

Fuel War Ignites European-wide Revolt Against the Greens

by Rainer Apel

The expanding wave of protest throughout Europe against rising fuel prices started out with road blockades and similar actions, but it has quickly shown that the population is concerned about much more than oil prices or gasoline taxes. What is under way in Europe now, is the beginning of a long-overdue revolt against the ecologist Greens and their ideological brethren, the followers of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's "Third Way."

The protests of truckers, river boatmen, farmers, fishermen, taxi drivers, and others are especially vehement in the three countries governed by coalitions including the Greens—France, Germany, and Belgium—and in Britain. Rage has been building up in the populations of France, Germany, and Belgium, against the greenish governments and their budget-cutting policy since they took power, beginning with Blair in Britain in May 1997.

There are many reasons to be angry at the respective governments, and there are many reasons for justified protests, but the most recent revolt has been sparked by the drastic increases in the fuel prices, being the proverbial spoonful of hot water that made the pot boil over. The protests are not a revolt against the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the "oil sheikhs," as Blair would like them to be, but they are a revolt against the Euro-green governments.

This became even more visible in Britain than in France, when activists from the British Farmers for Action, in interviews during the first week of September, announced that their protest is not restricted to the fuel price issue, but includes calls for fair pricing of farm products, and against the ruin of the remaining industries of Britain by a government that simply does not care to protect jobs or companies. David Handley, chairman of the Farmers for Action, told BBC on Sept. 8: "This is going to be an ongoing situation. . . . We are sorry for the inconveniences we've caused, but we are not prepared to let our industries, haulage, and farming in Britain, fall foul and go down the drain like other major industries the U.K. has had." Handley warned that if the Blair government would not listen, it would face a "severe winter of discontent."

Other spokesmen for protesting groups, which blocked a big fuel depot of Royal Dutch Shell in northwestern England, issued a stern warning to the Blair government not to neglect

them, if it wanted to escape the fate of the Labour government of Prime Minister James Callaghan, which was brought down by an endless chain of labor strikes, protests, etc., during the winter of 1978-79. The Callaghan government had tried to play the revolt down at the time, with arrogant statements like: "Crisis? What crisis?"

The Wreck of Blair?

More and more Britons, among them many who originally voted Blair in, have come to the conclusion that time has run out for this New Labour government. Arrogant as he is, Blair himself has decided not to pay much attention to the growing opposition. The two big warning shots he received, have not changed his mind much: In June 1999, his New Labour party lost more than 50% of its seats in the European Parliament; and in May this year, Labour rebel Ken Livingstone won London's first mayoral election, with an explicitly anti-Blair ticket that, interestingly enough, gained support and votes among many former Tory constituencies.

Blair has not learned much from that, and therefore he was taken totally by surprise, when the first protests erupted in Britain, within a few days after the French protests began. He carried on with "business as usual," visiting remote northern English villages, as if nothing troublesome was occurring in Britain—at a time when the Shell fuel depot was blocked by protesting farmers and truckers, and the British press covered the events in specials of two or three pages of their daily issues. When Blair noticed that the revolt had to be taken seriously, he panicked and called on the Queen's Privy Council, a higher authority than his own government, to authorize "special powers" so that he could, if needed, crush the protests with the riot police and, eventually, also the military. The Privy Council, attended by the Queen, convened at the royal Summer retreat at Balmoral Castle and assigned Blair these special powers—which in the eyes of the population have turned him into the British version of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, when he made his coup in 1973. Blair declared that he wanted to make no concessions, and recommended that people turn their rage against those "oil sheikhs of OPEC," instead. What Britons have done, however, is to express their outrage at Blair even more vehemently.



Greens demonstrate in Germany during the early 1980s. These anti-nuclear, anti-industrial elements which were brought into European governments beginning in the mid-1990s, have now become the object of hatred, as their radical environmentalist policies have fuelled the collapse of the standard of living.

Greens Are the Target

On the continent, Green government members have become the main target of protesters' attacks.

Trying to be more clever than Blair, the government of French Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin made an early attempt to de-escalate and buy off the protest ferment, by offering the truck drivers cuts in the gasoline-diesel tax, retroactive to Jan. 1. The successful move to mollify farmers and several other groups, cost the government 2 billion French francs (about \$300 million). The concessions on the tax enraged Jospin's Green coalition partner, however, because the drastic *increase* of that tax is one of the main "anti-pollution" demands in their party program. Jospin decided to concede a new energy-saving initiative to the Greens, to calm them down, and they accepted the deal. This, however, implies new punitive taxes on every French citizen, family, and company that does not invest in what are termed "ecology-compatible technologies," and it is as certain to provoke a new wave of protests against the government, soon.

Germans are protesting against the "ecology taxes" that the Socialist-Green government there has imposed, after taking power in October 1998.

The German ecology tax, which increases the tax on every liter of fuel by 6¢ every other year, has become the main target of protesting truckers, bus drivers, farmers, river boatmen, and others, who took to the streets of Germany, only a week, after the French protests broke out on Sept. 2. The ecology tax is, by comparison, only a fraction of the

price increase that global speculators have inflicted on the oil price in recent weeks. But the tax is a centerpiece of the German Greens' policy, and the Greens are the weak flank of the government coalition, which has come under massive attacks already, because of its budget-cutting policy and other aspects of the attempt to introduce Blairism in Germany.

If there were national elections in Germany now, the Greens would be voted out of parliament; that is certain. And if Social Democratic Chancellor Gerhard Schröder does not find ways to extract major political concessions from his Green coalition partner, in order to calm the protests down, he will soon lose whatever remaining confidence that the German population may still have in him. His government will be replaced by another one.

If, however, the ecology tax falls, it will be the first big defeat for the Greens, and the population will be that much more encouraged to fight for the abolition of other, numerous ecologist regulations, which the Green ideology has imposed on Germany in the last 20-25 years. Notably, people will become more interested in the return to development of nuclear power, as a way to liberate the country from the energy dependency on, and blackmail by, speculation-priced crude oil and its derivatives. The Green paradigm that has devastated Germany, its industry, and its politics, from the late 1960s and early 1970s on, will be abolished, once the Greens are defeated.

The ecology tax, so far, uniquely German, and it does not exist in Belgium. But there, truck and bus drivers, farmers,

and others have numerous other reasons to revolt against the Greens, which are in the government coalition that took power a year ago. The fact that Transport Minister Isabelle Durant, a Green Party member, on Sept. 11 arrogantly refused to even meet a delegation of the protesting groups for a rational discussion on the fuel price issue, is seen by many in Belgium as the provocation that triggered the protests. Angry truckers have been blocking most of the inner-city traffic in the Belgian capital, Brussels, since Sept. 11, and have expanded their actions to other regions of the country, as well—including the important port of Wandre on the Maas River, which supplies much of the oil shipped to Germany.

The arrogance of Durant, which resembles Blair's, has contributed a lot to the growing conviction among infuriated Belgians over recent days, that policy deals with the Greens are not possible. This poses Belgian Prime Minister Verhofstadt with the unpleasant prospect—not unlike that facing the German Chancellor—not just to think about replacing Durant with a more conciliatory Green politician, but to look for an alternate coalition without the Greens.

Big political changes are coming in the core of western Europe, apparently, and it is an open question now, whether the governments will still be in place by the end of this year. After all, the present situation around the oil price is but one of the more acute crisis hot spots of the speculative financial bubble. What has been seen in oil, will soon be seen repeated in other commodities, with a domino effect on the producing industries and consumers.

Only a New Bretton Woods Will Work

Unless the governments of Europe get the problem of financial and raw materials speculation under control, the source of all the inflationary developments in commodity prices will be left untouched, and will provide ever-new provocations for protests “into the pipeline.” The only way out is an initiative of the governments to restore rationality and calculability on the financial and raw materials markets, and this can be done only in the framework of a new international financial arrangement, using the positive features of the old Bretton Woods system as the starting point. As Lyndon LaRouche has defined the necessary policy, a New Bretton Woods system would require putting the present, bankrupt monetary system into receivership, drying out the speculative bubble, and erecting a new financial architecture, based upon defining a basket of commodities—rather than currencies—the commodities most required for the growth and development of the physical economy (see LaRouche, “Trade without Currencies,” *EIR*, Aug. 4, 2000).

The enraged citizens of the European countries are well-advised, to put the call for a New Bretton Woods on their agenda. The LaRouche movement has told them and the governments so. The most recent political turbulence in Europe have once again underlined its dramatic urgency.

Chronology

Elites Sound the Alarm over Impending Crash

Over the past two months, some leading circles in Europe, Russia and the United States, have, to varying degrees, been telling the truth about the impending global crash. Here is a selection of commentaries, mostly unknown to the U.S. public.

July 15: The London *Economist* features an article by U.S. economist C. Fred Bergsten, warning the City of London and Wall Street that their grip over Asian financial and monetary policy is eroding fast, ever since the 13-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations, plus Japan, South Korea, and China abandoned the “Washington Consensus,” at the ASEAN Plus Three meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand. East Asians were let down by the International Monetary Fund and by the United States after the crisis of 1997, and their fears of a repeat have driven them to act in their self-interest. He says that Asia must be coopted back into the IMF system by giving it a greater voice. “The success or failure of this process, will do much to shape the world for the next 50 years.”

June 5: The organization of central banks, the Swiss-based Bank for International Settlements (BIS), releases a report predicting a “hard landing” for the U.S. financial system. Besides *EIR*, not a single major journal in the United States covered the BIS report.

July 3: A memorandum by the industry-financed Invest in Britain Bureau warns of a “significant level of high-profile closures” and even “the possible meltdown of the U.K.’s manufacturing base.” “In my view the rate of closures is now likely to accelerate dramatically,” writes author Andrew Fraser.

July 6: Former IMF head Michel Camdessus warns in a speech that in August 1998, when Long Term Capital Management (LTCM) collapsed, the world financial system was “very, very close to the precipice.” Camdessus calls for an “urgent reform” before the “next catastrophe.”

July 12: The New York Council on Foreign Relations’ “Financial Vulnerabilities Project” sponsors a conference, “The Next Financial Crisis: Warning Signs, Damage Control and Impact,” where some 200 elites investigate “scenarios of economic and financial collapse,” using war-games modeling. Among the scenarios, is the seizure of power from the U.S. President and establishment of emergency rule. (See “Exposed! CFR Bankers Plan for Financial Crash,” *EIR*, July 28, 2000.)

July 12: *USA Today* runs “What ‘Robust Economy’?”