

Local Protest

A delegation from the San Francisco Jewish community is about to make a protest to the West German consulate here. The subject is possible West German arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

There have been economic dealings between the two countries for some time. Last October, they agreed to "broaden cooperation" to the military area. Last month, a couple of Saudi Major-generals began to visit weapons factories in West Germany and discuss the purchase of arms.

There are three reasons why such a sale deserves strong protest. The first reason is the same that was used in objecting to the American sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia. It was not just that the sale of sophisticated weaponry to the Saudis threatened Israeli security. But to sell arms to the Saudis without requiring them to join actively in the Middle East peace process is an act of weakness and capitulation which can only harden rejectionism and make peace more remote.

After the AWACS sale narrowly avoided veto by Congress, a U.S. Senator came to San Francisco to explain why he finally voted for the AWACS sale. "I received assurances," he said, "that we would use the sale as leverage on the Saudis in future negotiations." Well, since the sale, the Saudis have continued to finance most of the anti-American forces in the Middle East, and have not exerted themselves notably in the blunting of Arab

rejectionism. As the opponents of the AWACS sale had said: any leverage on the Saudis has to be obtained before the sale, not afterwards.

There are two additional reasons why West Germany should not commit the same mistake. To begin with, German law prohibits the sale of arms to "regions of tension." Now, Germany may wish to change that law. But to try to pretend that Saudi Arabia is not a "region of tension" is to seriously raise the tone of cynicism in the world. Saudi Arabia is in a declared state of war--"holy war"--against Israel, and has always given aid to military moves against Israel.

High German officials are scheduled to arrive in Israel on January 27, and one of their missions is to assure the Israelis that they will only sell "defensive weapons" to the Saudis. But the weapons that have been discussed--the Leopard tank, or the Marder anti-aircraft armored personnel carrier--can be used offensively, and any Saudi promises to the contrary are worthless.

But there is a final reason for Germany not to make such a sale. Need it be said? West Germany has made genuine efforts to atone to the Jews who survived the Nazi Holocaust. Is it now ready, for reasons of profit, to put those survivors and their children at risk in the Middle East?

The last time the Jews of San Francisco went to see the German Consul here, it was to ask--successfully--that the German statute of limitations on murder be further extended for Nazi criminals. That communal delegation spoke on behalf of the total organized Jewish community: ADL,

American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Hadassah, ORT, Council of Jewish Women, Jewish War Veterans, Jewish Labor Committee, B'nai Brith, the Board of Rabbis and all three religious denominations, among others. It is formidable when the local Jewish community speaks as one.

All of these groups, including local survivors' groups, will be part of the strong expression to the local German consul on the subject of an arms sale to Saudi Arabia. But individuals may wish to write as well to Dr. Horst Schmidt-Dornedden, at 601 California Street.