

By Diana Johnstone

WEST GERMAN CHANCELLOR HELMUT Kohl's trip to Moscow last month was billed as the official opening of a "new era" in German-Soviet relations. The trip "broke the ice" between Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov and the Christian Democrat from Bonn, spokesmen said.

Nobody was fooled that Kohl deserved credit for what was happening. His arrival in Moscow was the sign that even the slowest laggard had caught up with the trend.

Kohl's ill-chosen words two years ago likening Gorbachov to Hitler's propaganda chief, Joseph Goebbels, cast a chill over West German relations with Moscow. Like a blundering whale caught in the ice, Kohl was slowly extracted from his awkward predicament by Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, with behind-the-scenes help from members of the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD) and visiting businessmen.

Kohl went to Moscow with a large delegation of bankers and businessmen who are probably more important than he is. Some consider the Soviet Union West Germany's most important future market. But business is slow so far. Gorbachov has been avoiding a spending spree that could perhaps bring quick popularity by offering the population Western consumer goods. It's not just that he wants to avoid getting the USSR in debt. It's also that he wants the rewards to come from *perestroika*, from learning how to work better.

The three billion Deutsche mark credit line opened by a consortium of West German banks will go mainly for modernization of food processing and other consumer goods production. Germans will train Soviet managers. Gorbachov wants to improve the quality of products and get away from the pattern of exchanging Soviet raw materials for Western industrial goods.

Since the Chernobyl accident the Russians have turned to the Germans for nuclear safety technology. A joint commission of safety experts will compare security features on Soviet and West Germany reactors.

The industrial giant Siemens will help build a high-temperature nuclear reactor on Russia's Volga River. The billion-dollar contract was the German nuclear industry's first foreign sale in 10 years. The project was immediately attacked as unsafe by West German ecologists, which can help explain why Siemens wants to build it so far away.

Not far enough, perhaps, to avoid controversy: West Germany is also exporting its environmental movements eastward. Last year a subgroup of the Soviet peace movement was formed that calls itself "Green Peace." And this month a Greenpeace delegation from Hamburg went to Moscow to discuss a joint environmental education program for Russian and German children. Greenpeace is planning to open an office in the Soviet Union.

This is a big change from the recent past, when the Soviets branded Greenpeace a CIA front and fought its activists protests against Soviet whaling. Soviet ecologists are already talking about the need for a "green international."

Gorbachov seems to sympathize with that view. When Brazilian President Jose Sarney was in Moscow recently Gorbachov told him that the whole world was concerned about



West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's talk of German reunification may be for naught.

Soviets' warming trend with Western Europe

saving the Amazon rain forest.

"Nice boys": The Germans who traveled to Moscow included Defense Minister Rupert Scholz, who agreed with Soviet Defense Minister Dimitri Yazov on conventional disarmament prospects, and the Christian Democratic right-wing leader Alfred Dreg-

DIPLOMACY

ger, one of the last defenders of the Germans' World War II fight against "Bolshevism." Dregger inspected Soviet soldiers, found them to be "nice boys," and announced that "only we conservatives" could have broken the ice so effectively, and not the Social Democratic Party "because of its credibility problems." It is true that adversaries of detente in the West have tried to isolate the SPD, the pioneer of *Ostpolitik*. This is no longer possible.

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Mikhail Gorbachov is not only twice as popular as Ronald Reagan in West Germany, but is also more popular than Chancellor Kohl. A poll published on the eve of the trip showed that only 19 percent of West Germans feel militarily threatened by the Soviet Union, compared to 80 percent who do not. Two out of three are convinced that Moscow wants disarmament and 71 percent favor reducing arms expenditures.

An earlier poll showed that the number of West Germans in favor of "continuing to stand closely by the U.S." has dropped by 56 percent in 1980 to 32 percent, while those in favor of a policy of neutralism between East and West have risen from 31 percent to 44 percent.

Kohl's blunt, blundering ways may make him the right man for this delicate moment in history. The Western allies, in between tear-smudged declarations of sympathy for the German people's natural desire to be together in a single nation, watch like suspicious hawks for signs that Germans might be trying to make it happen. Nothing appalls them more than the prospect of a German reunification resulting from a friendly accord between the Germans and the Russians. The traditional geopolitics of the Atlantic states has been directed at preventing rapprochement between the land powers, Russia and Germany.

Konrad Adenauer, West German chancellor from 1949 to 1963, was the darling of the West because he willingly abandoned any real prospect of a unified Germany in favor

of inserting the Federal Republic into a Western military alliance directed against the Soviet Union. The talk of "rollback" was mere bluster. In fact it sharpened East-West divisions by alarming the Soviet Union into a more rigid defense posture.

Kohl is a political heir to Adenauer. The more he talks about reunification, the less it is likely to happen. He is not the man to make some clever deal.

During his banquet speech at the Kremlin, Kohl deplored the division of Germany as "unnatural" and demanded that detente "should allow the Germans to overcome the division of their country by peaceful means." The unity of the German people "is a historic and human reality that politics cannot overlook," he declared. This recast a momentary chill.

Gorbachov reminded his guest that "the present situation is the fruit of history." Gorbachov's clear "no" to reunification was a relief to West Europeans who count on Moscow to keep Germany within bounds, but don't dare say so.

The recent promotion of former Soviet Ambassador to Bonn Valentin Falin to head of the Central Committee's international department is a sign that the Soviet leadership grants a key role to Soviet-German relations in East-West rapprochement. Falin succeeds former Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Dobrynin, who is retiring. Germany's importance to Moscow is not merely a matter of trade. Above all, it involves sharing influence in an Eastern Europe that in the coming years will evolve in unpredictable ways.

Moscow's main priority is to avoid reverting to the pre-World War II situation when Western powers fished in East Europe's troubled waters in order to weaken and attack the Soviet Union.

The prospect of such a peaceful understanding alarms Atlantic-rim powers who have traditionally built their own influence in Eastern Europe on anti-Russian and anti-German sentiments. With the Social Democratic inventors of *Ostpolitik* presently out of office, its adversaries have focused their suspicions on liberal Foreign Minister Genscher. He has recommended that the West "take Gorbachov at his word" and "use the historic opportunity inherent in the Soviet Union's new thinking."

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Genscher has been working hard to facilitate conventional arms reduction talks that could remove any justification for the pending NATO modernization of short-range nuclear missiles. His suggestions have been taken up by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. The two get along famously. Soviet leaders promise that Bonn's influence will grow as East-West relations become demilitarized.

A "hearty mutual antipathy": Genscher has apparently made some headway in convincing French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas and President François Mitterrand that it would make sense to hold up development of the short-range "Hades" nuclear missile to see what disarmament deal can be made with the Soviet Union. This has naturally put the French military-industrial complex on his back, along with the American arms addicts.

No wonder there is a "hearty mutual antipathy," according to the West German news-weekly *Der Spiegel*, between Genscher and U.S. Ambassador Richard Burt, an ardent champion of missile modernization. Burt says Genscher is "slippery."

Genscher is all the more exasperating to his adversaries in that, after 14 years as foreign minister, he enjoys solid support at home. Month after month, year after year he tops public opinion polls as West Germany's most popular political figure.

Media prejudiced toward "Western diplomatic sources" have spread innuendo about Genscher. In late September the influential French daily *Le Monde* asked pointedly: "What is Mr. Genscher's true nature...? Does he nourish unmentionable intentions as eternal champion of *Ostpolitik*?"

Le Monde said Genscher's diplomacy was based on "a few simple ideas," starting with the "typically Germanic" notion—which dis-

mays the French—that "if people keep talking even the sharpest conflict can be worked out." The French were also annoyed by Genscher's working assumption "that Germany was at the origin of Europe's misfortunes and that its first duty today is to help out." Nothing so arouses French suspicions as apparent good intentions.

The Germans do not, however, mean to "abandon the West," but rather to take the West with them. In some cases, this is easy. The Italians are second to nobody in enthusiasm for Gorbachov and in closing business deals. Kohl was preceded in Moscow by Italian Prime Minister Ciriaco De Mita, who arrived surrounded by generous Italian bankers. And little Belgium did them all a favor at the recent NATO nuclear planning meeting by holding up any decision to modernize short-range nuclear weapons.

An isolated France? France is more recalcitrant. But Mitterrand and Dumas seem

aware that it is France that risks isolation by opposing détente and disarmament. Mitterrand's spokesmen counter domestic charges of letting themselves be "towed by the Germans" by saying that the best way to keep German *Ostpolitik* under control is to go along and "envelop" it.

France has little practical alternative but to go along with West Germany. Mitterrand's original hope for a partnership of "nuclear powers" with Britain has been dashed by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's unyielding devotion to her "special relationship" with Reagan and atavistic hostility to continental Europe.

German Social Democrats have been privately reassuring French Socialists that their fears of *Ostpolitik* have been groundless. "We Social Democrats are sure that with our policy of détente we have done more for human rights in Eastern Europe than all the Cold Warriors," Horst Ehmke, the Social Democrats' foreign policy spokesman, recently told foreign policy specialists in Paris. He said that Franco-German cooperation must not be reduced to symbolic military projects. It should be primarily political.

A new era is at hand, according to Ehmke, that will be marked by the end of Soviet-American tutelage. "Are we in Europe, in Germany and France, politically prepared for such a new era? The honest answer is 'no,'" he said. He advised the French to overcome their military obsessions and stop regarding Gorbachov as "more dangerous than a Soviet arms buildup."

Ehmke said he was "outraged" that after all these years there was a Soviet leader "who is saying what for years we in the West wanted a Soviet leader to say, and we are afraid."

A concrete step toward diplomatic cooperation was decided last summer by Dumas and Genscher. In an unprecedented experiment, the two countries are planning to establish a joint Franco-German embassy in Mongolia, with an integrated staff and alternative French and German ambassadors. The pattern could be extended to other countries, and overcome the chronic French suspicion that the Germans are secretly planning to abandon the West for the East.

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By Joe Lockard

JERUSALEM

THIS WAS THE MESSAGE OF ISRAEL'S NOVEMBER 1 election: the right is taking charge here. As *In These Times* went to press, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was beginning to assemble a new government coalition composed of patriots, territorial maximalists, ultraconservative religious parties and advocates of mass Arab expulsion.

Contrary to expectations, the election results did not strengthen the two major parties, Likud and Labor. Each lost some of their seats in the Knesset, Israel's parliament. Likud now has 39 seats to Labor's 38. Still, due to better coalition-building possibilities among the Knesset's 120 seats, the right-wing Likud is in the commanding position.

The religious parties captured a historic high of 18 Knesset seats. This bloc's ultraorthodox parties now control 13 of the 18 seats. Little concerned with peace and security issues, they focus instead on such issues as Friday night movies and Sabbath legislation, sanctions against the Reform and Conservative Jewish movements and increased religious content in secular school curricula.

The effects of this religious ascendancy in the Knesset are expected quickly: bacon-eating, for example, will likely be banned. Standing in his butcher shop in Jerusalem, Moshe Kranzendorf told *In These Times*, "There are 250 shops in the country that sell pork, like this one, plus the *kibbutzim* that supply us. First thing, the anti-pork law will go through and they'll shut us down. The people of Israel are going crazy.... Don't they have anything better to do?"

Any coalition with the ultraorthodox parties would also result in multimillion-dollar government subsidies to their affiliated *yeshivas*, or religious schools. This post-election "payola" has galloped Israel's secular public for many years.

The ultranationalist parties won seven seats, which only slightly improved their Knesset representation. As ready partners in a Likud-led coalition, however, they will have a much-enhanced ability to lead and obtain government financing for a new settlement drive in the Occupied Territories.

The election results point out Labor's need for internal rehabilitation. Labor's decline is due in part to its continued unpopularity among new, younger voters and the aging of its traditional constituencies. It has become a quiescent, middle-class party that captures a major portion of its votes simply because moderate voters reject the Likud alternative.

Leftist parties such as the Citizens Rights Movement (CRM) and Mapam (United Workers) profited from disillusionment with the Labor Party. The liberal CRM gained five seats, up from the two seats it had won in the 1984 election. Mapam, which split from Labor after a 23-year partnership, firmly re-established itself as a socialist alternative party by capturing three seats.

Peace front absent: Nearly 80 percent of Israel's eligible voters went to the polls. Yet observers here suggested that voters turned out in such high numbers more in spite of the campaign than because of it.

The campaign revealed almost no new ideas about Israel's growing confrontation with Palestinian nationalism (see *In These Times*, Oct. 26). The Labor Party's main proposal called for three to six months of absolute quiet in the Occupied Territories. This would be followed by elections to choose

Right gains in Israeli vote



Palestinian representatives to a peace-talks delegation.

The proposal appeared to be aimed at undecided centrist voters, because the plan is patently unacceptable to Palestinians. Palestinians have been far too radicalized by the year-long *intifada*, or uprising, to view local elections as anything more than a meaning-

MIDEAST

less exercise supervised and controlled by the military occupation authorities.

Labor's election scheme provided the Likud with a campaign springboard. During the campaign Likud Prime Minister Shamir repeatedly and vociferously denounced the Labor Party for its readiness to entertain the notion of negotiations with the Palestinians, even within the framework of a carefully staged international conference.

Election-time violence: Since the early '50s, physical and rhetorical violence have been historical partners in Israeli elections. "Begin, Begin!" remains the menacing mantra of the Likud faithful, even though Menachem Begin stepped down as prime minister five years ago.

This year's campaign saw its full quota of violence. As they traveled around the country, Labor's Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin were stoned and targeted by vegetable-throwers. Shamir responded to the stoning of his opponents with the taunt, "What does labor want—love?"

Labor Knesset candidates endured constant screams and insults during their campaign events. It spilled over into private life: *In These Times* witnessed Labor's economic coordination minister, Gad Yaacobi, sitting at an outdoor cafe surrounded by a crowd screaming "Traitor, murderer!"

Labor candidates were not the only targets of Likud threats, of course. There were also the Palestinians. In one campaign appearance Shamir took a genocidal page from the Book of Joshua and promised a cheering crowd that if Palestinians in the Occupied Territories used weapons to resist the Israeli army, "not a single Arab will be left alive."

Labor Defense Minister Rabin entered the rhetorical competition with a campaign speech threatening, "If the Arabs do not keep the quiet, they will find themselves standing on scorched earth."

Arab violence continued uninterrupted despite Rabin's promise. Two days before the elections an Israeli mother and her three children burned to death when Molotov

cocktails hit their bus as it traveled through Jericho.

The attack triggered a xenophobic backlash against Labor as Likud turned the tragedy into a campaign issue. Labor Secretary-General Uzi Baram estimated that the Jericho bombing cost his party five or six Knesset seats, along with its status as the country's largest party.

On the same day as the bus attack two Palestinian youths were killed and another 20 were wounded by army gunfire, events that drew negligible attention and lost no one any votes.

Racist votes redistributed: Two weeks before the election the High Court of Justice ruled Meir Kahane and his Kach (Thus) party could not participate in the election. The court cited Kach's clear racism against Arabs, rejected its Talmudic arguments for Jewish separatism and indirectly compared Kach's philosophy to Nazism.

Likud leader Shamir welcomed the decision against Kach and, less publicly, so did his campaign staff. An estimated one-half of the would-be Kahane voters returned to the Likud fold, providing Likud with an extra one or two Knesset seats. The remainder of Kach's votes went to the other ultranationalist and religious parties.

Many Likud supporters were sympathetic to Kach's plight. "It's a pity they threw out poor Kahane," said Benny Mizrahi, a vocal Likud supporter in Jerusalem's Kurdish

quarter. "Imagine kicking out a rabbi and still letting the communists and the PLOniks participate!"

Kach's current strategy is to transform itself into a militant extraparlimentary vanguard that will continue to spearhead Jewish confrontation with the Arabs. But the election results appear to have made Kach redundant. The Homeland Party, headed by reserve Gen. "Gandhi" Zeevi, gained two Knesset seats. It has incorporated Kach's notion of mass Palestinian expulsions.

The real test: In the coming weeks Israel promises to enter a period of political confusion. Negotiations to form a new government may be in progress as the Palestine National Council considers declaring a government-in-exile and begins to push for its diplomatic recognition (see accompanying story).

Right-wing Israeli groups are preparing a fresh settlement push. One such group has readied a postelection plan to establish 53 new West Bank and Gaza settlements, 19 of which were approved by the outgoing government.

Nearly four-fifths of Israel's voters are almost evenly divided between the two large parties, Likud and Labor. This split into two relatively constant camps duplicates the 1984 election results and appears to signal a long-term deadlock. Given its current reluctance to cut any political deal with the non-Zionist left, Labor has very little chance of escaping this stalemate.

For Israel's left, the era of non-violent confrontation politics in the Occupied Territories ended well before the *intifada* began. Peace Now, the group that turned out 25,000 demonstrators in 1983 to protest the occupation of Lebanon, has sponsored no such protests over the *intifada*.

The election results confirmed the left's role as a witness, not a player, in shaping the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. The chances of a reversal of current trends depend greatly on Labor's behavior in opposition and whether anti-occupation sentiment will rise high enough to change Labor's message and the Peres-Rabin leadership.

The real test of the November 1 election results was how far they advanced Israelis and Palestinians toward the negotiation table and a peace settlement.

Israel flunked. Now it's the Palestinians' turn.

Joe Lockard is a Jerusalem-based writer.

Next move is up to Palestinian leadership

With the Israeli election out of the way, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) now faces key decisions of its own.

The Palestine National Council (PNC), the most important legislative authority within the PLO, gathers in Algiers on November 12. Observers say the PNC may face an important vote on the future of the Occupied Territories.

PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat, recently told Arab journalists that he may ask the council to decide on one of four options for the Israeli-controlled Occupied Territories.

• Ask for international supervision of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

• Pass a "proclamation of independence" that would mark PLO recognition of Palestinian statehood within the Occupied Territories.

• In addition to the proclamation, establish a provisional government that would attempt to establish some sort of administrative authority within the Occupied Territories and would seek international recognition.

• Establish a provisional government without a proclamation of independence.

According to Ghassan Bishara, Washington correspondent for the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Fajr*, the proclamation, or the establishment of a provisional government, would likely be based on PLO recognition of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181. Because that 1947 resolution calls for side-by-side Israeli and Palestinian states, says Bishara, such a move would mean an official and explicit PLO recognition of Israel's right to exist.

—Miles Harvey