

Biedenkopf's statement is the more revealing in that it is well-known in West Germany that the hard-core of the Green Party is composed of former members of the avowedly neofascist National Demokratische Partei (NPD). The NPD was created in the 1960s, and then quickly disappeared after it had been employed for a similar "shift the votes" operation at that time.

The big test

The first big test for Strauss's great green hope will be the May 11 elections in the industrial-heartland state of North-Rhine Westphalia. In this state, a dense network of SPD-linked trade unions and industrial organizations has, with the exception of a few green spots, reduced greenie political organizing to a very low profile.

With his statement of welcome to the greenies, Biedenkopf is surely intending to build a bridge for them into the Ruhr, but this might heavily backfire on the CDU. If the Schmidt forces recognize the big opportunity this Biedenkopf move opens up for the Social Democrats, and if the Schmidt forces rid themselves of spokesmen for the greenie ferment within the SPD itself (Hans Eppler, Klaus Traube and others), Schmidt could even win an absolute majority in this year's elections ending dependence on the weak Free Democrats.

The SPD in the Ruhr should in fact be able to hand a devastating defeat to the Christian Democratic Union in that state. As all leading polls show, Schmidt is approaching voter approval ratios of above 50 percent, while Strauss is heading down to between 25 and 30 percent. With Strauss and Biedenkopf performing their machinations a little too openly, Schmidt should produce a deep break in traditional CDU constituencies that feel deprived of a candidate of their own this year.

There is no reason for Schmidt to hesitate. The international climate featuring his alliance with France's Giscard d'Estaing, and Giscard's Arab petrodollar-holding friends, has permitted the financial and industrial machine of West Germany to find the financing and political clout to defy the environmentalists and the British and U.S. governments alike by announcing its intention to launch a major export drive. Schmidt has the advantage. Those behind Strauss and his new green friends do not.

One Georgetown strategist admitted as much in a recent interview. The CIA has lots of dirty tricks capabilities. But not in West Germany at present, he stated, "We can't do it right now." But if Schmidt and his forces hesitate to exploit the "favorable moment," the CDU, with help from U.S. "dirty tricks," might be able to shift enough of its own votes to the Green Party to raise them to the 4.9 percent or more that would wipe out the Free Democrats. In that case, the Schmidt government falls, and the consequences could make the world a very unpleasant place in which to live shortly thereafter.

MIDDLE EAST

French diplomacy's attack on Camp David

by Nancy Coker

French President Giscard d'Estaing's recent diplomatic initiatives for securing a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement is a direct and deliberate challenge to the Camp David "partial peace" plan of the Carter administration.

In an effort to counter France's peace efforts, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington have decided to bring down the hard-line government of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and replace it with a less intransigent regime capable of salvaging the Camp David peace process, now blocked largely because of Begin's refusal to make concessions on the critical question of Palestinian autonomy.

This week, Carrington held an extended strategy session in London with a delegation of top British and French Jewish community leaders led by Alain de Rothschild to reaffirm British support for Camp David and to pledge that London will not interfere with the pact. The Zionist leaders with whom Carrington met are the same ones who control the puppet strings of the faltering Begin coalition and of Begin's probable replacement, opposition Labour Party leader Shimon Peres.

France: a new reality

In moving to dump Begin, Britain and the United States are, responding to the "new reality" that France's Middle East diplomacy has imposed upon them. This new reality dictates that unless some kind of Anglo-American Middle East initiative is consolidated that is capable of shoring up Camp David and throwing Europe's peace drive off balance, the United States and Britain will be locked out of the Middle East.

Backed by Socialist International leaders Willy Brandt of West Germany and Chancellor Bruno Kreisky of Austria, the Vance-Carrington faction of Anglo-American "realists" is negotiating with Zionists both inside and outside Israel to topple Begin and install a Peres government. Peres's job would be to make more concessions to Egypt and the Palestinians and, in so doing, somehow salvage the Palestinian autonomy talks before the scheduled May 26 deadline.

The autonomy talks are now in jeopardy because of Begin's intransigence on the issue.

As a result of the Vance-Carrington operation, Begin's government is rapidly disintegrating, and the Peres option is gaining momentum.

At a press conference March 17, Peres announced that five to six parliamentary members of Begin's coalition are preparing to jump ship and join the opposition, which might be enough to topple Begin. Already Peres is negotiating with several leaders of other political parties currently part of the governing coalition, such as the National Religious Party and the Democratic Movement for Change. Defense Minister Ezer Weizman is threatening to quit government, as are Deputy Prime Minister Simcha Ehrlich, Interior Minister Yosef Burg, and Finance Minister Yigal Hurvitz.

According to the French daily *Le Figaro*, former Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan has emerged from retirement and is playing a behind-the-scenes but central role in the Anglo-American-sponsored power play against Begin.

To build up Peres's image, Peres is being portrayed as a statesman capable of "delivering" Camp David or some variation thereof. Peres has claimed that he has won some sort of "commitment" from Jordan's King Hussein on negotiating a peace with Israel. When pressed to elaborate, however, Peres last week stated, "I can't give details."

The Israeli press is egging Peres on. Last week the liberal daily *Haaretz* published a poll predicting an absolute majority of 62 parliamentary seats for Peres's Labour Party if elections were held today.

Economic holocaust

Unless Israel decides to link up with France's peace efforts—something that would be very much in Israel's national interests—the government of Israel, whether it be led by Begin or Peres, is heading for economic disaster and most probably war.

At this point in time, the catastrophic state of the Israeli economy is playing right into the Peres power play by spreading disillusion with the Begin government. Strikes and violent demonstrations are hitting industrial, farm, and professional layers as inflation soars over 120 percent and budget cuts hit home. Even the Israeli defense budget has been cut back six percent, leading nervous Israeli military officials to speculate about the danger of Israel losing its superiority to growing Arab military power.

In an interview with the *Baltimore Sun*, Israeli military spokesman Col. Yacov Even stated that Israeli living standards must fall to maintain the defense spending. "This will be accompanied by very serious social and political problems, conflicts, even riots," Even admitted.

Predictably, Begin, backed by the more extremist

factions in his government, is already preparing for military confrontation as his "last-ditch option" in the face of Europe's successful peace efforts and the failure of Camp David.

The possibility of an Israeli military move is being widely discussed in European and Arab capitals. In a recent interview, King Hussein warned of an Israeli strike east against Syria or Jordan. The alternative, said Hussein, is a European initiative for peace led by France, hammered out at the United Nations with the involvement of the two superpowers.

In Kuwait, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Arafat warned that a new war is being planned against Syria—not directly, but through Lebanon, where tensions are rising. Leading French sources also report that Israel is considering a desperate military action to halt what it sees as a European-Arab convergence.

Begin's growing desperation is reflected as well in his direct onslaught against the French.

The French President's visit to the Middle East, said Radio Jerusalem and the Jewish Telegraph Agency, is a "unilateral policy that will endanger Israel" and will "create danger for Giscard himself."

To underline the warning, Begin is mobilizing his Zionist supporters worldwide against France. In Paris, Begin's Likud Party networks are planning a 100,000-strong demonstration, and French intelligence sources are carefully watching a secret office of the Anti-Defamation League that just opened in Paris that includes operatives of the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency.

Combatting Europe

According to the *Jerusalem Post*, Israel's newly appointed foreign minister, Yitzhak Shamir, is working closely with Begin "to mount an Israeli campaign ... to combat the European initiative."

In addition, Shamir, a professional assassin for the Stern gang during the 1940s, has wasted no time kicking off a worldwide offensive against Europeans and Americans who buck the Begin government's policies of expanding settlements on Israeli-occupied Arab territory and of keeping the Palestinians out of peace negotiations.

Special Israeli intelligence teams have been sent to Europe, and Israeli diplomats have been instructed to protest loudly to governments, creating a climate in which Israeli-inspired terrorism can be "justified" as an authentic expression of "Jewish outrage." Shamir, in a series of interviews, declared that Israel would no longer abide by the U.S.-Israel "special relationship," but would instead act on its own. The Austrian government, which has officially recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization, was told that it had "sided with an organization whose hands are stained with blood and who openly desire the destruction of Israel."