

Schmidt defeat rouses fear on all sides

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

TWO YEARS AFTER HIS RE-election, and perhaps now more popular than ever, Helmut Schmidt on October 1 became the first West German chancellor to be thrown out of office by the Bundestag. The fall of Europe's most respected statesman confirms Europe's political weakness, fragmentation and dependence.

West German voters obviously do not like the backroom intrigues and deals that brought down Schmidt and the 13-year-old coalition between his Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). The FDP split as its leader, foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, went over to the other side and formed a new conservative coalition with the large Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its smaller right-wing Bavarian partner, the Christian Social Union (CSU), headed by Franz-Josef Strauss. The new government, headed by Helmut Kohl (CDU), sought its mandate in dissension within the SPD, the deepening economic crisis and public opinion polls. But these claims to legitimacy were refuted by the weather vane state elections in Hesse on September 26. Instead of confirming the shift in public favor from SPD to CDU, Hesse voters threw out the unfaithful Free Democrats, retrieved the SPD from what had seemed certain to be a defeat, left the Christian Democrats short of their anticipated government majority with only 52 out of 110 seats and elected nine Greens to hold the balance and make life difficult for the others.

Dissension within the SPD-FDP coalition had allegedly made Germany "ungovernable." But with a narrow majority resting on part of a split and weakened FDP, on a colorless chancellor and with an aggressive Strauss breathing down its neck, the new government is scarcely stronger than the one it replaced. It seems to have only one asset, which perhaps explains everything: it should be reassuring to the Reagan administration.

No major policy changes were promised. But CDU leaders emphasized their determination to "restore Bonn's privileged relations with the U.S.," and to avoid Schmidt's "arrogance" and "errors of comportment."

Schmidt's fatal flaw may have been that he had too much stature for a European leader. Merely by his visible confidence and seasoned judgment (and not much confidence in the judgments of others, notably the American leaders he saw come and go without learning much), Schmidt suggested the possibility of an independent European approach to world problems. Of course, this never materialized, but the hope was there. With Schmidt's removal and the key country of Europe turned over to leaders anxious to please Washington, that hope is dead for the foreseeable future.

Economics the deciding factor.

Ostensibly, the decisive issue was economic policy. It was in the name of "liberalism," in the European sense of free market, laissez-faire capitalism, that the Free Democrats united the coalition that swept the 1980 elections. Throughout the '70s, the liberals were content merely to block the Social Democrats from continuing the reform that marked their first years in office when Willy Brandt was chancellor. But with the deepening recession in the '80s, the liberals have been demanding a rollback of social benefits that is unacceptable to the SPD and its labor constituents. The break became inevitable on September 22, when Economics

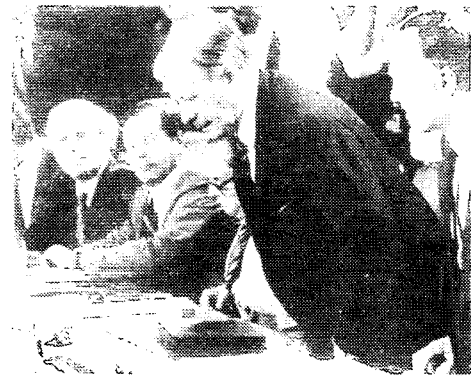
Minister Otto Lambsdorff (FDP) published a long memorandum calling for deep cuts in social spending and fiscal benefits to business. Schmidt took up the challenge vigorously, demanding that the FDP cabinet ministers either stick to coalition policy or get out. Lambsdorff, Genscher and the others promptly resigned and began—or rather, completed—their negotiations with the Christian Democrats to form a new government.

In a scathing attack, Schmidt reminded everyone that Genscher had been firmly attached to Schmidt's coattails when the FDP leader reaped his record vote two years ago. Genscher was violating his mandate by changing sides. Accusations of treachery, betrayal and even regicide converged on the FDP leader. The magazine *Stern* drew a forked tongue onto its cover shot of Genscher. The FDP's rating in public opinion polls and its score in the Hesse elections tumbled well below the 5 percent required to win seats in the Bundestag. Schmidt called for early elections (because the Bundestag is halfway through its normal four-year term) to let the voters decide. This call was echoed from the other side of the spectrum by Franz-Josef Strauss, who would like to wipe out the FDP and dominate a more right-wing CDU-CSU partnership. But to avoid this, Kohl and the other more moderate CDU leaders want to save the FDP. A compromise was reached to hold early elections, but not until next March 6.

Free Democratic leaders were gambling that this delay would give them their

the Economics Minister in the new government. But the Christian Democrats have too many working-class constituents of their own to go along very far with his program of cutting deeply into unemployment compensation, old-age pension, aid to education and public health and other social benefits in order to increase profit margins and Germany's competitive edge in the world market. The economic program adopted calls for a 14 percent sales tax increase and obligatory interest-free loans to the government from higher income taxpayers. The Free Democrats had turned down similar tax and indebtedness increases when the SPD asked for them.

Since nobody has ready solutions to the economic crisis (although it is the



would do as well if not better in national elections. This prospect so alarms the established party that it may not dare to go ahead with the early elections next spring.

The loss of Schmidt, the familiar father figure, arouses fears on all sides. On the left, intellectuals are afraid of Strauss and the crackdown they fear will be led against the peace movement by Strauss' choice for interior minister, Friedrich Zimmermann. Zimmermann was implicated in a Bavarian gambling casino in the '60s. First convicted of perjury, he was acquitted by a court of appeals on grounds of "momentary intellectual deficiency." Experienced at breaking up gatherings of young people, Zimmermann wants to send large numbers of "yes workers" back to Turkey and to tighten up the controversial ban on "radicals" in public service, known as *berufssverbot*. This would be a reversal of the liberalizing policies of former Interior Minister Gerhard Baum.

Fear of the Green party extends from the right into the SPD, where some see their unconventional disregard for post-war standards of political democracy as heralding a new totalitarian peril. Fears of Strauss to the right and of the Greens to the left could eventually savor the notion of a "grand coalition" of the CDU

With the SPD now in opposition, labor will grow more combative.



(Top) Helmut Schmidt, the first West German chancellor to be thrown out of office by the Bundestag. (Bottom) Helmut Kohl, the new West German chancellor

one chance to survive. The September 17 crisis announcing the imminent fall of the SPD caused the German mark and stock market prices to soar, reflecting enthusiasm in financial circles for FDP austerity policy. Genscher and Lambsdorff hope this psychological factor may cause enough of a business upswing to make the economic picture look reasonably good just in time for the spring elections. By claiming credit, the FDP might be able to get back over the 5 percent barrier.

But the Hesse election results sent the mark, the stock market and business morale down again. Clearly, espousing Reaganomics is no way to get elected in West Germany. Lambsdorff survives as

overriding issue), West Germans' interest may turn to other, more "qualitative" issues. On the right, this can mean concern for law and order, for sending immigrant workers back where they came from and for taking a tougher line with the Communist East.

On the left, this means nuclear disarmament, ecology and lifestyles that can accommodate slowed economic growth in the developed countries. This "qualitative" left is stronger today in Germany than anywhere else, as proved by the electoral breakthrough of the Green party.

In Hesse, the Greens got 8 percent of the vote, replacing the FDP as the third party. And recent polls indicate that they

and the SPD. While out of the question today, this might be the only way to keep the government in the middle of the road if the FDP is wiped out in the next election.

The SPD, appearing relieved that the suspense was over, seemed particularly united as it was thrust into opposition. Schmidt fell from power magnificently, putting himself and his party in a strong position to fight their way back. But serious strains are bound to develop over the questions of the Social Democrats' future alliance—FDP, CDU or Green? Public opinion surveys indicate there is strong support for the idea of a SPD-Green alliance. The left minority of the SPD believes the Social Democrats must make their comeback by coming to terms with the Greens and then building alliances with the new movement.

There are serious clashes of style and sensibility between the SPD and the Greens. They are divided over the central issue of economic growth. The Greens are generally quite ignorant of economics and lack coherent policies on many issues that legislators have to vote on. But their insistence on paying attention to the ends and not just the means of politics could contribute to a political renaissance in Europe if this new left would somehow combine with the old left of the SPD. Two crucial areas of potential agreement between them are aid to Third World developments and disarmament.

Those on the left who would like to see a rapprochement between the SPD and the Greens are hoping that an alliance against the conservative government may be built in the coming months between the peace movement and organized labor. The trade unions are preparing for big demonstrations against cuts in the social budget, and the metalworkers plan to fight for the 35-hour work week as a way to curb unemployment. With the SPD in opposition, organized labor is likely to grow more combative. This should make it easier to involve the unions in the peace movement, which is already so strong that deploying nuclear missiles in West Germany may be politically impossible, even with a conservative pro-U.S. government in Bonn. ■

IN SHORT

Make jobs, not war

The freeze referenda on the ballot in nine states this fall are not the only opportunities Americans will have to cast disapproval on Reagan's military buildup. Several million voters in more than 50 cities from Lansing to Atlanta will face "jobs with peace" proposals, which ask whether Congress should divert funds from the Pentagon for human and public service programs. Most of the referenda are non-binding votes similar to those already passed in 14 cities (Boston, Detroit, San Francisco, Madison, Oakland, Berkeley and a number of towns in Massachusetts) since 1978. But in Baltimore and Pittsburgh, the proposals would require city officials to publish figures on the amount of money taken from local taxpayers for military projects.

Frank Clemente, director of the campaigns in Massachusetts (where 41 more towns are hosting proposals this November), says the idea of the jobs with peace referenda evolved from efforts to broaden the peace movement. "It came with the recognition that we didn't represent the backbone of America—the ethnic groups, the working people, senior citizens," he says. "We saw the votes as an educational tool." According to Clemente, they have also turned out to be a good organizing tool because peace activists, labor and minorities have all mobilized behind the proposals. Jobs with peace proposals are also on the ballot this November in Milwaukee, San Jose and Worcester as well as Santa Cruz and Humboldt Counties in California. For more information contact Jobs With Peace National Network, 2940 16th St., Room 1, San Francisco, Calif. 94103, (415) 558-8615.

Recycling a good idea

At a time when unemployment is on the brink of double digits, when mass transit systems are being squeezed, when overworked sewage treatment plants are dumping untreated sludge into rivers and when highways are crumbling, the often-maligned job programs of the '30s now seem like strokes of brilliance. Under government supervision unemployed workers built 46,000 bridges, erected 62,000 buildings and dug several subway systems. The Civilian Conservation Corps, a program for unemployed youth, planted two billion trees—the timber value of which paid for the program several times over. Even Ronald Reagan's family was pulled out of poverty during the Depression when his father landed a post with one of the jobs projects. But the president, who insists over and over that the private sector can shower us all with prosperity if only given the chance, seems to have forgotten those days. But most Americans have not—85 percent of them favor a government-sponsored jobs program for young men (75 percent favor one for young women), according to a recent Gallup poll.

Meredith ain't whistlin' 'Dixie'

At Ole Miss, the university that became a bloody battlefield in 1962 when a black man named James Meredith tried to register for classes, some things have changed. But some remain the same. Blacks now play a role in the gridiron heroics that are a big part of the school's cherished traditions. But they are cheered on by fans who still wave rebel flags and sing the Confederate anthem, "Dixie." Seven hundred blacks now attend the university. But none have been accepted into the powerful fraternities and sororities that lord over the school's social life. James Meredith earned a warm welcome when he returned to campus recently to observe the twentieth anniversary of his enrollment at the previously all-white university. But, as Meredith told *In These Times*, "It's still a segregated university. Only six percent of the student body is black. They have only six blacks on the faculty. There's not another school, not even in Mississippi, that doesn't have at least three or four times as many black teachers."

Meredith pointed out that Ole Miss is an incubator for the state's elite—doctors, lawyers, business leaders and politicians—which explains why it is the last of Mississippi's schools to accept a racially mixed student body or faculty. "They get a lot of funds from the federal government," he says; "so they do the bare minimum of integration to keep those funds coming." In travels to other universities—both in the north and the south—Meredith said he still finds a great deal of discrimination against blacks. But he hasn't hung up his hopes of educational equality. As publisher of *Outlook*, a magazine published in Jackson that explores social issues in Mississippi, Meredith continues to pursue the goals of the civil rights movement. "My aims now," he says, "are the same as they were 20 years ago."

—Jay Walljasper

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Photographer unknown

Independent booksellers fight back at the chains

OAKLAND, CA—The local independent bookshop may be going the way of the family farm. Giant chains of bookstores, often subsidiaries of much larger conglomerates, are rapidly gobbling up the bookselling business. B. Dalton's, Waldenbooks and other chains accounted for only 10 percent of book sales in 1972. Now the figure is approaching 30 percent and rising steadily.

"We're selling the idea of book-reading," says Robert Haft, president of Crown Books. "I read six to eight books a week myself." Walk into one of Haft's stores anywhere in the country and you'll find an almost identical stock and store format: best-sellers, gift books, standard classics, Garfield and Dead Cats, all at discount prices. "If you paid full price," reads the sign, "you didn't buy it at Crown Books."

But it's not the chain's discounts to consumers that bother Andy Ross, owner of Cody's Books in Berkeley, Calif.—it's the publishers' generous discounts to the chains. Ross and the Northern California Booksellers Association (NCBA) have filed an antitrust suit in San Francisco's federal district court against one of the publishers, the Hearst Corporation's Avon Books, contending that Avon is giving larger discounts to the chains than to independent bookstores. The suit says the practice is discriminatory, anti-competitive and illegal under the Robinson-Patman Act, which covers fair competition.

Even if the NCBA eventually wins the suit, it's not likely to do much more than slow the trend toward concentration in the bookselling business. Neverthe-

less, the suit has provided a focus for trying to organize a difficult constituency—the independent small business people who own most of America's bookstores.

Ross believes that more is at stake in this case than the future of the community bookstore. He thinks "our cultural heritage" is on the line. "I'm convinced," he says, "that the chains' buying-influence spills over into publishers' editorial decisions on what is published."

If distribution is dominated by a few national chain stores, then the content of popular publishing will be determined by the needs of those chains. Their success depends on high turnover—shelf space is money and shelf life is brief. Slower-moving books aimed at smaller audiences—political books, poetry and books by unknown or first-time authors—won't be picked up by the chains. In turn, publishers will give them even less attention than before.

"Books," says Ross, "are unique. They present ideas that must be cherished and nurtured." Fewer books available will mean that fewer ideas are widely accessible.

Sales clerks at Crown Books think such worries about literary merit, originality and political insight are snobbish. "We do carry lots of books. No one can carry everything," one says. For them, the consumer is the ultimate test of merit and purchases are like votes at election time.

"I have more faith in the free market and economic efficiency," says Gary Halling, attorney for Avon Publishers, "than I do in subjective and moral judgments. What's important is what people want." Halling points out that even chain bookstores are

only part of the market for a publisher like Avon, because more and more books are being sold in drugstores and supermarkets.

If Federal District Court Judge Thelton Henderson rules the case must go to trial, the NCBA will have to raise "tens of thousands" of dollars to cover the court costs. "Our legal position is very strong," says Ross, "but they can outspend us as much as they have to. I hope that justice is not just a matter of dollars and cents."

—Alan Snitow

SWP members sue Lockheed

MILLEDGEVILLE, GA—Fifteen members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) filed suit against the Lockheed-Georgia Co. in late September, claiming the firm harassed, spied on and fired them because of their political activities.

The plaintiffs are using internal company documents in their case against the large defense contractor, from whom they are asking \$3.4 million in damages as well as reinstatement with full seniority and back pay. They say the documents prove Lockheed officials followed them home from work, investigated their roommates and attempted to use electronic devices to listen in on a conversation.

All but one of the plaintiffs were fired in December 1980 and January 1981 from Lockheed's Marietta, Ga., aircraft plant. They had been employed in semi-skilled jobs and were active in the Machinists' Union, according to Tom Fiske, the only one of the plaintiffs not fired. Fiske said the company began an intensive surveillance of the plaintiffs and others after a co-worker reported that SWP campaign literature was passed out at a union meeting in October 1980.

Lockheed spokesman Dick Martin said the workers were fired because they falsified information on their job applications. According to him, the socialists were among 100 employees dismissed in 1980 for "violations of company policy."

But Fiske said the Lockheed files reveal it was politics—not job application forms—the firm was worried about.

The documents came from a Lockheed file marked "SWP case," Fiske said, which contained notes on the surveillance of eight persons—outside their homes, in a shopping center, at a civil rights march and at a Red Lobster restaurant. He added, "One of the gumshoes who followed people home testified in a deposition that the only reason for the initiation of this [falsification of application] investigation was that he suspected these workers were members of the SWP."

The plaintiffs gained access to the Lockheed files through a court order from another case, in which the SWP is suing several branches of the federal government.

"We think this is a fight not just for 14 jobs," Fiske said, "but for all the unions in this country, for all the civil rights organizations. If they can do it to us, they can do it to all organizations."

—Janet Groat