

FRANCE AND GERMANY BRING NEW BLOOD TO RESEARCH MINISTRIES

Perhaps Matthias Wissmann would like to paraphrase US Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, who once quipped, upon nomination of his wife Elizabeth to head the US Department of Transportation, that he regretted he had but one wife to give his nation's transportation infrastructure.

Wissmann, a legal expert named Germany's research minister just months ago (PHYSICS TODAY, April, page 51), now is taking over the transportation ministry in a cabinet reshuffling. Wissmann has been replaced at the Ministry of Research and Technology by 43-year-old Paul Krüger.

Wissmann was barely known in Germany's science communities when Chancellor Helmut Kohl picked him last winter to replace Heinz Riesenhuber as Minister of Research and Technology. Riesenhuber, a PhD industrial chemist who had served as research minister for ten years, was well respected if not deeply loved in the world of research.

Wissmann's successor, Krüger, is even more of an unknown quantity than Wissmann was. A native of East Germany, Krüger entered politics only a few years ago, and while his rise in the governing Christian Democratic Party has been meteoric, his only real qualifications for the research ministry would seem to be two years of service on the parliamentary science committee, an advanced degree in mechanical engineering and some experience as a software development manager.

In France, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*—the more things are the same as in Germany, that is. The new French research minister, 38-year-old François Fillon, also is a relatively unknown politician who takes the place of a scientist who has been a big name in science policy, the physicist Hubert Curien.

Youth would seem to be the hallmark of the new French government, at least to judge from those positions bearing upon Europe, industrial poli-

cy and research. Alain Lamassoure, the minister of European affairs, is 48. Gerard Longuet, minister of industry, the postal service and communications, and foreign trade, is 46; Alain Madelin, minister of enterprise and economic development, is 43.

Fillon is a political scientist with a specialization in military policy who apparently had his eye on the defense ministry. But his views on defense—and perhaps Europe as well—were deemed too incompatible with those of President François Mitterrand for him to get such a senior cabinet position. (He favored a professional army and was considered a Euro-skeptic.)

The landslide victory of the conservative coalition over the socialists in France's national elections last March, which ushered in a second round of "cohabitation" in which a conservative parliamentary government has to share power with a Socialist president, contained many mysterious elements. The main victor, Jacques Chirac's neo-Gaullist party, has been split between pro- and anti-European factions, and so the results could be interpreted either as a repudiation of European unification or merely as a rejection of the way the Socialists were handling the integration process.

The selection of Eduard Balladur as

German-American Council

Acting at the initiative of Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Germany and the US are establishing a US-German Academic Council to further scientific and scholarly projects of mutual interest.

The principal emphasis of the council will be to promote interdisciplinary work in the humanities and social sciences, with the objective of rectifying what Kohl sees as decreasing mutual interest in the two countries. But the organization also will sponsor projects in the hard sciences, acting from a perception that traditionally strong ties between the two countries' scientific communities have deteriorated too.

Thus the council will support programs for outstanding young scientists in both countries, for example by organizing interdisciplinary meetings and establishing joint research projects. A program of meetings might build on the "Frontiers of Science" scheme initiated by Frank Press, the past president of the US National Academy of Sciences.

The German-American Academic Council will be funded initially by

Germany's Ministry of Research and Technology while sources of money are identified in the US. The council's budget is to go from \$2 million in 1993 to \$6 million in 1996.

The council's establishment goes back to 1991, when Kohl and former President George Bush reached agreement in principle to set up such an institution; initial planning work was done in 1992 by the former German Research Minister Heinz Riesenhuber and by Bush's science adviser, D. Allan Bromley. Further work was done by a 12-member committee that included Press, Reimar Lüst, the former head of the European Space Agency who currently is president of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and Henry H. Barschall, an emeritus physics professor at the University of Wisconsin.

The headquarters of the council will be in Bonn but a branch office will be maintained in Washington, DC. For more information, contact Reimar Lüst, President, Humboldt Foundation, Jean-Paul-Strasse 10-12, 5300 Bonn 2, Germany; (49-228) 833-0 (phone) or 833-199 (fax).

the conservative coalition's prime minister signals that France's commitment to Europe remains basically intact. But science, seen until recently as a principal engine of European unification, suddenly seems relegated to second-class citizenship.

That anyway is the impression left by the offhand way in which the research ministries have been filled in France and Germany.

—WILLIAM SWEET

APS COUNCIL ADOPTS STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF BOSNIANS

On 16 April the council of the American Physical Society adopted a statement expressing outrage about the situation in Bosnia. "We fear for the lives of our colleagues," it said in particular, "and call upon the authorities in control to guarantee their safety and that of their families and countrymen."

Despite that and like-spirited statements, physicists feel considerable ambivalence on the question of whether United Nations sanctions against the Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) should be enforced against individual physicists. Earlier this year, CERN felt obliged to terminate access rights for eight Serbian physicists, after a Swiss journalist called attention to the fact that their presence at CERN violated a UN resolution calling for suspension of scientific and technical cooperation "involving persons or groups officially sponsored by or representing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." Serb physicists also have complained that they are having trouble getting their articles printed in international physics journals, some of which have taken the position that they may not publish work by Serbs who are supported by the Yugoslav government.

Joseph Birman, chair of the American Physical Society's Committee on the International Freedom of Scientists, helped draft the APS statement on behalf of Bosnian colleagues but feels it would be unjust and counterproductive to enforce UN sanctions against Serb physicists, some of whom have been among the most active opponents of the ultranationalist regimes in Yugoslavia and Bosnia. Birman feels that in this case primacy must be given the principles of free communication and free movement in science, as embodied in UN resolutions and the charter of the Interna-

tional Council of Scientific Unions.

Publishers of physics journals in the US, including the American Institute of Physics and the American Physical Society, almost certainly would contest in court a government demand requiring them to reject manuscripts from the Yugoslav Republic. In a single instance involving such a manuscript, AIP has received permission from the US Treasury Department to publish it, provided there is no economic benefit to a public agency or embargoed entity in the Yugoslav Republic.

—WILLIAM SWEET

TICHY WILL LEAD ACOUSTICAL SOCIETY IN 1994

Jiri Tichy of Pennsylvania State University is the new president-elect of the Acoustical Society of America. The new vice president-elect is Lawrence R. Rabiner of AT&T Bell Laboratories in Murray Hill, New Jersey. The two began their one-year terms in May. Next year they will succeed the current president and vice president, Richard H. Lyon of MIT and Stanley L. Ehrlich, an acoustics consultant.

Tichy received a DSc in technical sciences from the Technical University of Prague in 1953, and he served on the faculty there from 1955 to 1968. That year he moved to Penn State, where he has been head of the university's graduate program in acoustics since 1970. An expert in noise control, Tichy has done research on acoustic intensity technique and active control of noise and vibration. He previously served as ASA vice

Jiri Tichy



president and as chair of the society's committee on noise.

Rabiner earned a PhD in electrical engineering from MIT in 1967, and since then he has been a member of the technical staff at Bell Labs. He currently directs the Information Principles Research Laboratory there. His research involves speech communications, including recognition, synthesis, perception and analysis, as well as digital signal processing.

ASA also elected two new members to its executive council: Alan H. Marsh of DyTec Engineering in Huntington Beach, California, and Mark F. Hamilton of the University of Texas, Austin.

CONCERN MOUNTS SHARPLY ABOUT LIU GANG'S CONDITION

Just as the US government has extended most-favored-nation status to China for a year, to the disappointment of some human rights activists who had hoped for a tougher line, concern is mounting sharply about the condition of the jailed physics student Liu Gang, number three on the list of most wanted student leaders after Tiananmen Square (see PHYSICS TODAY, March, page 80).

Following new reports that Liu was beaten and tortured during hunger strikes in 1991 and 1992, urgent communications on his behalf have been sent to China's Minister of Justice and the director of its State Commission on Science and Technology by Donald Langenberg, president of the American Physical Society, Cyril Harris, president of the New York Academy of Sciences, and Paul Plotz, cochair of the Committee of Concerned Scientists. Fang Lizhi, co-chair of the Committee to End the Chinese Gulag, is asking scientists who are going to China this summer to press their concerns about Liu Gang's medical condition.

Joseph Birman, chair of the APS Committee on the International Freedom of Scientists, says he and his colleagues are "very, very alarmed about Liu Gang's condition," that there has been "a succession of grim stories about him," and that this is "a matter of the highest urgency."

Last winter, a person who wrote to the Chinese ambassador to the US expressing concern about Liu received back this disquieting reply: "There isn't such a physicist named Liu Gang who is imprisoned. The so-called physicist Liu Gang's case is simply nonexistent."