
Germany

Stoiber Shadow Cabinet Damages His Campaign

by Rainer Apel

Edmund Stoiber, the German Christian Democrats' challenger to incumbent Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (Social Democrat), began in May to form his "competence team," a combination of politicians who were expected to radiate "reputation" and "high governmental skills" to the voters for the Sept. 22 national elections. But reality, and economic crisis, have intervened.

Once every week, Stoiber presented another name for that team, beginning with Lothar Späth, a former Governor of Baden-Württemberg, and now, chief executive at the Jenoptik optics plant in Jena. Another prominent name was Wolfgang Schäuble, a former Cabinet minister of the Chancellor's office and former chairman of the Christian Democrats' Bundestag parliamentary caucus. The idea was that prominent personalities like these would contrast to the governing Social Democrats' shrinking popularity, which was plunging with the worsening economic situation.

Reconstruction by Budget Cutting Fails

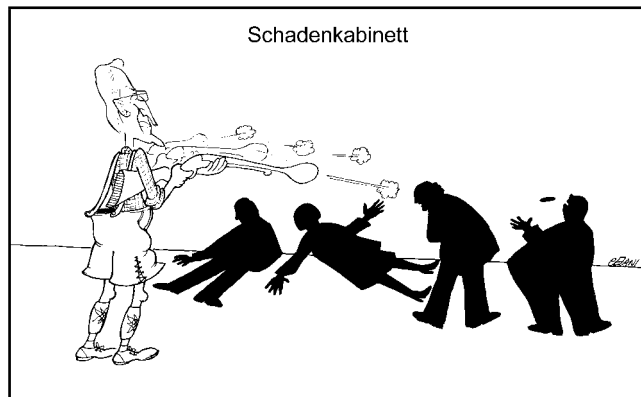
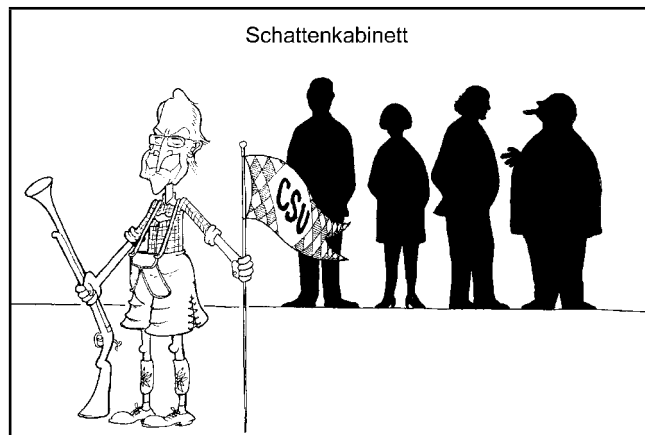
The nomination of Späth for the team posed questions, though, because he stands for tough neo-liberalism—budget cuts and privatization—whereas Stoiber himself has been careful in recent years, to build the image of caring for those

with lower incomes, and who would defend the small firms against the big corporations and banks often protected by the Social Democrats.

A conflict of interests inside the Stoiber camp seemed pre-programmed. And indeed, the troubles for Stoiber's election campaign began when, in early July, Späth endorsed Social Democratic proposals for deep cuts in the labor and welfare budgets as "revolutionary" and called on the incumbent Chancellor to implement them immediately. Stoiber had to restore his authority, and intervened to make clear that cuts in these budgets were not his own policy. Späth then blurted out that he would also advise Schröder, should *he* be re-elected, and left people wondering which candidate Späth was actually working for. Stoiber had to intervene, again, to declare that Späth was his man, and was assigned a post in a Christian Democratic Cabinet.

The next big trouble emerged for Stoiber during the Elbe River flood which hit one-third of eastern Germany and caused gigantic damage. Chancellor Schröder responded promptly and declared the flood a "national catastrophe" to be fought with "a spirit of national common sense." His staff even proposed to issue national bonds, guaranteed by the government, to create billions of extra off-budget funds for flood recovery programs in the German east. This proposal was dropped, but the debate is continuing. Schröder also began to polemicize against the European Union's Maastricht budgeting criteria, as being invalidated by the need to combat the flood with extra funds. Späth hurried to the press to declare that Maastricht had to be absolutely respected, adding that Schröder's proposal was a "miracle box" that would achieve nothing; Späth allied right away with the banks that opposed the bonds.

Here, Stoiber failed to intervene: Instead, he backed Späth and attacked Schröder on the Maastricht issue, insisting on creating reconstruction funds only by new budget cuts; he promptly lost popularity against Schröder, whose flood crisis management was met with approval by an overwhelming ma-



jority of Germans.

Stoiber then added a hasty proposal to utilize Central Bank currency-trading earnings of more than 7 billion euros, for the recovery effort, but that did not do much good for his popularity either, because he also insisted that the other areas for which these Central Bank funds were earmarked, be cut out altogether.

All of this helped to undermine Stoiber's carefully crafted image of being the big defender of lower-income German citizens, as it was clear his axe would cut the social welfare and labor budgets.

Iraq War Debate Crucial

Another big problem for Stoiber, was the decision by the Chancellor in early August, to oppose the Bush Administration's Iraq war drive in frank words, and to make it a centerpiece of his campaigning. Since the war is opposed by more than two-thirds of Germans, the traditionally pro-American Christian Democrats were faced with the danger of walking into a trap: supporting Bush but losing the support of the German voters.

Stoiber first resisted the temptation to go on a pro-Bush line, and he even went so far as to echo Schröder, remarking that German troops would not take part in any Iraq war. But then, Stoiber lost the initiative, and got drawn, step by step, into a position that would combine pro-war with anti-war views. This became most visible during the nationally televised election debate with Schröder on Sept. 8, when Stoiber failed to say anything convincing on Iraq, such that an opinion poll taken among viewers yielded 50% support for Schröder, against only 29% for Stoiber. Already before the televised debate, polls had found that the Chancellor's anti-war stance had enabled the Social Democrats to recoup support lost since April-May.

A very detrimental role in that loss of support for Stoiber has been played by Schäuble, who serves the "competence team" as chief foreign policy adviser. Schäuble has stated again and again that the importance of German-American relations implied German solidarity with Bush's "war on terrorism" wherever it goes, that a German military role in an Iraq war should not be ruled out, and even that—as the Chancellor and Stoiber said—no new United Nations mandate was required for an attack on Iraq, since the 1991 mandate was perfectly sufficient. Stoiber at first voiced differing views, but increasingly adopted his Shadow Cabinet leader's argumentation.

With that, Stoiber shot himself in the foot. A cartoon from the election campaign of Helga Zepp-LaRouche, who heads the slate of the Civil Rights Solidarity Movement (BüSo), portraying Stoiber's "*Schattenkabinett*" as a "*Schadenkabinett*," plays with a pun on the words *Schatten* (shadow) and *Schaden* (damage)—much to the delight of many German voters who have seen it.

U.K. Chief Rabbi Hits Israeli Occupation

by Dean Andromidas

On Aug. 27, in an interview with the London *Guardian*, Great Britain's Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks, made hard-hitting comments on the "morally corrupting" effect of the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Despite the fact that he is a fervent supporter of Israel, so much so that he has alienated many of the pro-peace elements within the Jewish community, he came under sharp attack by the right-wing Zionists and the government of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. His statements have initiated a strong moral debate throughout the Jewish community in the Diaspora as well as in Israel.

While denouncing Palestinian suicide attacks as being morally beyond the pale, and asserting that Israel finds itself under attack, he nonetheless strongly criticized the idea of Israel ruling over another people. "You cannot ignore a command that is repeated 36 times in the Mosaic books: 'You were exiled in order to know what it feels like to be an exile,'" Rabbi Sacks said. "I regard that as one of the core projects of a state that is true to Judaic principle. And therefore I regard the current situation as nothing less than tragic, because it is forcing Israel into postures that are incompatible in the long run with our deepest ideals."

Rabbi Sacks said, "There are things that are happening on a daily basis which make me feel very uncomfortable as a Jew." He said that he was "profoundly shocked" by reports of smiling soldiers posing for a photograph with the corpse of a slain Palestinian. "There is no question that this kind of prolonged conflict, together with the absence of hope, generates hatreds and insensitivities that in a long run are corrupting to a culture."

These statements came in the context of the Bush Administration's international mobilization for a war on Iraq, and the widespread fear that Sharon will use this war to transfer the Palestinian population into Jordan.

As a prominent moral and religious figure, Rabbi Sacks put forth a clear position. On Iraq, he said he would support a war only under three conditions: if there is a clear objective and end-game, a broad coalition of support, and very strict safeguards against civilian casualties. He also supported the right of the Archbishop of Canterbury to speak out against the war.

As Great Britain's Chief Rabbi, Dr. Sacks is a member of the political establishment. Shortly before the interview, he