

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

All quiet on the Eastern Front?

The German government and other institutions are once again showing a suicidal appeasement of Moscow.

In its official reaction to the developments in Moscow, Bonn sailed in the pro-Yeltsin convoy of western governments, assuring him of their support for his crackdown against the "violence-prone opposition."

The fact that many moderate opposition figures who did not belong to the Ruts koy-Khasbulatov group were also victimized, held under arrest for 24 hours and more, wasn't addressed by Bonn. Nor was the fact criticized that the main mouthpiece of the moderates in the opposition, the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* daily, was put under partial censorship through Yeltsin's emergency decrees and was prevented from publishing articles critical of his regime.

Neither were the German embassy nor semi-official institutions present in Moscow, such as the Social Democratic Friedrich Ebert Foundation, able or willing to give information about the effects of the Moscow curfew and the emergency regime upon the daily work of the moderate opposition. A source linked to the foundation even said it was useless to press the Moscow authorities for information about such matters, that one would have to wait until the "dust settles."

This attitude is the old appeasement in a new coat. This is even practiced against German establishment figures. For example, Karsten Voigt, a senior foreign policy expert of the Social Democrats, was ostracized when he warned party executives at a Bonn meeting a few days before the crackdown that it was a mistake for the West to stake all on Yeltsin. He said that there were many in the oppo-

sition who, unlike Ruts koy and Khasbulatov, were worth listening to.

The appeasement line went into effect long before the recent bloody phase of the Moscow power struggle. At a foreign policy congress of his liberal Free Democratic Party, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel revealed on Sept. 10 that the German government and the West accepted a Russian sphere of influence over the former Soviet bloc except for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. These three nations would be integrated (with Moscow's consent) into the western economic and security institutions, while Ukraine and the three Baltic states wouldn't, Kinkel declared.

That congress was addressed by the foreign ministers of Britain and France, Sir Douglas Hurd and Alain Juppé, respectively, and by Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski, who was quite surprised to learn that German Defense Minister Volker Rühe had just told a Bonn meeting that Poland's request to join NATO would be on the agenda at the NATO summit in January 1994.

When the crackdown in Moscow occurred three weeks later, Bonn's official line changed visibly: It was leaked from Kinkel's Foreign Ministry that the issue would not be dealt with prominently at the next NATO summit, and it was alleged that the Polish government had accepted that.

What had caused the change was not a retraction of Poland's motion for NATO membership, but a confidential letter from Boris Yeltsin to the United States, Britain, France, and

Germany. The letter, whose existence was leaked on Sept. 30, specified that Russia wanted a say on such "vital security" issues as the integration of Poland into NATO, and warned that nothing should be done on this matter without Moscow's consent.

The affair was played down by Bonn and most of the German media, but more insightful people rightly interpreted this letter as a message from the Russian military.

When the first reports about the bloody showdown in Moscow on Oct. 4 came over the news wires, Foreign Minister Skubiszewski issued a statement in Warsaw, charging the West with selling Poland out to Russia. He said there were unmistakable signs in western governments of an intent to pull out of commitments given earlier for Polish integration into NATO, and that Poland was in danger of again becoming a buffer zone in a new Iron Curtain between the East and the West.

Skubiszewski, who called the Bonn Foreign Ministry's leaks about a changed Polish view a rumor-mongering campaign, charged that current international diplomacy resembled the conferences of Teheran and Yalta that gave eastern Europe to Moscow, and of the partition of Poland in the 18th century between the West (Prussia and Austria, at that time) and Russia's Empress Catherine II. Russian "security guarantees are not acceptable for Poland under any conditions," he stated.

Skubiszewski's remarks were played down in Bonn, and some went so far as to say that after the recent elections for Polish Parliament which resulted in dramatic losses for his UD party and other "reform" groups, he was a lame duck political figure anyway. Bonn appeasers are tuning in, already, to a strong current in Poland's new parliamentary majority that seeks closer ties to Moscow.