

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### For whom the bell tolls

*Genscher's outrageous foreign-policy performance of 1984 has made him dispensable for the Kohl government.*

**H**aving made many political enemies abroad in past years, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher is now being treated as an undesirable inside his own country, and even his own party. Criticism of his foreign policy performance has been mounting steadily, and might reach the point that he becomes a "hot potato" Chancellor Helmut Kohl will simply drop.

It happens that the Free Democratic Party, which Genscher has chaired for more than 10 years, is to elect his successor at a national party convention in early February. Genscher's defection from the previous coalition government of Social-Democrat Helmut Schmidt, which helped bring Christian-Democrat Kohl to power in October 1982, lost his party much support in its predominantly socialist-liberal base. The Free Democrats have not won a parliamentary election since. The debacle of the European Parliament elections in June 1984 forced Genscher to give his party a promise he would resign from the chairmanship by February 1985.

Genscher insists, however, that he will remain as foreign minister in the Kohl cabinet, asserting that he remains the best man for the post. Many people in Bonn have their doubts. Genscher's 1984 foreign policy record speaks for itself:

- At the peak of international outrage over the Khomeini regime's use of Iranian children as cannon-fodder in the war with Iraq, Hans-Dietrich Genscher visited Teheran for cordial talks with the mullahs.

- Only the British government's breaking of diplomatic relations with Libya after the shoot-out at the Libyan embassy in London deterred Genscher from visiting Tripoli for similarly cordial talks in late spring 1984.

- Throughout 1984, Genscher denounced or misrepresented the U.S. beam-weapon defense program, causing confusion and preventing collaboration from the Bonn government.

- Even as news poured in of large-scale Soviet troop rehearsals for a blitzkrieg against West Germany, Genscher stuck to his official "appeasement" approach toward the Kremlin. Months of a Soviet propaganda campaign against an alleged "revival of Nazism and revanchism in West Germany" brought no official protest or even meaningful comment from the foreign ministry.

- Genscher called his appeasement "an initiative for reorganizing the dialogue between East and West." In September, East Germany's Erich Honecker canceled his scheduled trip to Bonn, as did the Hungarian and Bulgarian foreign ministers. Official Polish attacks against "West German revanchism" made it impossible for him to visit Warsaw in October. That was the end of Genscher's "initiative."

- In November, he failed to protest against especially Czech attacks on German "revanchism," while preparing to carry through with a scheduled trip to Prague. A drama around East German refugees in the West German embassy in Prague was enough for many Christian Democrats, who began attacking Genscher

for his humiliating policy of "not addressing controversial issues" with any Eastern government.

- In mid-December, he visited Prague, and then pretended not to notice that the Czech foreign minister—"my best friend among the Eastern diplomats"—had attacked Bonn for "revanchism" even as his plane was landing.

- Just before Christmas, as the West German government was engaged in a propaganda effort in favor of emergency food aid to Africa, Genscher's man at the United Nations was ordered to abstain rather than vote against construction of a \$75-million U.N. conference center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The measure passed. The American delegates fumed with rage because, as U.S. envoy Nyhard said, the sum "could have been used to feed one million Ethiopian families for about one year," or "build a water-supply system for seven million Ethiopians." An embarrassed Chancellor Kohl, contradicting the abstention, wrote a letter of protest over the measure's passage to U.N. Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar.

- While a large part of the Israeli press, on the occasion of a visit from a delegation of West German Green Party members, was denouncing that neo-Nazi party as anti-Semitic, the West German ambassador to Israel came out in defense of the Greens: Ambassador Niels Hansen told a Christmas gathering of German-born Jews in Jerusalem that Israel had better treat the Greens well, or there would be "negative repercussions for Israel in Germany"—in effect threatening the Israelis with anti-Semitism if they did not welcome anti-Semitic Greenshirts!

The word is now out in Bonn: Once he has resigned from the chairmanship of his party, the bell will toll for Hans-Dietrich Genscher.