

## Only Germans want reunification

FRG, Konrad Adenauer, was able to capitalize on the refugees as a voting bloc, and many in the CDU and CSU find it attractive to pay lip service to the sentiments of the older refugees who still foster memories of their native homes.

The GDR however, has its own hard line position which it periodically asserts. It contends that two distinct nations have evolved in Germany, and in 1974 the constitution was consequently amended. Where it once read "The GDR is a socialist state of German nationality," it now read, "The GDR is a socialist state of workers and farmers." The extremists within the Socialist Unity Party (SED), the ruling communist party in the GDR, feel that the increased societal contacts entailed by inter-German relations are a West German ploy to destabilize the country by increasing the desire within the population for liberalizing reforms. In response, they developed a policy of "abgrenzung" (demarcation), which can best be described as an attempt to cut the GDR off from the West, especially from the FRG, as much as possible. A major factor of inter-German relations since the Basic Treaty has been the gradual realization by the SED leadership that East Germany, located geopolitically where it is, cannot isolate itself from the West without damaging its own interests. It has also realized that it loses internal legitimacy by forcing a 2-nation thesis on a population of which large segments still harbor strong national feelings.

### "Solidarity" divides

Unrest in Poland in 1980 led to the sharpest deterioration in inter-German relations since the signing of the Basic Treaty. On August 22, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt cancelled his planned visit to the GDR for fear of being there when the crisis came to a head. On October 9, in order to discourage contact between Germans, the GDR doubled to DM25 (Cdn\$19), the amount of money which visitors from the West were forced to exchange daily while in the GDR. The leadership felt that its population could be susceptible to the "Polish virus," through too high a level of contact with West Germans. Four days later, the General Secretary of the SED, Erich Honecker, opened a party meeting in the city of Gera with a set of "prerequisites" for continued pro-

gress in inter-German relations, which subsequently became known as the "Gera demands." They were the recognition of East German citizenship, the conversion of the permanent representations into embassies, settlement of the border dispute along the Elbe River, and the dismantling of a center in Salzgitter for monitoring GDR human rights abuses. The first two were untenable for the FRG since they violated its constitution.

### Pragmatism prevails

For the most part however, the hard line positions have stayed in the background of a relationship based on pragmatic foundations which have proven to be very resilient in the face of strong counter pressures. Honecker has come to differentiate between the first and the last two Gera demands, moderating his position on those with a "constitutional" character. Many were expecting inter-German relations to enter a new "ice age" when the CDU/CSU and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) formed a new government in October 1982, with Helmut Kohl as Chancellor. Instead, continuity was the general rule and a broad consensus on inter-German relations developed among the major parties in West Germany. They all agree that the unity of the nation must be maintained with as many human contacts with the GDR as possible. They also agree that reunification is not a contemporary issue and that current policy should concentrate on trying to overcome the consequences of the division rather than the division itself. As an editorial in *The Economist* succinctly put it: "Even Mr. Kohl's Christian Democrats have had to admit that hob-nobbing with the once-despised Honecker regime does more to keep the two Germanies in touch than did the pretense that the East does not exist."

### Party splits

Although they do not yet threaten the consensus, there are forces on the extreme left of the SPD and the extreme right of the CDU/CSU which could do so in the future. The SPD premier of Saarland, Oskar Lafontaine, who is also among the three most powerful men on the national executive of the party, is thought to be in favor of de jure recognition of the GDR. Before a visit



Photo: IN-Press Bundesbildstelle

West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in meeting with East German Head of State Erich Honecker.