

**Three powerful factors—military security, trade opportunities, and *Ostpolitik*—are shaping West German attitudes toward the Soviet bloc.**

—Photos by Paul Kennedy

# Germany at the Pivot

BY VINCENT P. GRIMES

**O**N ONE critical issue after another—arms control, East-West trade, modernization of NATO nuclear weapons, policy toward eastern Europe—West Germany is now exerting a major and perhaps decisive influence.

The nation of 61,000,000 seems increasingly ready to place itself at odds with key allies on the basic security issue of how to respond to Soviet power. Bonn consistently outpaces both the US and Britain in supporting Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and in calling for Western military concessions.

Bonn's actions reflect a desire for a larger role in eastern Europe, a region where the Kremlin faces vast problems and where German influence has long been a sensitive issue. Even talk of a reunified Germany is back in style.

The Federal Republic, in short, is moving toward a leading role on fundamental issues going to the heart of East-West rivalries. US leadership in NATO, reform in eastern Europe, and the future of the German nation are sure to be affected.

What is kindling the new assertiveness in West Germany's interna-

tional approach are West German economic and military power within NATO and the German perception that a historic opportunity exists to ease national problems.

The rise of a powerhouse economy in the Federal Republic, far from concentrating German attention on internal affairs, has fed German readiness to play a more prominent international role.

After World War II, Germany lay destroyed, and the lines of occupation became the frontiers of a divided Europe. From this prostrate condition, the West German state has risen to become a worldwide industrial giant and the dominant economic force on the Continent.

Its Gross National Product now exceeds \$1 trillion and continues to expand. West Germany, once a recipient of US aid, now provides its own assistance to some allies.

Within NATO's military assistance program, West Germany has been supporting moves by Greece, Turkey, and Portugal to modernize their forces. Included are funds for Hellenic Army and Air Force programs, Turkish aircraft, and Portuguese Type-209 submarines.



*The West German Air Force's first-rate equipment includes 165 Tornado fighter/ground-attack aircraft. This Tornado and crew recently visited Andrews AFB, Md., as part of a West German and Rockwell Corp. joint effort to develop the Tornado as the next-generation US Wild Weasel aircraft.*









*The multinational European Fighter Aircraft program will give the Luftwaffe a new primary combat aircraft in the late 1990s. The twin-engine, single-seat EFA will be very agile and will boast advanced avionics. West Germany plans to buy 250 EFAs in the late 1990s, along with other weapon systems modernizations.*

West Germany's military achievement has been less spectacular but equally critical to its emergence as a power in European affairs. Today, the highly professional German force of 485,000 active servicemen and 800,000 reservists is viewed as a key to NATO conventional defense on the Continent.

This is true despite restrictions imposed on West German military power. Under provisions of the Paris agreements of 1954, which cleared the way for West German rearmament, all forces except a Territorial Army are under direct command of NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. German law bans production of nuclear, biological, or chemical arms.

### **German Force Lineup**

The West German Air Force, 109,000 strong, comprises ten wings of fighter/ground-attack aircraft, two wings of air defense fighters, and two wings of reconnaissance aircraft. The Luftwaffe possesses excellent personnel.

In addition, much of its equipment is viewed as first-rate. Included in the German inventory are 165 relatively new Tornado fighter/ground-attack aircraft, 160 F-4 Phantom interceptor and fighter/ground-attack aircraft, sixty RF-4

Phantom reconnaissance aircraft, and 175 older and soon-to-be-replaced AlphaJet fighter/ground-attack planes. The swingwing Tornado is the backbone of the German fighter/bomber force.

On land, West Germany boasts the largest standing army in western Europe, one numerically larger than US Army forces in Europe and with more main battle tanks.

West Germany's Army, or Bundeswehr, today has 345,000 troops, 170,000 of them conscripts serving active-duty terms of eighteen months. Of the total, about 266,000 are assigned to the Field Army committed to NATO defense, 49,000 to the Territorial Army, and the balance to various support units and headquarters. In addition, there are 710,000 Army reservists.

The Bundeswehr, until recently, was organized into twelve divisions: ten mechanized, one airborne, and one mountain. Long-term problems, however, have forced the service to reorganize. This reorganization, carried out under a plan known as "Force Structure 2000," calls for a force of ten mechanized and two airmobile divisions, plus another thirteen brigades of the airmobile, lift infantry, and mechanized infantry type. The new setup will require fewer active-duty troops.

At the heart of the Bundeswehr is its large force of some 5,100 main battle tanks. Of these, 1,800 are of the Leopard II type. The older Leopard I numbers some 2,400. There are also 900 or so older US-made M48 tanks.

While Germany's tank force is dwarfed by Soviet armor holdings, it is nevertheless larger than that used by the German Army to overwhelm France in 1940 and invade Russia in 1941.

The Bundeswehr is facing some sharp peacetime challenges, the greatest of which is a demographic downturn in West Germany. With the pool of draft-age men shrinking, Bonn is experiencing growing difficulties finding servicemen in sufficient numbers. The Army also has problems retaining second-term NCOs.

West Germany's Territorial Army, organized into five divisions, is intended for rear-area duties such as home defense, base-area security, and reserve training. Also under the Territorial Army command are German battalions assigned to a joint Franco-German brigade, based at Böblingen, which falls outside NATO supervision.

Germany's Navy, the Bundesmarine, has only 38,500 officers and sailors, including 6,800 naval aviators. Even so, efforts over the past two decades to increase German seapower have been largely successful. The fleet, deploying 150 ships in 1970, now operates some 180 vessels. The total includes twenty-four diesel submarines and eighteen surface combatants. Delivery of the last of eight Bremen-class frigates will soon be complete. These 3,750-ton ships are armed with Harpoon antiship missiles and NATO Sea Sparrows.

### **Modest Modernization Plans**

The services are due to benefit from modest modernization programs. The most conspicuous, the multinational European Fighter Aircraft (EFA) program, will provide the Luftwaffe with a new primary combat aircraft in the late 1990s.

The EFA is to be a twin-engine, single-seat design with a delta wing and canard configuration, making it very agile, and with advanced avionics. Luftwaffe plans call for buying 250 EFAs. Also on tap are sixty



additional multipurpose Tornado fighters and up to 3,000 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles.

Though it has run into development problems, the new PAH-2 attack helicopter is expected to increase German Army capabilities substantially in the 1990s. This aircraft is being developed jointly with France at a cost to West Germany of \$4.5 billion. The Bundeswehr will get 200 of the PAH-2s, which are slated to perform many of the same tasks that the US Army's new LHX will perform.

Four ships of a new, all-German frigate class are about to be ordered at a cost of \$1.5 billion. Twelve Type-206-class subs are being modernized to operate in high-threat waters. These will be equipped with the Krupp-Atlas SLW-83 combat information system, built around an upgraded DBQS-21D sonar, and the DM2A3 antiship, antisubmarine torpedo. The Bundesmarine will purchase at least twelve new, long-range, maritime-patrol ASW aircraft, variants of the US Navy Long-Range Air ASW Capability Aircraft, the Lockheed P-7A.

Taking into consideration Germany's economic power and formidable defense contributions, Bonn's allies now are demonstrating what experts say is new attention to West German views on strategic affairs.

For example, analysts point to slow and cautious development of SACEUR's Follow-On Forces Attack concept for the conventional defense of western Europe. FOFA's more aggressive features have been toned down to allay German political concerns.

Just as the realities of German national power have kindled a new purposefulness in Bonn, long-standing German vulnerabilities and weaknesses impart a new sense of urgency on many issues.

Today, the most obvious and by far most significant manifestation of new German assertiveness concerns Bonn's reaction to Kremlin initiatives under Gorbachev. "Gorbymania," present to some degree in all Western nations, is epidemic in the Federal Republic. While it is still possible in Washington, London, and Paris to regard the Soviet leader's peace overtures skeptically, many Germans have embraced his arms-control, disarmament, and

trade ideas almost without reservation.

### Three Motivations

Three factors account for mounting West German insistence on striking an independent pose on this critical East-West issue.

The first is a military security problem like none other. Gen. Eberhard Eimler, when he was Chief of Staff of Germany's Air Force, described the situation vividly:

"Two-thirds of all Soviet forces are stationed in Central Europe or in the western part of the USSR. There is no other part of the globe where so many military bases, troops, weapon systems, and nuclear warheads are concentrated as at this line dividing the two power blocs. The Federal Republic of Germany extends from south to north over 625 miles, . . . the longest common border with the Warsaw Pact. The average width of the Federal Republic of Germany from east to west is not more than 135 miles, a distance any modern aircraft can cover in less than fifteen minutes. About eighty percent of our industries are situated in a strip no more than 100 miles deep along the Iron Curtain."

The West German public and ma-

ior politicians alike are preoccupied with the need to reduce this threat to German security. Gorbachev is widely viewed as the best chance for peace and worthy of strong Western support.

Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has maintained that the West must move swiftly to help Gorbachev in his avowed effort to change Soviet society. In June, West Germany and the Soviet Union pledged in an East-West document to strive for disarmament and intensify cooperation. Signed by Gorbachev and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the statement commits their nations to seek "a peaceful European order or a common European home."

This preoccupation with the promise of peace held out by Gorbachev accounts, in part, for lukewarm German support for modernization of short-range nuclear missiles in Germany. In April, the two strongest supporters of the plan, the US and Britain, gave in to Bonn's demands that NATO put off a decision on deploying a new, longer-range version of the Lance missile. Many Germans view the step as needlessly provocative.

Then Bonn surprised Washington by calling for immediate negotiations on the missiles despite prior



The West German team was the overall winner of Airlift Rodeo '87—a testament to the quality of training and motivation of the Luftwaffe's 109,000 highly professional personnel. Here, a German Transall C-160 taxis off after making its assault landing during the competition.

—USAF photo by S/A Nancy Smelser





*The fate of NATO and reform in eastern Europe are sure to be affected by the Federal Republic's growing role in East-West affairs. West Germany's independent stance is motivated by military security considerations, economic factors, and the "German Question": Can and should the two Germanies be reunited?*

US and British calls for the Soviet Union to reduce its conventional superiority in advance of any new missile negotiations. The Allies pattered over their dispute at the May NATO summit in Brussels, agreeing to postpone the decision until 1991. While the argument has been pushed to the back burner until after German elections next year, it seems virtually certain to move to the forefront again.

On the question of military spending, West Germany once again is at odds with Washington. In the view of West Germans, the Soviet threat is fading fast and will continue to dissipate unless Gorbachev is backed into a corner by a Western buildup. Some experts note a growing German desire for what they call "burden-shedding," rather than burden-sharing. That notion contrasts with the US government view that Soviet power has not declined much, if at all.

### The Factor of Trade

The second reason that West Germans are more enthusiastic than others about pursuing détente with Gorbachev is economic.

In Germany, there is conviction

that economic prospects are emerging not only in Russia but also in east European markets. Germans are understandably loath to sacrifice their potential economic stake in East-bloc trade.

West Germany, Russia's top trading partner in the West, exports billions of dollars worth of goods to the Soviet Union each year; two-way trade fluctuates between \$7.5 billion and \$10 billion. Even so, exports to the Soviet Union account for only a small percentage of West Germany's total exports. Gorbachev has claimed that Soviet-German trade is lower than it should be, and he is seeking to expand it.

On a visit to Germany last June, Gorbachev issued a strong appeal to German business leaders to step up investment and trade with the Soviet Union. To help the process along, he signed a new accord expanding guarantees to German firms operating in Russia.

In the "satellite" nations of eastern Europe, West Germany is even more anxious to encourage developing political trends and to establish itself as an economic force. For several years now, Bonn has been promoting investments and trade in

the region. One goal was to raise hopes in eastern Europe and defuse potential political explosions. The lure of economic advantage, however, is undeniable and growing more intense.

Western leaders encourage Bonn's initiatives—up to a point. The concern is whether Germany, perceiving national opportunities in the East, could one day find that its interests conflict with those of NATO as a whole.

### The Pull From the East

The third reason for West Germany's unprecedentedly robust support for the Soviet leader is political. Over the past two decades, Bonn's policy of promoting better relations with Moscow and the East has enabled hundreds of thousands of Germans in the East to reach the West. West Berlin also has enjoyed relative tranquility.

Germans see in Gorbachev's reformist attitude a possibility to achieve progress on the central and most sensitive "German Question"—how to overcome the postwar division of the German state into capitalist West and Communist East.

Few expect early reunification of the two Germanies; slow development of greater cross-border ties is viewed as the maximum change allowable, given the concerns that a reunified Germany would arouse all across Europe.

Even so, long-term reunification has become the subject of the most widespread discussion in years. The Alliance's most recent policy document, for example, restates its view that true peace "will require that the unnatural division of Europe, and particularly of Germany, be overcome."

In Germany recently, US Ambassador Vernon A. Walters declared that the flight of East Germans to the West in recent months indicates that the Germanies may be reunited in the not-too-distant future. Diplomatic observers said it marked the first time a senior diplomat spoke of reunification as anything other than a theoretical, long-range possibility.

The sum of these factors is recognition, inside Germany and out, that Bonn is destined to play a key role in the unfolding of East-West affairs. At least for the next few years, the nation to watch is West Germany. ■