

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Tractors, instead of battle tanks

Gulf war propaganda is backfiring in Germany, and critical questions are being posed.

On Feb. 6, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published a critical view of the U.S. and Israeli war propaganda against Iraq. In an article on Bush's campaign of holding prayers in American churches for Operation Desert Storm, the daily wrote:

"Western observers in the Arab and predominantly Islamic world, see Bush's religious appeal with concern, fearing that it will deepen Christian-Muslim controversies that have been there and are even intensified now by the war in the Gulf.

"Religious fundamentalism is not confined within the boundaries of the Islamic world, but it is widespread also among Christians in the United States and among Jews in Israel, and it includes even racist aspects."

In a country where most of the news media swing to the side of the Anglo-Americans in attacking the Mideast interests of German industry and government, the article was courageous.

The verdict on Bush and Shamir appeared the day after Rehavam Ze'evi, a member of the extremist anti-Palestinian Moledet party, was appointed to a cabinet post in Israel. The news of Ze'evi joining the Shamir cabinet neutralized much of the intense psy-war campaign against the anti-war protests in Germany that had used the simplistic equation: He who is against this war is against Israel and is anti-Semitic.

This attempt to strangle the broad anti-war ferment backfired.

"It doesn't really matter whether we do something for the Israelis or not—we may deliver weapons now, but it

doesn't make a difference for us. The current leadership of Israel is simply not willing to have good relations with the Germans," a German Social Democrat who has been active for years to promote a dialogue between Israel and the Arabs, said in a discussion with *EIR*. "I even think that Bush is endorsing the Israelis, in order to put maximum pressure on the Germans to finally give in and join the war line."

Any proposal for cross-border cooperation that would employ the best of Israel's technology for the good also of neighboring Arabs, has so far been turned down by the Israeli power elites, the Social Democrat said.

The German government decision at the end of January to supply Israel with air and missile defense systems against Iraqi attacks, he said, was wrong, because it encouraged those in Israel who favor military solutions. German weapons for Israel would bring no peace.

Vera Wollenberger of the "Green Party/Alliance 90" parliamentary group, who was touring Syria and Jordan at the beginning of February, also attacked German military aid to Israel because it contributed to radicalism in the neighboring Arab countries. Bonn's appeasement of Israel, she warned, would plant the seed for future Israeli-Arab conflicts, and was a short-sighted policy.

Statements of German solidarity with the people of Israel—a delegation headed by parliament speaker Rita Süßmuth was just touring Israel—were unbalanced, Wollenberger said, as long as politicians in Germany refused to take official notice of

the Israeli policy of oppression in the occupied territories.

A long-time dissident under the East German communist regime—which Edgar Bronfman's World Jewish Congress courted intensely during 1988-89—Wollenberger is qualified to attack Israel's policy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Many in Germany share this view, but don't dare speak their mind in public.

The silent majority is becoming audible, however, in public opinion polls. One recent poll showed that only 4% of Germans consider "good relations" with the state of Israel as important for united Germany.

The low percentage is the backlash to a weeks-long propaganda campaign that tried to equate popular anti-war sentiments with alleged anti-Semitism. The backlash is there, and it has to be taken into account. What must be done now is to lift the entire debate about peace or war to a higher level.

Remarks by Catholic Bishop Franz Kamphaus, of the Limburg diocese, made on television Feb. 5, are worth taking up in this context. He said one should imagine what would happen if some politician stood up and demanded DM 15 billion to launch Third World development projects just the way German politicians are willing to give DM 15 billion for the war in the Gulf. One should just imagine what good could be created by the money that is used for destructive purposes right now.

This is a good argument, and it revives an old slogan: In the mid-1970s after the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the first big oil crisis, the LaRouche lobby in Germany campaigned with the slogan, "Tractors, Instead of Battle Tanks!" The anti-war movement in Germany will add the "tractor" slogan to its campaign for a ceasefire and for peace in Mideast.