Germany to decentralise nuclear waste treatment

GERMANY'S ambitious plans to build a huge nuclear waste disposal centre at Gorleben in Lower Saxony have finally been dropped, despite pressure from the federal government. On 30 September Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and the Minister-President of the eleven German Länder agreed to abandon the plan after a series of lengthy negotiations. And the nuclear industry have now decided to approach the problem in smaller stages.

After an international six-day hearing last May (24 May, page 283), Minister-President Ernst Albrecht of Lower Saxony (CDU) had rejected plans to build an integrated nuclear waste disposal centre at Gorleben. However the Federal Government under Chancellor Schmidt (SPD) continued to adhere to the concept of an integrated waste disposal centre. The result was stalemate and additional delays to nuclear expansion in West Germany — because of the law-courts' insistence on feasible nuclear waste management before granting licences to new nuclear power plants.

But now Chancellor Schmidt and the Minister-Presidents of the Länder have agreed on the following points:

- West Germany is to manage the whole of its nuclear fuel cycle but in small units at different sites.

- No reprocessing plant of any kind is to be built at Gorleben in the foreseeable future. Instead, the possibility of building one or more small reprocessing plants at other sites in West Germany is to be investigated and the final decision on reprocessing is to be taken by the mid 1980s.

- Testing of Gorleben salt domes for final storage will continue.

- Lower Saxony and Northrhine-Westphalia have agreed to build two or three intermediate storage facilities which will be needed for about 20 years before a final solution to the storage problem is developed. The Bavarian criticism that "compact storage facilities" within nuclear power stations "contribute to the intermediate storage problem" has been taken into account.

- Research into alternatives to reprocessing, in particular final storage of unprocessed spent fuel, is to be supported.

But there many unknowns in this political solution. One certainty, however, is that no reprocessing plant will ever be

built at Gorleben — Minister-President Ernst Albrecht is trying to avoid endangering his political career, especially as he is a potential candidate for the chancellorship in 1984 or 1988. A complete new reprocessing plant may never be built especially if ideas to enlarge the existing experimental plant at the nuclear research centre in Karlsruhe are adopted.

However the problems of siting intermediate storage facilities might be only marginally easier than those of siting reprocessing plants and final storage facilities. In Ahaus (Northrhine-Westphalia), for example, which has already been selected as the site for intermediate storage ponds, the CDU lost 20% of their former votes during local elections last week while a recently-formed opposition group won 25% of the votes.

Further, the question of whether the law-courts will accept the intermediate storage compromise as a solution to the waste management problem for the time being is still open. And last but not least, the congress of the governing SPD (Social Democratic Party) will be held in Berlin in December. Nuclear power will top the agenda.

Klaus Hopfner

Soviet psychiatrist attacks 'Snezhnevskism'

MOSCOW'S psychiatric establishment has now produced its own internal dissent — according to US psychiatrist Walter Reich. He was referring to an article, soberly titled "Differentiating Exogenous Psychiatric Illness from Schizophrenia", which was apparently sent abroad by unofficial channels and appeared in the August issue of the US "Archives of General Psychiatry".

Of itself, the article appears to be simply a criticism of current Soviet diagnostic procedures. On the basis of an analysis of more than 300 patients, the author, Dr Eteli Filipovich Kazanets of Moscow's Serbskii Institute of Forensic Psychiatry speaks of many "over-diagnoses", "incorrect diagnoses", the necessity for "revising many long-standing diagnoses" and the "criteria, associated with the Snezhnevskii school" which "over-extend the diagnosis of schizophrenia".

For Andrei Snezhnevskii, head of the Institute of Psychiatry of the Soviet Academy of Medical Sciences, all mental illness is some form of schizophrenia. Indeed, he has identified a number of types which seem of specifically Soviet provenance, including "sluggish" schizophrenia which, it appears, has no presenting symptoms except political dissent.

Dr Kazanets, it must be stressed, does not in any way refer to the "political" application of Snezhnevskii's theory — although coming from the Serbskii Institute which has been responsible for

many diagnostic reports on dissidents. Indeed, he does not even say that the patients whom he reviewed were in fact in good mental health — only that they were suffering from brief "exogenous psychoses" which could have been cleared up in a short time, without for the long "rehabilitation" process with compulsory attendance at psychiatric outpatient clinics and domiciliary visits.

Where, then, lies the "daring" which Dr Reich — known as a moderate and cautious commentator — finds in the article? It should be stressed, perhaps, that even apart from its provenance, the study is, in the words of Jack Weinberg, former president of the American Psychiatric Association, scientifically "significant".

Of recent years Snezhnevskii's theory of schizophrenia has made a number of western psychiatrists wonder how long a meaningful dialogue with their Soviet opposite numbers would be possible. Irrespective of the political misuse to which they could be put, Snezhnevskii's views, it was felt, could impose a Lysenko-type isolation on Soviet psychiatry.

To attack these entrenched ideas, Dr Kazanets was obliged to send his manuscript abroad "privately", bypassing the official postal (and censorship) channels — an action which in itself could have serious consequences. Yet the article is, in itself, controlled in tone. Certainly, as western commentators have been keen to point out, he notes that the "prolonged retention of individuals on psychiatric,

dispensary lists long after their recovery infringes on rights" (not "human rights" as it has been misquoted). He also implies, however, that Soviet society as a whole may suffer: the "illegal inclusion of persons not mentally ill on psychiatric rosters" may entail "criminal elements" being unjustifiably freed from "responsibility for their crimes".

Dr Kazanets has long been considered something of a "loner" and "troublemaker" by his colleagues, and it is not surprising that he should be the first to raise his voice in qualified criticism of Snezhnevskii. Nor is it entirely surprising, that some cracks are occurring in the monolith of Snezhnevskism. Already some "establishment" psychiatrists are known to have associated themselves with the dissident "Working Commission for Monitoring the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes" (a body which in spite of official harassments is still producing a regular bimonthly *samizdat* bulletin).

One should not, however, be over-optimistic. So far there is little indication that Dr Kazanets has any great following, although at least one of his colleagues has been prepared, privately, to testify to his intelligence and "stimulating" personality. Such an assessment may well be needed in months to come — for already there are hints that certain Soviet "establishment" psychiatrists are referring to Dr Kazanets's challenge as itself a symptom of — "schizophrenia".

Vera Rich