

West German research and technology

Meeting of past and present

The ceremony last week to open the new London premises of the Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society was attended by the unlikely trio of Dr Heinz Riesenhuber, the present minister at the West German Ministry for Research and Technology (BMFT) and two of his predecessors, Dr Andreas von Bülow and Professor Hans Leussink.

Dr Riesenhuber was in London to discuss Anglo-German cooperation in science and technology with the British government, especially in the context of international organizations such as the European Molecular Biology Laboratory and in information technology. He is also interested in joint industry-government collaboration between Britain and West Germany.

Such work might be managed on the West German side by the federally supported Large Research Centres. Riesenhuber reiterated his aim of directing the work of these centres to more industrial projects and his hope that small to medium-sized firms (fewer than 200



Heinz Riesenhuber... advocate of collaboration

employees) will band together to support research at the centres. This may simply mean that these centres impinge on the ground at present occupied by the Fraunhofer Gesellschaft, which supports a number of cooperative research laboratories, and independent contract research centres without increasing the amount or effectiveness of research and development. It remains to be seen, however, what form the as yet undefined "indirect" support of industrial research will take.

Last week the minister acknowledged the achievements of West German science under his predecessors and, conscious that research and development is a long-term activity, accepted that change must come slowly. He is, however, concerned about the mediocrity of much basic research and wants to give more support to outstanding scientists. In a constant budget for basic research, this means that money will be less evenly spread. On the other hand, it is not clear how budding geniuses are to be iden-

tified before they flower, and with the proposed replacement of student grants by loans (even in secondary education) from 1984 those from modest backgrounds may find it difficult to be recognized. Nevertheless, Dr Riesenhuber believes he knows who the top five in genetic engineering are, and hopes to lure at least one of them to a Large Research Centre.

Dr von Bülow, Riesenhuber's immediate predecessor, was present in his capacity as deputy chairman of the trustees of the Volkswagen Foundation, which has paid

Polish education

New students' association's aims

Poland's new student union, the Association of Polish Students (ZSP), launched last month, has announced a wide programme of action and campaigning to cover virtually all aspects of the higher education process — "the formulation of demands concerning secondary education", equal opportunities of entrance to university, grants, rest and sports facilities, the patronizing of student artistic activities and the "student scientific movement", rationalization of the job market and a loans system for graduates who have difficulties in obtaining housing.

Just how ZSP intends to pursue these aims is not clear — under the new Higher Education Act, which came into force on 1 September, student associations do not have trade union status, and the right to strike is denied them. Some innovations — such as student grants, means-tested on the income of the whole family — have already been introduced by the new act. Other problems, including the disparity of secondary educational standards between urban and rural schools, are already matters of serious government concern. One of the "most important goals" of the association, "exerting influence on matters concerning further education" and the creation of "self-management and democracy" within universities and colleges, is, the statute admits, already covered by the new law, and the association's role will be to lobby for improvements and amendments.

ZSP was founded as a continuation of the old Socialist Association of Polish Students (SZSP), which lost most of its members in autumn 1980, when the Solidarity-type Independent Students Association (NZS) was founded, while many of its functions, including travel and welfare matters, were taken over by "self-government committees" on which both unions were represented. After NZS was banned last January, its members showed no sign of returning to SZSP. Accordingly, shortly before the SZSP Congress (19–20 November), the governing council of SZSP

for the renovation of the premises taken over from the Pharmaceutical Society. Since leaving office in October, Dr von Bülow has made known his belief that one of the two experimental nuclear reactors should be abandoned. (The costs of completing the fast and high-temperature reactors were a persistent problem for him as they still are for his successor.) In von Bülow's view, the price of uranium is such a small factor in the overall cost of existing light-water reactors that neither reactor can become competitive in the next thirty years, whatever the price of other fuels. This is in sharp contrast with the policy of the present government to complete both reactors.

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recommended that the word "Socialist" should be dropped, and that the association should be reshaped to draw in as wide a membership as possible. At the same time, the governing council made clear, the experience of the past ten years should be incorporated and a firm commitment made to socialism. Thus the new ZSP statutes not only acknowledge the "leading role" of the party but also pledge the association to fight for the implementation of socialist values in Poland, and to cooperate with "progressive" youth organizations abroad in the "battle for peace and national and social liberation".

The Congress of SZSP/ZSP met against a background of continuing university unrest. A few days earlier, all teaching in Torun University had been suspended for a week after disturbances in one of the halls of residence. At Warsaw University, the department of psychology was closed for three weeks pending an inquiry by a special "Rector's Commission" into the stoppage of lectures and classes on 10 November, the Solidarity "day of action". (Few universities came out fully in support of this "day", although token stoppages and meetings were reported in several universities, including Krakow and Wroclaw; in Warsaw, there was a rally on the main campus of the university, estimated by the party newspaper *Trybuna Ludu* at around 1,200 persons.) The Warsaw psychology department was allowed to reopen last week following the resignation of the dean and sub-dean, although many students still face disciplinary proceedings.

How far the new association will go to help defuse the situation remains unclear. One innovation proposed for the new ZSP seems to have been designed to provide a ballast of older members, who could well act as a calming influence. In addition to the ordinary student members, ZSP is to admit "supporting members" — Polish citizens who support the statute and who take some active part in the work of the association.

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