

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Resistance grows to the Green agenda

*In both east and west, Germans have begun to repudiate the greenie sabotage of economic infrastructure projects.*

**T**he ugly reality of the economic depression is running into increasing conflict with the visions of the ecologist movement, even in a country that has been as pro-greenie as Germany has. The tide of the Green party and its mass movement has primarily been a phenomenon of the western part of Germany, anyway: In the eastern states of the Federal Republic, which suffer from jobless rates twice as great as those in the western states, ecologism has never been as popular as in the west.

Germans in the eastern areas are voicing a much greater interest in the creation of new jobs, than in protecting rare birds, snakes, or snails—the favorite choices of the greenies whenever they seek some new pretext to stop infrastructure development or construction projects. The eastern Germans have remained aloof from most of that ecologism, despite nearly six years of intensive efforts by the predominantly pro-greenie media to brainwash the population.

The Green movement ran up against that lack of support, when they tried to stop the Havel River waterway project, which is one of 17 priority projects in the national transportation program. Four months of intensive campaigning in the eastern state of Brandenburg failed to generate the required 80,000 signatures from the state's population to qualify for a referendum against the project. When the deadline came at the end of August, the Green party and more than 80 allied ecology activist groups were unable to submit more than 60,000 signatures, with about half of

these coming from the greater metropolitan area of Potsdam, the state capital.

In the countryside, however, between Berlin, Potsdam, and Magdeburg, through which most of the waterway travels, the ecologists found it very difficult to garner any support, as many told the greenies, in no uncertain terms, that for the average person, jobs rank far above ecologism. The Havel River waterway project is expected to create several tens of thousands of new jobs during construction, and then, after it is completed, in the shipping sector.

The Havel River project is part of the planned modernization of the 280-kilometer-long waterway linking the cities of Hanover, Magdeburg, and Berlin. It consists of several canals that connect the Elbe and Havel rivers.

The entire waterway project consists of three main sections: 1) the extension of the Central Land Canal (from Hanover to the Elbe River and the large lock complex at Magdeburg); 2) the Elbe-Havel Canal (from Magdeburg to the city of Brandenburg); and 3) the Lower Havel Waterway (from the city of Brandenburg to Berlin). The project, including the modernization of the Elbe River port and lock complex at Rothensee/Magdeburg, will require investments of DM 4.7 billion, and construction is to be completed by the year 2002.

The modernization of this already existing, decades-old waterway is being undertaken to increase the water depth to 3.5 meters, and thus allow use of tandem barges up to a maxi-

imum length of 185 meters—an advance indispensable for the waterway to become a primary artery for bulk transport between the western part of Germany and the Berlin region.

The failure of the anti-Havel referendum is a major setback to the ecologists in the German east.

But, opposition to the greenies is also growing in the west. The most spectacular protest against the ecologists occurred on Aug. 31, near the northwestern coastal city of Wilhelmshaven, in the state of Lower Saxony. There, more than 10,000 citizens gathered to do something that has not happened in Germany for 15 years: to stage a protest rally against the greenie sabotage of economic development. This particular case concerns a dike reinforcement project along the 50 kilometers of North Sea shoreline at Jade Bay.

A recent district court ruling favorable to the green contention that conservation of saltwater marshes just inland from the bay should take priority over the population's interests in protecting against North Sea incursions, has provoked a public outcry. The dike-building project was approved last year, in response to the flood catastrophe in neighboring Netherlands, where 150,000 residents had to endure emergency evacuations when the dikes could not hold back the sea. Even leading members of the otherwise pro-ecologist Social Democratic Party, including the state agriculture minister, took part in the Jade Bay protest, a 10,000-person march that culminated in a candlelight chain along the five kilometers of dike which the Greens don't want to have reinforced.

This is good news coming from Germany, especially from the western part, and there are some prospects that more of the same can perhaps be reported in weeks to come.