

Report from Bonn by Edith Vitali

An aura of secrecy

The West German Social Democrats don't want publicity around their talks with the East German communists. Why?

At first glance, it doesn't make sense for the liberal-conservative government in Bonn to see a "positive signal" in Prof. Herbert Haerber's recent promotion to full membership in the politburo of East Germany's ruling "Socialist Unity Party" (SED), without having been even an alternate member before. The power he now holds is underlined by the fact that the same plenary session of the SED's Central Committee also made him a Central Committee secretary, which means that he might become "crown prince" to SED party chief Erich Honecker.

Since 1950, Haerber has been groomed as East Germany's "all-round" talent for contacts with West Germany. On his frequent trips to Bonn, he talks to Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Liberals, industrialists, and trade unionists with equal success, having something reassuring to say to all of them about East German intentions. A knowledgeable source on East Germany in West Berlin called Haerber the Soviet satellite's "top infiltration specialist."

Indeed, the current strikes of West German printers and metalworkers for a "35 hour week," which are of a purely disruptive character, are to some extent a result of Haerber's work. "For years he has built and cultivated many contacts in the trade unions, contributing to the change of values in the DGB (trade union federation) which is now visible in the strikes. Even though the trade unions don't like to hear that, the reality is that East Germany managed to export her ideology

to the West. They hardly need the DKP (West German Communist Party) anymore," this source noted.

Haerber himself mentioned this biggest triumph of his career in his speech at the Central Committee plenum. The time of West German "social peace" is over: "The sharp wind of class struggle" has blown away all illusions of "social partnership and class harmony." Now the "true nature of capitalism," the "irreconcilable contradiction between labor and capital" has shown its face.

A related "success story" for Haerber is the transformation of the SPD leadership. For the first time meetings have taken place between SPD and SED representatives this year, arranged by Haerber.

On April 26-28, SPD leaders from Schleswig-Holstein got together with SED leaders from Neubrandenburg and Rostock in a small town in northern (West) Germany, Malente. They discussed "common approaches to solving the war danger," and agreed, for example, that Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative must be torpedoed. "The discussions are in a very sensitive stage," a high-ranking SPD participant said; "premature publicity could ruin everything." He volunteered that a "secret report" had been written, "addressed only to Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr."

On May 24, SED Central Committee member Otto Reinhold spoke at a conference of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, an SPD think-tank, in Wiesbaden. Other speakers at this in-

itation-only event were Hesse's Prime Minister Holger Börner (SPD), who has just set up a coalition with the fascist, anti-NATO Green Party, and Ulrich Steger, SPD parliamentarian in Bonn. An East German News Agency reporter at the meeting said that Börner's ambition is to make Hesse a "model" for SPD-SED cooperation. Reinhold, Steger, and Börner privately discussed closer economic integration of the two Germanys on the eve of the conference. That explains Börner's violent reaction to members of the European Labor Party who were distributing leaflets against "decoupling" before the opening session. The prime minister ripped apart posters and leaflets, injuring two EAP members. They are pressing charges.

In his Central Committee speech on May 24, Haerber heaped praise on the SPD, singling out the resolutions passed at the SPD Congress in Essen which called for a halt to the deployment of Pershing-II and cruise missiles and the withdrawal of installed missiles. The SPD, Haerber stressed, also adopted the Warsaw Pact proposal for a non-aggression pact as part of their program.

The Kohl Christian Democratic (CDU) government he attacked for "toeing Reagan's destructive line" on disarmament issues.

It would be wrong to conclude from Haerber's anti-CDU tirade that he has no contacts inside the CDU leadership. On the contrary: He arranged then-mayor of West Berlin Richard von Weizsäcker's visit to East Germany in late 1983. Von Weizsäcker, newly elected President of West Germany, whose father Ernst negotiated the Hitler-Stalin Pact in 1939, has also won *Izvestia's* approval. The Soviet paper recently hoped that Richard will be able to "influence West German foreign policy," despite the "figure-head nature" of his office.