

LETTER FROM FRANKFURT



# Cold War science

Some recent defectors are giving Bonn an embarrassing time

by Ted Shoemaker

Like a rerun of an old movie, the spectacle of a trio of defecting scientists is disturbing the equanimity of the West German science community. The Bonn Government is trying to counteract the propaganda coup, but the statements put out by West German Science Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg have a defensive flavor to them.

In interviews well publicized by the East German Government, the three scientists, who left within as many weeks late last year, have been accusing the West Germans of using scientists to revive militarism. The charge, although standard, is more politically significant than usual because of recent Russian and East German threats to treat West Germany as they did Czechoslovakia if they feel their security endangered.

The incident demonstrates that Germany, both East and West, is still a focal point of the Cold War, and remains sensitive to the minor skirmishes no matter how warm or cold is the general atmosphere between the great powers.

The three scientists, all in their 30's, are Dr. Peter Möbius of the Institute for Theoretical Physics at Karlsruhe, Dr. Herbert Patzelt, a physicist who worked for the European nuclear organization Euratom, and microbiologist Dr. Ehrenfried Petras, who left the Institute for Aerobic Biology at Graf-schaft.

Both Dr. Patzelt and Dr. Petras were in organizations that are particularly sensitive at the present time.

Euratom, Dr. Patzelt's employer, has been the focus of German resistance to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (SN: 5/11/68, p. 449). On the question of inspection of nuclear power stations to see that their output is not being siphoned off to make bombs, the Euratom nations have insisted that they be allowed to keep their present setup, by which Euratom members inspect each other's installations. Other non-nuclear nations would be subject to the inspection of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Germany has not yet taken action on the treaty, and the Euratom role is one focus of the opposition.

Euratom, says Dr. Patzelt, using a phrase which has become a Cold War cliché, is "a tool of the Bonn militarists."

Dr. Petras's connection with the Institute of Aerobic Biology is equally embarrassing. His charge that the institute is engaging in development of offensive biological and chemical weapons is particularly significant because, by a 1955

pact, West Germany is barred from producing them.

Bonn says it abides by that treaty, and that the work being done is defensive only. But Dr. Petras says, "Where is the defense capability of a substance so poisonous that a gram is enough to kill a million people? . . . It can be very difficult for a scientist to decide where the defensive virus stops and the aggressive virus begins."

Bonn has responded to the attack on its defense programs by saying that all its military research is being carried out jointly with its Western allies, giving the impression that anything Germany develops will be under the control of other countries.

At the same time, the West Germans are trying to play down the defectors as small fish.

Science Minister Stoltenberg claims that only eight West German scientists, including the present three, have defected to East Germany in the last three years, while 77 came in the other direction. The East German defectors, he says, included 6 university professors, 13 engineers and 58 scientists from various fields.

As for the eight West-to-East defectors, Stoltenberg says all held subordinate positions, and none had access to classified information. All had close ties with East Germany, he says: They were born there, had studied or worked there, or had wives, children or parents living there at the time of their defections.

Because of the restrictions East Germany puts on leaving for the West, Bonn officials are convinced that many other scientists would like to leave if they could.

Among scientists, most of the dissatisfaction in East Germany seems to be political rather than economic. East German scientists are at least as well financed and paid as in West Germany, and one of Dr. Möbius's co-workers suggested that he might have been tempted by a higher salary than the \$500 a month he was getting at Karlsruhe.

Nor do scientists appear to be unreasonably fettered in East Germany: The research program looks balanced and includes a number of fields that don't have much bearing on national goals.

Outside of the political embarrassment, Bonn officials are not too worried about the few defections they have had to the East. They are much more bothered by the brain drain to other Western countries, principally the U.S., and would be very happy to find some way of stemming that flow.