

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Gorbachov cracks the whip

President von Weizsäcker puckered up to kiss the derrières of the Kremlin leaders, and received a kick in the face.

West Germany's President Richard von Weizsäcker and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher arrived in Moscow July 6, to open up what they called "a new chapter in the book of German-Soviet relations." But the delegation's groveling before the Soviet leaders had the same result as Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler: The Kremlin demanded that the West Germans crawl even lower, debase themselves still further.

While Mikhail Gorbachov did not take the trouble to attend the ceremonial banquet for Weizsäcker, Soviet President Andrei Gromyko accused the Federal Republic of harboring war criminals, and handed the astonished German President a list of 15 names of people to be "extradited" to the U.S.S.R.

The Soviet behavior was "totally unexpected," according to press reports here. Just days before the German delegation's arrival, Soviet media had signaled "high esteem" for Weizsäcker, whose visit they characterized as "of the highest importance for opening a new chapter in German-Soviet relations."

Soviet media had praised Weizsäcker's speech of May 8, 1985 in Bonn, which paid tribute to the "communist resistance against Hitler," and noted favorably his advice in a speech to German Army commanders on June 3, 1987, to "live without the image of an enemy."

When Weizsäcker came to Moscow, he acted according to the Soviet propaganda profile. At the dinner given for him by Gromyko at the Kremlin July 6, the German President called

for an end to "thinking in military and political blocs," recommending that "the spirit of cooperation" should rule future German-Soviet relations.

He spoke hopefully of a chance for German reunification, and concluded his speech with formulations borrowed directly from Gorbachov: "There is one common European culture between the Atlantic and the Urals. . . . That which divides us, shall perish, that which is common to us, shall grow."

But where was Gorbachov? Was it simply "scheduling problems" that kept him away, as the German delegation was told? Hardly, as shown by the fact that *Pravda* did not print key sections of Weizsäcker's speech the next day.

And on July 9, when Gorbachov finally received Weizsäcker and Genscher, who wanted to discuss the question of German reunification as a prominent item, he took the Germans on most rudely.

It was not through the German delegation, but through *Pravda*, that the public was informed what happened during this stormy session. Gorbachov said that the debate on "the so-called question of German reunification" raised doubts in Moscow, whether the Bonn government was still loyal to the postwar treaties with Moscow. Nobody in Bonn, he warned, should "pretend that Yalta and Potsdam are not lawful, and that there are still open questions on Germany." Blaming "Churchill and the Americans" for the postwar partition of Germany, Gorbachov said that "history" had decided there should be two sep-

arate German states. He added the demand that "some people in Bonn bid certain complexes and political myths a final farewell."

"Maybe 100 years from now," Gorbachov said, "history will decide on Germany, but whoever dares to interfere with this process of history, will face grave consequences."

Despite everything, Weizsäcker tried to maintain a facade of harmony and optimism, when he told the press on July 8 that his second encounter with Gromyko that same morning had been "open and friendly." He admitted to press questions, though: "It is not that easy here, to discuss it."

Again, *Pravda* leaked the story about this second meeting, which had ended with Gromyko handing over to the German a list of the "15 most-wanted war criminals," mainly Germans, which the Kremlin wants delivered over to the Soviet "justice" system—just as the Estonian-born Karl Linnas was given to them by the United States. Linnas, a naturalized American citizen, had been tried *in absentia* in a Soviet court, and found guilty of war crimes; his citizenship was revoked on Moscow's demand by the U.S. Justice Department, and he was sent to the Soviet Union to face a firing squad. Instead, he died in a Soviet prison hospital early in July.

Gromyko's statement on the affair was later handed out by the official Soviet news agency TASS on July 9, while there was still not one word on it from the German delegation. According to TASS, Gromyko had even charged the Bonn government with "helping these prominent war-criminals escape trial."

There is a saying here, that smearing honey on a bear's tongue will only increase his appetite. That's certainly true of Russian bears, as the German delegation was forced to notice.