" in the Gulf. He also criticized Iraq's use of chemical weapons against Iran.

Genscher's remarks are particularly hypocritical, because he never said any critical word on Iran's role in this war. Genscher has refused to sign the International Convention for the Protection of Children, although his ministry was presented with documentation that Khomeini is sending tens of thousands of Iranian children to the most embattled frontlines with Iraq.

Genscher's July 24 interview caused a furious response from the Iraqi government. On July 26, the official news agency INA declared that "Genscher received his payoff from the mullahs for doing longtime services for them." The official Baghdad daily *Al Djum'uria* pointed out that Genscher was "the first Western diplomat to officially recognize the mul-

lah regime in Teheran," when he visited Iran in 1984.

A meeting of the German-Iraqi Economic Commission, which was to take place in Bonn August 4-5, was canceled by the Iraqis. Next, talks on a \$520 million contract with the Mannesmann Corporation, for delivery of steel pipes for a new oil pipeline through Saudi Arabia, were called off. Another German company, Strabag Corporation, lost a contract for construction of roads and port facilities worth \$250 million. Talks with other companies on projects in Iraq were called off as well.

Rumors have it that many of these contracts will go to Turkish companies now. Turkey is at odds not only with Genscher's Mideast policy, but also with Bonn's support for the recent European Parliament resolution blaming the "Armenian genocide of 1915" on the current Turkish government.

Ankara also has complaints about the refusal of the Bonn government to give export credit guarantees for German industrial deals with Turkey. The repercussions to be expected will not be confined to economic relations. Apparently, not much attention is being paid by Genscher's arrogant diplomats to the fact that Turkey and Iraq have a common enemy which is supported both by Iran (with weapons and instructions) and Germany (with "moral" back-up): Kurdish terrorists of the PKK and other groups.

Bonn's support for Iran will only encourage Khomeini's regime to proceed with its war and terrorism against moderate Arab nations. Very soon, this will mobilize a significant section of the Arab world against the unsavory alliance between Bonn and Teheran. Unless Genscher and his policy are replaced in Bonn, German Mideast policy will not escape the Gulf War trap.