

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Red-green flags over West Berlin?

City elections set the stage for a coalition of Social Democrats and Greens, with a pro-Soviet program.

The three Western allies in Berlin, and particularly the United States, seem not a bit worried about the threat posed to the city by a "red-green" Senate of the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Alternatives (AL), that may rule from Schöneberg City Hall soon. Having gained the majority of votes in the Jan. 29 municipal elections, the "red-green" alliance negotiated a joint platform calling for the downgrading of allied authority in the city. This came close to an open call for a withdrawal of all allied presence.

Spokesmen of the U.S. and British administration offices avoided all comment on the outcome of the elections, and only declared that "the composition of the new Senate is a matter for the Berlin population."

This excessive tolerance shown by the Anglo-Americans, seconded by rather positive coverage of SPD Berlin section chairman Walter Momper in the British press, means nothing good for the western part of the divided city.

Should Momper become the new mayor of West Berlin, his policy would be one of outright decoupling from the West, and of cooperation with the East. Given the highly symbolic character of Berlin as the "capital-in-waiting" of postwar Germany, an SPD-AL Senate would influence affairs also in the rest of the western part of Germany, the Federal Republic.

The program of an SPD-AL Senate pays lip-service to the special status of Berlin, the allied guarantees for the security and supply of the population in the western part of the city. But

the program also states that "the status must not be allowed to be turned into a chain holding back necessary changes in the future."

Among the more immediate steps to be taken, the SPD-AL documents recommend the following: "The allied responsibilities for domestic security should, therefore, be transferred completely and generally, though under a revocable status, to the German authorities. The Senate of Berlin shall begin talks with the three powers, to achieve a build-down of occupation laws and a far-reaching transfer of responsibility to German institutions."

Now, what would a red-green Senate do, with these transferred responsibilities for domestic security? Both the SPD and the AL declared some time ago that they aim at downgrading police, riot police, and secret service functions. Both the SPD and the AL have repeatedly blamed the riot police for "violence" during the many left-wing riots and irregular warfare insurrections, the violent protests against the Reagan trip to Berlin in June 1987, and many other occasions.

The call for the downgrading of Western allied presence and elimination of police and secret service functions in West Berlin originates with the Soviets and the East Germans. This has been one of the battle cries in the Soviet campaign to decouple the free part of the divided city from the West, gain control of the "capital-in-waiting," and make the whole city the capital of East Germany.

It is interesting to look at what lies

behind this SPD-AL document. Several years ago, the AL and the left-wing current of the SPD called for de facto recognition of East Berlin as the capital of East Germany. They declared that West Berlin, remaining in the status of "part of the capital-in-waiting," provided no security, but only raised obstacles to "good neighborliness with the East." The future of West Berlin and its population would lie, they said, in "realignment with the surrounding countryside." In other words: full integration into the East.

Combined with "extended economic cooperation between the eastern and western parts of the city," this "realignment" of West Berlin would create "conditions favorable to pulling down the Berlin Wall," Dirk Schneider of the AL explained in a discussion in 1986. The same, with variations, was stated by Gerhard Heimann of the SPD the same year.

Both were seated on the commission that worked out the platform for a red-green Senate of West Berlin. Heimann and Schneider declared that they saw "no problems with the three powers" in West Berlin. The three Western powers were "ill-advised, at least, if they acted against the will of the majority of the population," which apparently voted for a red-green Senate in the Jan. 29 elections.

SPD slate leader Walter Momper ran his campaign on the pretense that he opposed a coalition with the Green Alternatives. Had the three Western powers warned and alerted the electorate against a red-green Senate, things would certainly look different now in West Berlin.

Instead, the three Western powers dropped their responsibility for West Berlin. Red-green flags over Schöneberg City Hall would signal the transfer of real power over the city to Moscow.