

5 AOUT 1972

ECONOMIST

INTERNATIONAL REPORT

forces in west Germany which are supposedly resisting the idea of better relations with the Soviet Union and its allies. If Herr Brandt were now to pursue Herr Schröder's suggestion to start talks with China without delay—which means before Germany's general election, still expected to be on December 3rd—he could bring the Russians' displeasure down on his head.

Russia and its allies could interpret the exchange of ambassadors with Peking as an unfriendly act and retaliate by making fresh difficulties for Herr Brandt in at least three areas of his Ostpolitik: the negotiations for a treaty with east Germany, the negotiations with Czechoslovakia over the Munich agreement of 1938, and the normalisation of relations with Poland. In all three of these fields progress has been very slow lately, a fact which is likely to be made use of by Herr Brandt's Christian Democratic opponents in the election campaign.

But if Herr Brandt decides to wait he will expose himself to the charge that he is doing so because he is already too beholden to the Russians. A Christian Democratic deputy has already made an attack along those lines this week. The chancellor could try to play for time. But there seem to be no obstacles in the way of an immediate exchange of ambassadors. No wonder the foreign minister, Herr Scheel, is temporising until his master gets back from holiday.

Germany

Too many friends

When Willy Brandt comes back from his Norwegian holiday he may find himself landed with a problem so awkward that it could become an issue in Germany's autumn election campaign. Gerhard Schröder, the Christian Democrat who is chairman of the Bundestag's foreign affairs committee as well as a former foreign minister, has just returned from a trip to China with the suggestion that Bonn and Peking should establish diplomatic relations as soon as possible. Herr Schröder, who was given red carpet treatment as the first senior west German politician to visit communist China, emphasised on Monday that all the Chinese leaders he had seen, including the prime minister, Chou En-lai, were anxious to have a direct diplomatic link with west Germany, China's second most important trading partner.

This is going to embarrass Herr Brandt because Herr Schröder's trip has already been attacked by *Izvestia* in Moscow and by the main east German party paper, *Neues Deutschland*. They have accused China of trying to sabotage the forthcoming European security conference and described Herr Schröder as a spokesman for the "imperialist"



Schröder's brought back a Chinese puzzle