

## Hamburg elections

# Power politics

### Heidelberg

Nuclear power and the environmentalists will play a crucial part in next week's local elections in Hamburg. The election on 6 June will be a four-cornered fight. The looseness of the traditional social democratic grip on the Hanseatic city state reflects the party's national difficulties. Mayor Klaus von Dohnanyi may well be returned, but with a minority in the senate. Proposals for a *gross Koalition* between the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the second largest party, and SPD have been dropped. The Free Democrats (FDP), aligned to SPD, are fighting for the 5 per cent vote needed for survival under the proportional representation rules. But the crucial minority, likely to get 8-10 per cent of the vote, is the Grün-Alternative Liste (GAL), an umbrella party of some 150 groups based on issues ranging from citizens' protection and women's rights to environmentalism and opposition to nuclear power.

Mayor Dohnanyi would apparently be willing to attempt a minority administration with GAL cooperation. Despite the difficulties of arriving at even an internal GAL consensus, and despite its preference for a role in opposition, GAL may agree. But its terms include rejection of the new *Energiekonzept*, the controversial product of long hard bargaining between Hamburg and the Hamburgischen Electricitätswerke (HEW).

These plans, announced on 27 April and heralded as classic reforms, involve going ahead with what is probably the country's most disputed nuclear reactor, at Brokdorf, and also the construction of four conventional coal-fired power stations with heat-coupling. Under the previous plan, 70 per cent of Hamburg's electricity was to have come from nuclear reactors; this has now been reduced to 25 per cent with the possibility of extra conventional capacity that would allow Brokdorf to be abandoned by the year 2000. HEW will invest DM3,000 million for the electricity-heat project and DM2,500 million for Brokdorf. DM50 million will be contributed by the federal government, which sees the plan as a pilot project for integrated energy supplies in built-up areas. A third of a million homes will be heated, 1,500 jobs created, 140,000 tonnes of oil saved, and pollutant emissions significantly reduced.

The plan provides ammunition all round. GAL insists on withdrawal from nuclear power plants at Brokdorf, Brunsbüttel and Krümmel. Nor is the prospective advent of a friendly neighbourhood coal-fired power station, however smart, pleasing to that diverse conglomeration. Within SPD, nuclear power is strongly supported by the federal government but

rejected by both Social and Free Democratic Parties in the north. The local Hamburg SPD voted last year for withdrawal from Brokdorf and the previous mayor, Hans-Ulrich Klose, resigned on the issue. The new plans split Dohnanyi's home base and may well drive SPD left, nearer to the "Greens".

Despite Dohnanyi's sleight of hand, his attempt to back the nuclear power issue both ways may leave him stranded. The Christian Democratic mayoral candidate, Walther Leisler Kiep, has attacked the financial basis of the project and the move from clean environmentally favourable nuclear energy to coal, predicting higher energy prices and an electricity gap if local objections slow construction of the coal-fired power plants.

Peter Glotz, party executive secretary, compares the social democratic response to the unwieldy manoeuvres of a tanker. If Hamburg's "Greens" reach the bridge, the Dohnanyi *Energiepolitik* may go overboard and the national supertanker be on course for a dry dock. **Sarah Tooze**

## East-West energy trade

# Pipeline ploy

President Reagan's visit to Europe next month will include major talks on the future of East-West trade. The immediate issue is that of the interest rates to be demanded of the Soviet Union. The Americans' wish to increase them is opposed by some West European countries, notably West Germany, which feel that if the Soviet Union is reassessed, several other countries should be treated likewise.

The Soviet Union has a chronic shortage of hard currency. One possible means of repaying loans would be a counter-trade in fuel, particularly natural gas, which during the 1980s will increasingly replace oil as the Soviet Union's major fuel export. French and West German contracts for deliveries of gas from the Urengoi field originally caused the Americans considerable concern. Of late, however, they appear to have accepted European arguments that the amounts involved (10,500 million cubic metres for West Germany plus 700 million for West Berlin and 8,000 million for France) form only a small proportion of the energy budget, and do not constitute dependence. However, the signing of a contract last week for the supply to Switzerland of 360 million cubic metres of gas annually for 30 years suggests that other West European customers for Soviet gas might not follow the comparatively small demands of France and West Germany.

The transfer of technology, heavy-duty pipelines and compressor equipment, as part of the initial Western investment in the pipeline, continues to worry the Americans, although little or nothing is involved that had not been made available to the Soviet Union ten years ago.

A recent survey of East-West energy trade, however, suggests that the lack of a coherent Western policy could considerably weaken the position of the NATO countries in the changing energy situation of the 1980s. The survey's author, Jonathan Stern, describes a dual energy scenario for the 1980s.

On the one hand, Stern says, an endemic energy shortage will develop in Eastern Europe which will only be made good by purchases on the hard-currency market. Under present agreements, the Soviet Union cushions increases in the price of oil and gas to the Comecon countries, but only up to an agreed amount, leaving an increasing gap to be filled from the world market. Unless the Comecon countries can agree with the oil producers to purchase oil and gas with soft currency, foreign debts

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will escalate and political and economic tensions will increase.

On the other hand, gas exports are an attractive hard-currency earner to the Soviet Union. Construction of the pipeline, in spite of the delays imposed by the US sanctions after the military takeover in Poland, is likely to go ahead, and once the pipeline is in operation, further contracts with the West are likely.

A coherent Western policy, Mr Stern urges, should therefore be worked out, based on the following criteria:

- Are other gas suppliers a more acceptable security risk?
- Are the security risks outweighed by related contracts?
- What would the Soviet Union achieve by cutting supplies (granted that it would lose more than 50 per cent of its hard currency earnings by doing so)?

Lack of such a policy, Mr Stern argues, would not only allow the Soviet Union to claim a political victory (by pointing out cracks in the Western alliance), but would also weaken the Western bargaining position in dealing with the other aspect of the East European energy problem — the efforts of the energy-poor countries of Eastern Europe to top up supplies on the world market. **Vera Rich**