

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Cabal seeks to oust Kohl

*With elections upcoming in Lower Saxony, the chancellor's only chance is to mobilize support for the SDI accord.*

**"T**he knives are being sharpened against Kohl," wrote Count Nayhaus in the daily *Bildzeitung* April 1. The cabal seeking to oust the chancellor includes, he reported, "first, the media; second, the intellectuals; and third, false friends in the party."

Kohl's popularity, which was at 57% one year ago, has now sunk to only 46%. There is a growing sentiment inside his own party, the Christian Democratic Union, to have him replaced as the chancellor candidate for the national elections in January 1987.

To the extent that this sentiment is based on Kohl's performance on economic, foreign, and defense policy, it is largely justified. But the campaign against the chancellor is now being orchestrated for more insidious reasons.

First, there is that phony court case for bribery and illegal party fundraising, which the Green Party has launched against Kohl. Second, there is a faction inside Kohl's Christian Democratic Union which considers him too soft in enforcing austerity, and too "conservative" in his approach toward the East bloc. Kohl is not the type of chancellor to strike grand deals with the Soviets of the kind the "New Yalta" faction envisages: withdrawal of U.S. troops and missiles from Germany, denuclearization of defense in Central Europe, and economic cooperation with the Soviets in the high-technology sector.

The crucial test for Kohl will be the upcoming state elections in Lower

Saxony on June 15. The opposition Social Democrats, feeling their oats after election victories in the Saarland and North Rhine-Westphalia last year, and in Schleswig-Holstein in March 1986, want to make the Lower Saxony race a trial run for taking power in Bonn in January 1987.

Chancellor Kohl confronts the drifting-away of traditional Christian Democratic constituencies like farmers, engineers, and craftsmen. He will personally participate in 50 election events during the remaining weeks of the Lower Saxony campaign, to try to prevent more desertions.

There is one chance Kohl has to win back votes, and that lies in the cooperation agreement the Bonn government has just signed with the United States on the Strategic Defense Initiative. It is not a real government treaty, but just a "memorandum of understanding" on research cooperation. Due to the obstruction of the Free Democrats, Kohl's minority coalition partner, the agreement has been watered down and does not provide for German entry into the military-strategic aspects of the SDI; it is restricted to "technology cooperation in the civilian sector." But it does give a long-overdue impulse to German industries to jump into the age of laser and computer technologies.

If Kohl makes the SDI a leading topic on his campaign agenda, he may be able to regain some of his waning popularity. This is just what Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and the arms-control mafia are trying to

prevent.

Genscher made it known on March 27, one day after the SDI agreement was signed, that his ministry would do nothing to promote it. What this means, is that Genscher will continue his sabotage of any German-American cooperation on the SDI. Sections of his party, the Free Democrats, have already stated that they will not support the SDI agreement, whether it is the policy of the Bonn government or not. The Social Democrats want a parliamentary debate and vote on the SDI, hoping that some of the Free Democrats will desert the government's parliamentary majority and vote against the agreement.

Moscow immediately escalated its attacks against the Kohl government. The Soviet news agency TASS put out the line that the SDI accord "turned West Germany into a weapons carrier in space for the U.S. first-strike doctrine." The annual German Easter peace marches targeted the SDI agreement. On March 31, the Moscow daily *Pravda* accused the Kohl government of having "proven that the well-known and unforbidden tradition of German militarism" was still "alive." And on April 1, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Korniienko warned Kohl at a press briefing in Moscow: "The SDI agreement means that Bonn can no longer count on the good will of the Soviet Union."

If Kohl fails to make the SDI his issue during the coming weeks, he will inevitably be stabbed in the back. The German-American SDI agreement may survive him, but if the Social Democrats win the elections of January 1987 and form the next German government, they have vowed to declare the SDI agreement "null and void." If Kohl wants to prevent that, he has to campaign for the SDI in public now. Time is running out for him.