

John Financial Times WEST GERMANY

13 OCT. 1972

Brandt mocks Opposition approach to foreign policy

BY DENIS FOSTER

DORTMUND, Oct. 12.

CHANCELLOR WILLY BRANDT to-day contemptuously dismissed a threat by the Christian Democrat Opposition leader, Dr. Rainer Barzel, possibly to renegotiate any foreign agreements concluded by the Government before the election on November 19 and declared his intention of signing a basic treaty with East Germany if all conditions were fulfilled.

Deriding Opposition attempts to sweep foreign policy questions under the carpet during the election, the Chancellor said the Government intended its policy of peace and understanding to play a decisive role during the campaign.

Speaking on the first day of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) two-day conference here, Herr Brandt accused the CDU and Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) of being incapable of directing the nation's foreign policy. Recalling how the Opposition had moved from initial opposition to the Government's

Ostpolitik, to abstention to the Eastern Treaty, to approval of the recent traffic agreement with East Germany, Herr Brandt mocked their indecisiveness and said: "The Opposition sees very well that it can no longer swim against the world stream."

The Chancellor said negotiations with East Germany are at present in a difficult phase but denied that contrary to recent rumours he had any intention of visiting East Berlin, Moscow or Peking before the election.

The main theme in the election campaign so far, however, is inflation and the rising cost of living. This was the Opposition's main theme at their conference in Wiesbaden and their charges were answered to-day by Herr Helmut Schmidt, Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Government's main line of defence has been to admit that inflation is a severe problem but to describe it as a world problem rather than a specifically German one. It also points to the fact

that the German rate, presently around 6 per cent., is lower than most.

This theme was developed this morning by Herr Schmidt who asked whether the Opposition "would also accuse Mr. Pompidou, Mr. Edward Heath, Italian Prime Minister Andreotti or the Swiss Federal Council. Are these also 'bad socialists' who can't be trusted to deal with money?" he asked.