

year, the Administration has to come back and ask for a supplemental appropriation.

Members in committee constantly joke about the level of pork in their bills. Whitten stares down at his desk and grins. Pork is one thing he is candid about. Aboveboard and shameless, he'll promise support for a colleague's pork in exchange for support for his own. How could something so routine be wrong?

In the corrosive pedantocracy that is the congressional budget process congressmen grow less conscious of dis-

tinctions between pork barrel spending and substantive spending. Is Strom Thurmond's Rural Electrification pork or community development? Is Orrin Hatch's Jobs Corps pork or workfare? To many congressmen, the question is irrelevant. They prefer Jamie Whitten's maxim, "Pork is what's in the other fellow's district." And when it comes to national programs they fall back on another of Whitten's maxims: "The whole country is in somebody's district," the obvious corollary being: Go ahead, spend.

Each cut of pork gets yelped through

Congress with assurances that it will create jobs and restore prosperity. But Jamie Whitten's own district illustrates the bankruptcy of these expectations. For all his efforts, it ranks 427th out of 436 congressional districts in per capita income. His home county, Tallahatchie, is among the poorest in the United States. Nevertheless, Whitten captured 66 percent of the vote in the 1986 election.

Tom Edsell, an academic and an associate editor at the *Southern Partisan*, has kept tabs on Whitten for a number of years. Last fall he migrated from his

home in South Carolina to manage the Republican effort to oust the congressman. "There is a kind of patient, Job-like despair down here," he says. "The thing that interests me is the failure of these people even to have any sense of hope or indignation about any of this. They just don't seem to think there is anything they can do about it. They go out and vote for the man. What they are doing is licking the spoon. It tastes pretty good and they know that's all there is. They don't bother to know who he is or to get mad at him." □

## EUROPEAN DOCUMENT



### MORE HISTORY

by Amity Shlaes

West German conservatives were thinking big as they moved through the last weeks before the general election on January 25. Their last large-scale campaign rally was so giant they had difficulty finding a structure in this narrow republic roomy enough to accommodate it. In the end, they settled for a multi-stadium complex in Dortmund known as the "Deutschland Halle." Fifty-five thousand citizens from Berlin to Aachen to Lake Constance rode 355 buses and fifteen chartered trains through Sunday-morning sleet to attend. The crowds mingled in a cheery fog of beer and pea soup and milled admiringly past baby-blue stands honoring the national economic achievement. They stamped their feet on wood floors when Helmut Kohl and other cabinet members from the ruling party, the Christian Democratic Union, arrived, and cheered their round-headed leader with low, solid rumbles of "Hel-Moot, Hel-Moot."

It was when powerhouse conservative Franz Josef Strauss, prime minister of Bavaria, wandered onto the subject of national pride and the years 1933-1945 that trouble came. "Germany is more than those times," he intoned. A young man shrieked something incomprehensible from the middle of the floor at the leader; he hurled what looked like a handkerchief in Mr. Strauss's direction. It took a pack of security guards and five minutes before

the overheated hall recovered its complacent mood.

Helmut Kohl's government has problems handling this country's history. In his last administration Kohl embarked on an interesting and somewhat undirected campaign to relieve this truncated nation's national consciousness. The campaign mostly focused on the series of 40-year anniversaries marking the end of World War II. The most successful of the projects was a mollifying, Santayana-ish speech about remembering the past by President Richard von Weizsäcker on May 8,

1985; the most egregious of them, in Western eyes at least, was Mr. Kohl's decision to take the reluctant Ronald Reagan to honor German war dead at Bitburg. Even before January's election, plans were under way to go beyond ceremony and make these policies concrete. The government will allocate funding towards a pair of national museums, and it hopes to develop prouder views of the German past throughout German cultural life, from grammar schools to history books.

At first glance the conservatives'

steps don't seem unduly controversial. In the early postwar years, the twelve-year "1000 Year Reich" was taboo. Then student protestors of the 1960s and 1970s used it to spice up their attacks on incumbent governments; the authority of the Federal Republic, they claimed, was "fascist." Today, as the number of Germans who can speak about the period from adult experience diminishes, establishing an acceptable official line becomes important. But lately the Christian Democrats' message about "getting over the past" has taken on an unattractively brassy tone. The result is growing resistance from a variety of fronts, among them the opposition Social Democrats, the flourishing ecologist Green party, and some historians, who charge that the government is irretrievably damaging national memory by trivializing the National Socialist crime for rightist political purposes. "If I were a German, I would scream," says the Israeli ambassador to Bonn, Yitzak Ben Ari, of the recent rightward rhetoric. The same ambassador had applauded the earlier speech by President von Weizsäcker.

The mission, in Strauss's words, is to end the period where Germans live "continually under the shadow of the Third Reich." Germans, he argues, need no longer feel guilty about the trains that rolled to the camps. They need to build a strong national identity to survive in Europe; a confident Germany is imperative for a strong Western Alliance. Much of the new



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mood is attributed to Erlangen historian Michael Stürmer, an adviser to Kohl who is said to have convinced the chancellor of the importance of the new task. The national newsmagazine, *Der Spiegel*, quoted a CDU official as saying that "Kohl has turned from a European to a German." Such historical confidence is also a handy tool in the prestidigitation the Kohl government is frequently forced to perform regarding the German reunification question. To turn attention away from the present split, it helps to recall a time when Germany was one nation.

The first signs of the battle came with the arrival of new comparisons of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, a parallel which has been taboo in West Germany since the 1960s. One early participant in the discussion was Franz M. Oppenheimer, whose article on the question of German guilt, "Treacherous Signposts: The Perils of Misreading Germany's Past," which first appeared in the November 1985 *American Spectator*, was reprinted last May by the prestigious conservative daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.<sup>1</sup> Oppenheimer noted that "the stench and gore of the Gulag, the deaths of slave laborers during the construction of the Siberian pipeline, are not permitted to intrude into discussions..." Historian Ernst Nolte then picked up the fight. His essay, "The Past That Will Not Pass Away," appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in June, around the time the conservatives won a state election that started them rolling toward national victory. Nolte argued that the mass murder perpetrated by the Nazis was to some extent built on the model of Stalin's murders in the Gulag. Hitler, Nolte felt, was frightened by the Stalinist regime: "You have to imagine," he quotes Hitler as having said of the instruments of Russian torture, "what happens to an officer who gets put in their rat cage." The consequence was that Hitler imitated what he feared. Another historian, Andreas Hillgruber, presented the same argument in a more oblique form when he published a book with the explosive (in Germany) title, *Two Kinds of Destruction: The Destruction of the Third Reich and the End of European Jewry*.

The response to such equation was outrage—to some extent correctly so. One of the German left-wing's biggest guns, philosopher Jürgen Habermas,

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Oppenheimer's essay has also been reprinted in a new collection, *Bitburg and Beyond: Encounters in American, German and Jewish History*, edited by Ilya Levkov (Shapolsky Publishing, Inc., 56 East 11th St., New York, NY 10003; \$29.95, \$17.95 paper).

took up the case. In several articles in *Die Zeit*, Germany's answer to the *New York Review of Books*, he charged that the conservatives were advocating a national *Entsorgung*, an "unburdening," of the National Socialist past. Such relativism, used to political ends, was dangerous, even in a nation where the grandchildren of the criminals were now to lead the nation. "Does responsibility fall to the next generation, and the generation after that?... The answer is yes." As heir to the distinguished Frankfurt school, founded earlier this century by philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, as well as the intellectual symbol for many of the protests of the 1960s, the white-haired Habermas commands widespread respect among West German intellectuals. His reasoned argument is fortified by personal conviction—although not Jewish himself, for example, he has given his daughters the Jewish names of Judith and Rebekka.

On the political level, the Kohl government has failed to match the sophistication and sincerity of the academic discussion. President von Weizsäcker's speech—"Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection"—was so impressive that nearly a million Germans requested copies within three months after he'd delivered it. But more often, the party's responses have been unreconstructedly reactionary. CDU politicians, and, more particularly, members of the CDU's southern sister party, the Christian Social Union, have occasionally issued statements about German history that can't be called anything but lies, grotesque and downright. This began as early as 1983, when conservative luminary Bruno Heck wrote that "the [student] rebellion of 1968 destroyed more values than the Third Reich did. Overcoming [that rebellion] is thus more important than overcoming Hitler once again." Later Alfred Dregger, CDU party whip in the Bundestag, announced that what ended in 1945 "had already begun in 1914," and heaped blame on other European countries in a version of the stab-in-the-back tirade so dusty it could have been lifted from a Weimar salon.

Even Chancellor Kohl's own performance sometimes verged on the shameful. Most of the problems come from his indecision over whom he'd prefer to court, Washington or Moscow. In a now-famous interview with *Newsweek* magazine last fall, he felt comfortable likening Mikhail Gorbachev's propaganda skills to those of Joseph Goebbels. Back in Germany, though, he had second thoughts and let his press spokesman attack *Newsweek* for misrepresenting him, even though Kohl's staff okayed the interview transcript before publication. At Dort-

mund, Kohl did it again, suggesting in a speech to party members that there were concentration camps in East Germany. But after criticism from the East, he qualified his statement to the press. From the American point of view, the price he paid for these remarks isn't particularly high—East German leader Erich Honecker, for example "canceled" a visit he'd already postponed for years. But within détente-conscious Germany, such vacillation and its results have only discredited the chancellor.

The attitude conservatives claim to undo is a tenacious one. In a nation where the common verb "to lead" (*führen*) still retains a strongly negative connotation, the "anti-authoritarian" movement that swept Europe and the U.S. during the sixties and seventies packed an unusually effective punch. The result is that for years German children from first grade to uni-

versity have been taught two lessons: Moscow isn't as bad as America thinks, and National Socialism was a consequence of capitalism. Thus the Kohl government is fighting what to Americans would seem to be a nation of intellectuals circa 1968. Sit down for a beer with a German sociology student nowadays, and he'll tell you how the American arms industry started World War II. And this is why the German conservatives, however clumsy or uncouth, deserve support. Once the museums are up, the school books written, and the speeches made, Germans can to some extent turn to other, less politicized concerns.

Time is short, however, partly because of pressures within the CDU. The governing coalition's victory in this January's election was weaker than expected—small, extreme, rightist parties made important gains in some states. After its disappointing showing, the government may have more trouble getting through legislation that will



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put history to rest. It may also overreact and even render West Germany less democratic. Most in danger is Germany's liberal immigration and refugee law, laid into place when the Allies and Germans wrote the postwar constitution. The Bavarian Strauss, for example, has said he wants a constitutional amendment to make it harder to enter Germany. He won't be able to lobby the

two-thirds majority needed for that amendment, but he may be able to continue to block immigration procedurally. The comforting silhouette of Richard von Weizsäcker has improved the German image significantly. But even von Weizsäcker could be somewhat threatened: to be reelected in 1989, he needs votes from the right side of his party, too.

It may well be that German conservatives are grappling with history today because they neglected it earlier. Konrad Adenauer, the national father, was too busy supervising the clearing of rubble and worrying about the Soviets in Berlin to set a strong line on the Nazi past; and the public was still smarting too much to listen in any case. So the job has

fallen on Adenauer's self-proclaimed heir, the somewhat bumbling but well-meaning Helmut Kohl. The chancellor's adviser on the modern history reforms, Michael Stürmer, offered some words that are on the right track: "In a land without history, he who fills memory, defines the concepts, and interprets the past, wins the future." □

## PRESSWATCH



### A SELECTIVE BUNCH

by Michael Ledeen

#### Woodward Rides Again

The Iran/contra story, which by now has left the American public with terminally glazed eyes (they can't remember all the names, the stories all seem to blend into one another, and the quantity of air time and ink seems disproportionate to the "news"), has become the personal crusade of the *Washington Post*. No other newspaper in the world—including *Pravda*—comes anywhere near to the *Post* in its daily regurgitation of already-established information in new formats. For a while I wondered what was going on, but I think I am beginning to understand. The *Post* is determined that this story shall not die, and that it shall destroy this Administration. In order to do this, the *Post* must maintain the appearance of daily revelations, whether or not there actually are any. So it was, that when I picked up the *Post*, on February 8, I found perhaps the archetypal story of the genre, written, of course, by the great helmsman, Bob Woodward, steering in tandem with David Hoffman.

"BUSH TOLD U.S. ARMS DEALS WERE WITH IRAN RADICALS," the headline screamed. To read the story by Woodward and Hoffman, you would think that the President's entire account of the Iran affair had been shown to be false. Their story was based on the discovery of a Top Secret/Sensitive Memorandum of Conversation between Vice President George Bush and Mr. Amiram Nir, who served as the personal representative of Prime Minister Peres during much of the Iran/contra

operations. Listen to the first two paragraphs:

A key Israeli official involved in the sale of U.S. arms to Iran told Vice President Bush last summer that "we are dealing with the most radical elements" in Iran because "we've learned they can deliver and the moderates can't," according to a top secret memo written by Bush's chief of staff.

The description of the Iran effort provided by the Israeli official, Amiram Nir, contradicts the claim by President Reagan that he was dealing with Iranian "moderates" in sending the weapons to Tehran.

Then, further down in the story, comes another alleged body blow to the Administration's case:

What Nir told Bush . . . also undermines the Israeli Government's repeated claims that it played only a minor and passive role in the dealings with Iran. Nir is quoted as saying of the Israelis, "We activated the channel; we gave a front to the operation; provided a physical base, provided aircraft."

As usual with the *Post*, and especially with Woodward's exegesis of secret texts, the quotations are accurate enough but they do not prove the points made in the article. To take the last point first, Nir's recounting of the Israeli actions in the earliest phases of the story adds nothing to what was already known—indeed what had already been announced by the President himself. For Reagan had said—or perhaps he "clarified"—that a "third country" (Israel) had made the actual deliveries of arms in the early autumn of 1985. And it is clear from the memorandum that Nir was talking about this period.

The first point is rather more interesting, for while it is quite true that Nir told the Vice President that contacts

had been established with the radicals for the purpose of gaining the release of American hostages, immediately following in the memorandum we find Nir saying something of signal importance, which was neatly omitted from Woodward and Hoffman's analysis. Here is the full paragraph:

Nir [said]: "We are dealing with the most radical elements. The deputy prime minister is an emissary. They can deliver . . . that's for sure. They were called yesterday and thanked and today more phone calls. This is good because we've learned they can deliver and the moderates can't. We should think about diversity and establish other contacts with other factions. We have started to establish contact with some success and now more success is expected since if these groups feel if the extremes are in contact with us then it is less risky for the other groups . . ."

In other words, the contacts with the radicals were recent, and until then the contacts had in fact been with moderates. Moreover, the policy of contacting the radicals was helpful not only in freeing American hostages, but also in enabling the Americans and the Israelis to establish contacts across the full spectrum of Iranian politics.

Now one may admire or condemn this policy, but it is certainly wrong, on the basis of the memorandum reprinted in the *Post*, to accuse the President of hypocrisy and Israel of lying. If anything, the memo lends considerable support to the claims of the Israeli and American governments.

If Woodward and Hoffman had wanted to level a serious charge against the President, there was one right in front of their noses: the memo shows

without doubt that there was a clear program to swap weapons for hostages, even though there was also a longer-term objective. ("It is important that we have assets there 2 to 3 years out when change occurs. We have no real choice than to proceed.") This is a matter well worth discussing, for it shows how a limited, tactical objective (saving some hostages) overwhelmed a serious, strategic goal (finding ways to improve American influence in Iran, and moving towards better working relations between the two countries). That is the real tragedy in the Iran story, as the memo shows: the policy started with the establishment of contacts with moderates, and ended by working with radicals to save the hostages.

In terms of real news, there was only one truly new piece of information in the memorandum: that Bush had received such a detailed briefing. And this indeed suggests that he was less than forthcoming when he spoke of this matter.

It is hard to judge journalists' motives, but it's equally hard to avoid the suspicion that Woodward, Hoffman, and the aggressive editors down on 15th St. were delighted to have a genuine Top Secret/Sensitive document in their hands, and wanted to exploit it to the hilt. They weren't entirely sure what it all meant, but there were a few phrases there which looked like they could be used to attack the Administration. So they hammered away. Just like the *Soldier of Fortune* T-Shirt says, "Kill 'em All; Let God Sort Them Out." They should have been more selective.

#### Sin of the Month

I am guilty of a sin of omission on na-

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