

LaRouche Movement Intervening into Germany's Economic, Political Crises

by Rainer Apel

Day by day since its full outbreak in mid-April, the struggle between Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, and his critics in the Social Democratic Party (SPD) left and the trade unions who reject over the planned deep budget cuts in Schröder's "Agenda 2010," has escalated. Agenda 2010 critics are gathering petitions among party members to force an intramural referendum against the budget-cutting program. For that, they need 70,000 signatures (10% of the SPD membership), which they believe will be in by mid-June. Schröder himself has provoked additional resistance by his flight-forward move to hold a special SPD convention on June 1, with the aim of armtwisting the dissidents: Either you back my policy, or I can no longer govern, says Schröder, insisting on at least 80% of the SPD's support, "no ifs, ands, or buts."

The Chancellor's armtwisting tactic is dangerous, as the dissidents are stronger than originally believed, and their backing among party members may be strong enough to deliver Schröder a defeat. In that case, should he step down, or will he and his critics arrange a compromise before June 1, to save his neck? As things stand, any compromise would be a foul one: The Chancellor made some advances for his cause, on April 28, when he managed to lure the critics into five newly created "working groups" to discuss "modification of details" to Agenda 2010, but to leave it otherwise untouched. But the party base is not convinced by such tricks. This became clear in Bonn April 28, when the Chancellor held one of four planned regional party meetings, to "talk with the members." But instead of the 4,000 people he had expected to come, only 700 showed up, which reflects the fact that the SPD's rating is now below 30%. Should there be national elections now, the government would be voted out by two-thirds of Germany's citizens.

'Open Letter to SPD and Trade Unions'

Moreover, the labor unions have their own petition campaign against the Agenda 2010, accompanied by nationwide protests during their "week of action" over May 12-17, leading to a national protest rally on May 24. Most politically active union members are also in the SPD, so the building labor ferment can rapidly spill over into the SPD party, which would neutralize internal efforts to suppress and contain a

debate on the Agenda 2010.

The LaRouche movement in Germany has intervened into this situation, with an "Open Letter to the SPD and the Labor Unions" by Helga-Zepp LaRouche, national chairwoman of the Civil Rights Movement-Solidarity (BüSo) party. The letter urges both sides in this conflict to pay attention to two crucial aspects of the overall economic and political situation.

First, critics of the Agenda 2010 may be right on most counts, but they do have to be aware that destabilizing Chancellor Schröder can only serve the war party in Washington around Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Perle, et al., who have stated they would favor a "regime change" in Berlin.

Secondly, Schröder, on his part, has been right on his anti-war tack, but he is committing a strategic mistake if he continues with an economic and financial policy that borrows from the radical free-market "reforms" favored by the very same war party that seeks to "regime-change" him. These two ends do not meet: Either Schröder joins the war party, or he has to drop the war party's economic agenda.

The only feasible way out from this precarious escalation for Schröder, his SPD, and the labor unions, as the BüSo Open Letter emphasizes, is to adopt a policy modelled on Lyndon LaRouche's proposal for a leading German-European role in the development of the Eurasian Land-Bridge.

Mass circulation of the Open Letter began on April 28, including at the Bonn regional SPD meeting. Intervention into numerous SPD and trade union events, especially the traditional May Day activities, have become a focus for widespread distribution of the Open Letter during May. Already the Bonn event showed how necessary a well-designed conceptual intervention is, when the mood is characterized by a dangerous mix of discontent, boiling rage that tends to be expressed by impotent protests, and increasing frustration and depression, in which people do nothing more than lodge mere complaints. The last was visible in the low turnout at a protest rally by the metal workers at the SPD Bonn event, with only 300 metal workers meekly lodging their protest.

However, LaRouche activists distributed 500 Open Letter leaflets, with many unionists and SPD members acknowledging the LaRouches' political stamina, and with many proving to be open for new ideas, especially that there was something



Organizers of the LaRouche Youth Movement in Germany campaigning for Wiesbaden mayoral candidate Alexander Hartmann, in front of the debate venue “Pariser Hof” on April 28. They are intervening in Germany’s tinderbox situation, with a broader view which can overcome the grave economic splits in the anti-imperial war coalition.

programmatically and more meaningful, beyond the phony alternatives of either backing down to the Agenda 2010, or risking to topple the government in the course of rejecting it.

LaRouche Youth Movement’s ‘Weeks of Action’

An especially dynamic aspect of the LaRouche movement’s mobilization is the two “weeks of action” from April 28–May 11, bolstered by some 30 LaRouche Youth Movement organizers, from Germany, France, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Venezuela and the U.S.A., coming to join in rallies and interventions. The first week of action is in support of the BüSo mayoral candidate in Wiesbaden, Alexander Hartmann. The second week of action takes place in Berlin.

In Wiesbaden, the capital of the state of Hesse, one of the highlights of the intervention was a rally at the city’s leading daily, the *Wiesbadener Kurier*, protesting the daily’s distorted and slanderous coverage of Hartmann’s candidacy in particular, and of the economic and education policies which his campaign addresses in general. Large banners were posted in front of the *Kurier* offices, reading, “A subway for Wiesbaden, the Transrapid for Europe, the Eurasian Land-Bridge, LaRouche for President in the U.S.” and so forth. Activists distributed leaflets to the shoppers who flood the area during their lunch breaks. Youth organizers uplifted the crowd by singing Spirituals from the U.S. Civil Rights struggles, “Oh, Freedom” and “We Shall Overcome,” to which they added a

new stanza, “*Nein zur Sparbarerei*”—Hartmann’s campaign slogan, which makes a pun on the German words for austerity and barbarism, thereby expressing “No to Barbaric Austerity.” One group of organizers went into the offices of the *Kurier*, where reporters and editors were literally hiding behind their computers. But when organizers tried to give them leaflets, it turned out that everybody already had received theirs outside.

This rally which lasted for about three or four hours, was followed by a forceful intervention by LaRouche Youth into a “panel discussion with the candidates” arranged by the *Wiesbadener Tagblatt*, the city’s second news daily, which had refused to invite candidate Hartmann. Heading up a group of about 20 youth organizers, Hartmann and the group took their seats in the audience, while others were distributing leaflets outside. The audience in any case was no more than 50 people, apparently affiliated with one of the two invited

candidates from the Social Democratic or Christian Democratic (CDU) parties.

The small audience was testimony to German voters’ disgust over the quality of debate between the two candidates on the podium: a multiple-choice kind of interrogation, on earth-shaking issues, such as traffic lights. At one point, one of the LaRouche Youth intervened: “Are you going to let people ask real questions, or will you continue with this kindergarten?” And when the floor was finally opened for questions, LaRouche Youth organizers were able to raise real issues, such as how the younger generation can expect to have a future in the midst of a global financial collapse, which is also the origin of the problems the cities have these days. “There is a danger of World War III—wake up! Let’s talk about these real issues!” said one, who shook both the panel and the audience.

Mirroring Chancellor Schröder’s approach of suppressing any real debate, the *Tagblatt* event sponsors decided not to allow debate, but to shut out the critics—which in this case, because Hartmann’s contingent made up so much of the audience, prompted the *Tagblatt* to shut down the entire event. That was not the end of the debate, though: There is a big difference between “inside,” where the establishment wants to lull people back to sleep, and “outside,” where people are beginning to wake up. The LaRouche movement is meeting an increasing openness for new ideas outside, in the streets of Wiesbaden as well as in Germany’s other cities, these days.