
Profile: Kurt Biedenkopf

Trilateral candidate for chancellorship

by Mark Burdman

As the government of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl is hit daily by new scandals and difficulties, media attention has zeroed in on Kurt Biedenkopf, the former member of the Trilateral Commission who recently became head of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Biedenkopf is being groomed as a possible alternative to the besieged chancellor.

A mediocre, "technetronic" personality, Biedenkopf graduated in international law from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., the Jesuit-run institution that trains most of the employees of the U.S. State Department and diplomatic corps. His "constituency" is not the voters of North Rhine-Westphalia, but the international think-tank set, the zero-growthers, and the Trilaterals.

It was in the 1970s, that Biedenkopf began to rise in the ranks of the CDU, achieving the post of general-secretary by the mid-1970s. By taking over the North-Rhine Westphalia CDU, Biedenkopf has now assumed control over the regional party that is most important in West Germany. Forty percent of the party stalwarts nationally come from this state. This presents Biedenkopf with quite an impressive springboard for launching a bid for the chancellorship, should he and his controllers decide to do so. Already, informed speculation in the Federal Republic, is that Biedenkopf will try to enter the CDU presidium, the most influential policymaking body in the party.

But Biedenkopf has made many enemies in his rise to prominence. Says one Biedenkopf-watcher: "Kurt is his own worst enemy. He's arrogant, and overambitious. The risk for him, if he challenges Kohl now, is that as soon as he moves in this way publicly, all the enemies will come out, and Kohl will not be the only one."

The following story, which has gone unreported by the media, reveals much about Biedenkopf's character. In January 1976, as general-secretary of the CDU, he attended a meeting of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, where he unexpectedly launched into a diatribe against the "sexual ethics" policy of the Vatican, charging that, by its efforts to maintain moral standards in sexual relations, the Vatican threatened to "make itself ridiculous."

Slightly over one year later, Biedenkopf showed up at an

important political function, arm in arm with a woman who was not his wife. Traditionalists in the CDU protested that this was hardly the man with the image to lead a party that had based itself on support for Christian family values!

A deindustrialization policy

Biedenkopf's economic policy is modeled on the computer printouts of the Malthusian Club of Rome. In an interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine released March 17, he attacked the Kohl regime for its belief that "economic growth creates employment. . . . That is no longer true." He praised past years' trends in the West German economy, which have involved the "redistribution of the public wealth" toward "environmental protection," and away from past years' versions of consumer and industrial spending. He also attacked patterns of defense spending, insisting that money for defense should go into a "conventional build-up." Given Bonn's negotiations with the United States on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), and the ongoing controversy over deployment of U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles, it was no mystery what Biedenkopf was actually attacking.

Days before the *Der Spiegel* interview, Biedenkopf had told a meeting of the regional leadership of the CDU in North Rhine-Westphalia that the region was suffering from "overproduction and overabundance"—this in a region which, like the Midwest industrial centers of the United States, is suffering from colossal unemployment and idle plant and equipment. Biedenkopf praised the policies of the CDU government in Lower Saxony, headed by Ernst Albrecht, which has pioneered introducing the Club of Rome's "post-industrial society" policies, under a "conservative" cover.

Biedenkopf's views on foreign policy and strategic issues favor distancing West Germany from the United States. According to a Bonn insider, "Biedenkopf is really most close in his thinking to Helmut Schmidt and Hans-Dietrich Genscher." Schmidt, the former Social Democratic chancellor, has become the most vocal spokesman for the Trilateral Commission's policy of accommodation with Moscow; Genscher, the German foreign minister, is at the forefront of attempts to sabotage U.S.-German cooperation on the SDI. "Biedenkopf doesn't like the SDI," the source reported.

Biedenkopf's Soviet connection runs through his Institute for Economic and Social Studies in Bonn, which is hosting operatives from the main Soviet international affairs think-tank, IMEMO. There is a liaison between Biedenkopf's people and IMEMO influential Anatolii Gromyko, son of the former Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko.

On March 22, Biedenkopf shuttled off to Washington for secret meetings at the State Department, with other U.S. government officials, and at Georgetown University. U.S. Ambassador to Bonn Richard Burt, coincidentally or not, will be there at the same time for "political consultations." Is the State Department becoming the headquarters for a "Committee to Elect Kurt Biedenkopf Chancellor?"