

Socialist Old and New Worry They Can't Beat Kohl

rd World

counts and properties

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debt crisis, not the IMF,
suffering peasants who
any, benefits from those
ns. For decades when
he majority in the Third
tending their belts, their
atoon of corrupt bureau-
ing theirs with fat bank
in the name of national
; the elites who disdain a
of living to pay for their
d all too often shift the
ce on to the peasants.

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OF. GEORGE B.N. AYITTEY
Bloomsburg University

e. The evening had noth-
"kicking off" the Arkansas
h had been very effec-
Jan. 3 when the Post Of-
st postage stamp of 1986
Arkansas statehood in
the Rock.

Glenn Campbell and
't participate in our Fan-
re. Campbell had a con-
previous commitment,
the state on network TV
of Liberty opening cere-
d said he would do to

BONN—Summertime is slumber time in
Bonn. The university town that doubles as
the capital empties out, and it is a sellers'
market for news. As the heavyweights
wander off to the Alps or the beaches, ju-
nior ministers and political groupies pre-
pare for Bonn's major summertime festi-
val: the August headline-hogging contest.

Take the case of Johannes Rau, the
man the Social Democrats have chosen as
their chancellor candidate in January's
election. While he was off on vacation,

Europe

By Josef Joffe

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Mr. Rau had carried North Rhine-West-
phalia, the Federal Republic's most popu-
lous state, in a landslide last year. But
scoring big in the provinces marked Mr.
Rau not as a heavy but as likely victim of
the Peter Principle (everybody gets pro-
moted to the level of his own incompete-
nce). Mr. Rau was a local hero "whose
talents thrive in a lesser arena." A caring
family man and devout Christian, the
would-be SPD chancellor lacked the
fighter's instincts for the top job in Bonn.
And thus, come next January, he would
"fall with almost inexorable necessity."

The author of those killing-with-kind-

ness lines is Klaus Boelling, a self-pro-
claimed confidante of Helmut Schmidt who
had served as the former Social Demo-
cratic chancellor's spokesman. Today Mr.
Boelling dabbles as a writer and gadfly; in
fact, his unsolicited advice was lifted from
a book that will come out in September.

Normally, such a sneak preview would
have been seen for what it is: a skillful
sales pitch, carefully timed for the sum-
mer doldrums when even a whiff of scan-
dal is bound to make the headlines. But
there is more to the story than an un-
comradely publicity plug.

To begin with, there are the telling
sounds of silence. One might have thought
that an attack on the candidate would have
been treated like an attack on the party.
Unlike Mr. Kohl's conservatives, who look
back at a long history of intramural
leader-bashing, the Social Democrats have
traditionally put solidarity *uber alles*.

Yet today nobody has proposed to read
Mr. Boelling out of the party. Damnation
was faint, almost perfunctory. Perhaps
that was nothing but good campaign strat-
egy—as if the order had come down from
headquarters: Let's not give comfort to
our enemies by fighting in public.

On the other hand, Mr. Boelling has
merely splashed across the front pages
what many of his comrades—and espe-
cially the left wing of the SPD—harbor in
private: the gravest doubts about the man
they have chosen to lead them against
Chancellor Kohl. Mr. Rau may appeal to
the center, but precisely for that reason he
is the wrong standard-bearer for an SPD
that has been drifting steadily leftward.

Mr. Rau is the "old" SPD: a bit statist,
but mindful of the market; fitfully critical
of the U.S., but not anti-American; eager
for detente, but with a keen appreciation of
the military balance. He does not believe
in exorcism when it comes to nuclear
power and nuclear missiles. Mr. Rau, in
short, is a Schmidt-like Social Democrat—

but without the former chancellor's hard
edges. In fact, his friends describe him as
a kind of Rhenish Ronald Reagan, a per-
sonable and optimistic fellow with a genu-
ine sense of humor.

Yet this "old" SPD is either dead or in
hibernation. The "new" SPD is led by sep-
tuagenarian Willy Brandt who, in his do-
tage, has developed strong sympathies for
the red-and-green visions of his youngsters.
In the middle ranks there is the successor
generation of the 40-year-olds who came
out of the student revolts of the 1960s, who
won the battle for intraparty power with
radical slogans, and who today are strad-
dling the line between reality and ideology
as they run for regional office. Finally,



Johannes Rau

there is the youngest
generation, en-
sconced on the pre-
cinct and local level,
where radicalization
is still strong.

It is here where
people like Mr. Rau
are almost persona
non grata, where
anti-Americanism is
rampant and where
NATO is a prime
candidate for the
dung heap of his-
tory. In addition to
his middle-of-the-road "deviationism," Mr.
Rau has committed the unpardonable sin
of categorically excluding any alliance
with the Greens—and everything they
stand for, i.e., neither nuclear power nor
nuclear weapons, and a no-growth econ-
omy.

And then there is Mr. Rau's Great Di-
lemma. In the last national election in
1983, the SPD pulled only 38.2%, its worst
showing since 1961. Current polls concede
only 41% to the Social Democrats. Since
the small Free Democratic party is com-
mitted to Mr. Kohl, and the Greens are an-

athema according to Mr. Rau, Mr. Brandt
doesn't need a computer to tell him that
victory will elude the SPD.

At this point Mr. Boelling's literary pot-
shots become part of a more significant
pattern of attack. While Mr. Rau's abilities
were pooh-pooed in public, the party's
chairman, Mr. Brandt, was heard to muse
that a majority in the January election
was but a dream; it would be a "nice suc-
cess" if Mr. Rau pulled 43%. Why would
Mr. Brandt (along with his secretary gen-
eral) denigrate the chances of his own
party? To do so makes sense only as a vel-
vet-gloved warning to Mr. Rau: stop flirt-
ing with the center and go left, young man.
You are bound for defeat unless you lift
your anathema against the Greens. A more
radical stance will sop up Green votes and
still leave you the option of a quasi-alli-
ance with the Greens when parliament
elects a new chancellor.

Will "Brother John" (as the pious Mr.
Rau is called) find happiness in the em-
brace of the Greens? Even if he forsook his
principles, he would only warm the hearts
of Mr. Brandt and his friends. Elections in
West Germany have always been won in
the center, and an SPD that would move
even further left might not even gain on
the fringes what it had sacrificed among
the vast majority. It did not work during
the height of the recession in 1983, and it
will not work in 1987—after several years
of sustained economic growth.

And if Mr. Rau does not heed the warn-
ings of the left? In that case, the guns of
August will hardly be retired in the months
to come. But in either case, it is a safe bet
that the next German chancellor will be
Mr. Kohl.

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tor of the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*.