

Agriculture by Marcia Merry

Will united Germany's farms be free?

While reunification of Germany proceeds, East German farm leaders warn of a "second expropriation of farmers."

Two representatives of the newly formed Organization of German Farmers (VDL) from East Germany held a press conference on Aug. 22 in Bonn, along with the Schiller Institute, to warn against the grave agriculture crisis in East Germany, and to denounce the connivance of West German government and farm organization officials in the situation.

In the storm of reaction that followed, the acting head of the West German Farmers Union (DBV) defended his reticence to help East German farm independence by saying, "One must live with reality."

Gerd Winzer, the president of the VDL, told the 30 reporters at the press conference that there is a danger of a "second expropriation of farmers," referring to the dictates 40 years ago by the communist government that coerced all farmers to place their land and property into state-run cooperatives (LPGs). Winzer heads an organization formed in June to speed the process of dismantling the LPGs, and of restoring land to private family farm ownership and operation.

Winzer said that the situation has become more precarious by the day. "The problem," he said, "is simply and solely that the structures must be changed. In this connection, I demand that the West German Farmers Union finally clarify its restraint on the issue of private property."

In particular, there is the problem of the "communist *nomenklatura*," according to Winzer, referring to the clique of individuals and families that continues to exert control in the East

German economy. Earlier this year, this circle formed a farm organization to masquerade as a new option for farm reform.

By the end of September, the West German Farmers Union plans to merge with the East German farm organizations, despite the tainted character of the various groups, and their refusal to dismantle the state collectives. The proposed fusion of the farm groups has been referred to as the "unnamed farm organization."

Winzer told the reporters that the West German Farmers Union is "collaborating with the socialist farm organization and armtwisting us to merge with them. But we will never merge with this red mafia. We clearly state that we will lead our organization as an independent one in a united Germany."

Winzer distanced himself from the much-publicized demonstrations in East Berlin on Aug. 16.

He reported on how the socialist farm organization behind the protests is still getting government funding, and could finance such an action. And he ridiculed the hasty "transformation" of the state collectives into "business communes." He called on members of the collectives to remove their land before group contracts are signed.

In recent months, the agriculture sector in East Germany (until now, all run by state collectives) has been hit by low prices, and by incompetence, greed, or duplicity among the heads of the collectives. The Western cartel companies—Cargill, Toepfer/ADM,

Louis Dreyfus, Continental, and others—are moving to make sweetheart deals with the heads of the collectives, which they view as factory farms ready and waiting to be exploited.

The West German Farmers Union refuses to recognize these dangers.

During the question period at the press conference, Winzer took up the issue head-on. He said that in the "Accommodation Law," the section known as Part 18 must be stricken. This section gives the state farm collectives the sole and lasting right to exploit the soil.

Winzer said that there must not be a fusion of farm groups without dismantling the structure of the collectives. He said that many ask why there could not be a fusion of farm groups, so that they could use the same offices, telephones, and so forth, along with the new "unnamed farm organization." This would mean, he explained, that procedures are being done for tactical reasons, and they do not have real content. He said that what is important to us, is our members. They do not understand, if we work with collaborators of the collectives.

He promised to continue to publish his magazine, *Der deutsche Landwirt*, committed to free, independent farms, and to go to members of the West German Farmers Union and ask them if they know that their organization supports collectivization.

The next morning on German radio, Dr. Born, the acting general secretary of the West German Farmers Union, replied to Winzer in an interview. "The VDL has our full sympathy," he said, "because it takes steps toward privatization. But one must live with reality." Born asserted that the new "unnamed farm organization," including the socialist group in East Germany, will find it "easier" to take power.