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GERMAN EUROPEAN POLICY: BUNDESTAG DEBATE

SUMMARY

1. HEATED DEBATE IN THE BUNDESTAG YESTERDAY, IN WHICH KOHL CAME IN FOR SHARP PERSONAL CRITICISM FROM THE OPPOSITION FOR HIS GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT OF EUROPEAN POLICY, AND PARTICULARLY THE CAP PRICE-FIXING, LUXEMBOURG COMPROMISE, AND SDI.

DETAIL

2. IN A BUNDESTAG DEBATE ON EUROPEAN POLICY CALLED BY THE OPPOSITION, VOGEL, THE SPD LEADER, ACCUSED KOHL OF 'ZIG-ZAGGING' ON SDI, OF PLAYING AN INCONSISTENT ROLE AT THE BONN ECONOMIC SUMMIT, AND OF DEALING EUROPE A HEAVY BLOW THROUGH KIECHLE'S VETO IN THE AGRICULTURAL PRICE-FIXING. THROUGH HIS POLICY OF CONTRADICTIONS AND INDECISIVENESS KOHL HAD SET EUROPEAN UNITY AT STAKE. VOGEL ASKED HOW, IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXPECTED TO PRESENT ITS ARGUMENTS IN MILAN. KOHL HAD SCALED NEW PEAKS IN THE ART OF GOVERNMENT BY INVOKING THE VETO AT PRECISELY THE MOMENT WHEN HE WAS CAMPAIGNING AMONG THE OTHER EUROPEANS FOR ITS ABOLITION AND A RETURN TO THE MAJORITY-VOTING PROVISIONS OF THE TREATY OF ROME: AND BY HAVING HIS AGRICULTURE MINISTER FIGHT FOR INCREASED EC EXPENDITURE AT THE SAME TIME AS HIS FINANCE MINISTER WAS ASKING FOR THE GREATEST ECONOMY AND STRICTEST POSSIBLE BUDGET DISCIPLINE FROM THE EC. THE DEVASTATING INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM SHOWED WHAT TO MAKE OF SUCH A CHANCELLOR. THE DEPUTY SPD FLOOR LEADER, ROTH, ACCUSED KOHL OF PITCHING THE EC INTO DEEP CRISIS. IT WAS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO SPEAK OF COOPERATION WITH FRANCE. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S EUROPEAN POLICY WAS IN COMPLETE CONFUSION: THEY HAD SPOKEN UP FOR FREE WORLD TRADE AT THE ECONOMIC SUMMIT, THEN FOUGHT A CUT IN CEREAL PRICES IN THE EC PRICE-FIXING ROUND.

3. KOHL SAID THAT NOT HE, BUT HIS PREDECESSORS WHO HAD LIVED FROM HAND TO MOUTH IN THEIR EUROPEAN POLICY, WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR AGRICULTURAL OVERPRODUCTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES. IT ILL BEFITTED THE OPPOSITION TO CRITICISE THE GOVERNMENT WHEN THEY HAD BEEN UNABLE IN THEIR TIME IN OFFICE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS SUCH AS THE BRITISH BUDGET CONTRIBUTION AND THE ACCESSION OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL. HE CALLED ON THE SPD TO SHOW MORE SOLIDARITY WITH THE FARMERS.

4. KIECHLE AND HEEREMANN (PRESIDENT OF FARMER'S UNION AND CDU MP) TOOK UP THE THEME OF PAST MISTAKES FROM THE TIME OF THE SPD/FDP COALITION. KIECHLE, ACCUSING THE SPD OF TRYING TO STAB HIM IN THE BACK, STATED THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO OPPOSE THE CONCEPT OF IMPLEMENTING QUANTITATIVE CONTROLS TOGETHER WITH PRICE CUTS WHICH WOULD BURDEN THE WEAKER FARMERS. MERTES, (MINISTER OF STATE, AUSWAERTIGES AMT) CLAIMED THAT OTHER MEMBER STATES WOULD HAVE INVOKED VITAL NATIONAL INTERESTS MUCH EARLIER THAN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC HAD DONE.

5. KOHL WAS ALSO ACCUSED BY THE SPD AND GREENS OF SACRIFICING EUROPE FOR AMERICA IN HIS ENTHUSIASM FOR SDI. EHMKE (SPD) CLAIMED THAT KOHL HAD BECOME THE 'CHANCELLOR OF THE CARTOON BUBBLE': A JOKE IN HIS OWN CAMP AND A LAUGHING-STOCK ABROAD. TODENHOEFER, THE CDU/CSU SPOKESMAN ON DISARMAMENT, RETORTED THAT THE SPD'S ANTI-AMERICANISM AND GULLIBILITY ABOUT THE RUSSIANS HAD MADE THEM THE LEAST RELIABLE OPPOSITION THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC HAD KNOWN.

BULLARD

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