

Germans Debate FDR Model, Defense of Social State

by Rainer Apel

Something highly interesting is happening in Germany: Coming as a big surprise to most, Franz Müntefering, the chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), hinted that his party is considering dropping the “Third Way” neo-liberal “new economy” policies named after Britain’s Prime Minister Tony Blair, and addressing instead the growing unemployment crisis and the bankruptcy of the real economy. In a speech in Berlin, April 13, Müntefering presented the ongoing work of the new party programmatic platform, attacking the neo-liberal ideology in words not heard from SPD officials in years:

“Many attack the institution of the state, calling for the lean state, and would not mind if it starved to death. Yes, they even want that to happen. This marks a watershed for the political course of our country. Skepticism about the state is an error. Despising the state is a danger. Only with the modern state, has the precondition for democracy been created. It provides the institutions with which societies can organize their living together. They guarantee peace and security. And, based on constitutional rights, they guarantee freedom. Our state is a state based on law. It sets law and supports law with its democratically legitimized power.

“Our state has the monopoly of power. No one else has a right to power. Domestic peace and security of the law are central public benefits. Our state also provides the other public benefits: an education system, health, finances, infrastructure. Our state is a social state. The mission of the state is the just order of relations between the citizens. The social state is not expendable.” Neither is the state a repair shop, he pointed out; it has the mission of shaping the development of society as a whole.

Müntefering added that the state must intervene in all areas that are vital for society: 1) to secure municipal investments; 2) to secure the social security systems; 3) to make investments, securing a future over the long term; 4) to invest

in basic research, in energy, transport, medicine, and not to wait to see whether the free market shows an interest in these areas.

All of these basic principles of government are under heavy attack in Germany, as they are in the United States, from free-market ideologues. Up to now, the SPD, like the U.S. Democratic Party, has offered no significant opposition. That opposition has come almost exclusively from the LaRouche forces: the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity party (BüSo), which is headed by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, Lyndon LaRouche’s wife.

‘A Swarm of Locusts’

The public response to Müntefering’s speech was rather mild, because most people think that SPD leaders (like leaders of other established parties) talk a lot, but don’t mean it. Then, four days later, Müntefering gave an interview to *Bild am Sonntag*, the Sunday edition of Germany’s largest mass-circulation daily, *Bildzeitung*. There, he said on April 17, that the worst threat to industry and jobs is a certain species of financial investors. “They stay anonymous, faceless, descend upon firms like swarms of locusts, eat them up and move on.” These are people with no respect at all for rules and limits, and it is “against this form of capitalism that we are fighting,” Müntefering said, adding that one “must not leave the world in the hands of the money.”

This “locust” remark provoked a hysterical response from the entire camp of neo-con and neo-liberal experts, politicians, newspaper editors, and others. What enraged them in particular, was the fact that Chancellor Gerhard Schröder on April 18 gave full support to Müntefering, having his official press spokesman Hans Langguth state that he shares the view that there is a social responsibility that capital is obliged to uphold—as is laid down in the 1949 Constitution of Germany.

Hostile cartoonists depicted Müntefering together with

Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin, to insinuate that the SPD wanted to revive the socialist or even communist states of the past, because the party and its government are certain to lose the upcoming elections anyway. As far as the elections are concerned, that is true; the rest is utter nonsense.

Attack on the New Deal, LaRouche

Ironically, it was the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* daily, the leading mouthpiece of the German banking and political elite, that decided to (for once) tell its readers the truth about what the real issues are, in three articles, on April 20, 22, and 24. This series breaks an almost universal press blackout in the leading German press on the activities of the LaRouche movement.

In a commentary announcing the review of a new, libelous book on Franklin D. Roosevelt, the daily, under the headline “Blue Eagle—Polite Fascism: The SPD Revives the New Deal,” viciously assailed the SPD, comparing its current campaign to that of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The “defamations and the pushing of enemy images” under Roosevelt, akin to what the SPD is doing today, are the “real threat” to democracy, the daily wrote. It ended with the following paragraph: “This is the same scheme with which Helga Zepp-LaRouche’s Civil Rights Movement Solidarity [BüSo] has recently gone to SPD party congresses, to garner support, while her husband, the right-winger Lyndon LaRouche, is pushing for the revival of the New Deal in America.” On April 22, the daily published a book review, this time saying that the “LaRouche couple” is at the center of reviving the Roosevelt model. The slander that Roosevelt’s New Deal was a “soft” version of fascism, was repeated on April 26, by Hans-Olaf Henkel, a former president of the German industry association BDI and a leading neo-con propagandist. In a television interview, Henkel denounced Müntefering’s remarks, saying they reminded him of the Nazis’ 1930s propaganda against foreign capitalists. This just illustrates the degree of hysteria that has grabbed the neo-cons (on both sides of the Atlantic).

In a statement issued on April 22, BüSo Chairman Helga Zepp-LaRouche noted that the forces behind the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* are clearly reacting to the political revitalization of the Democratic Party, catalyzed by her husband in America, and to the current BüSo election campaign in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (the elections there are on May 22). The BüSo has featured precisely those issues—defending the constitutionally mandated “social state” in Germany and promoting New Deal-type state investment—which are now being echoed by the SPD leadership, although still in general terms. She also noted that, in 2000, the same daily had refused to print a paid advertisement for a “New Bretton Woods,” which she had sponsored, and which was signed by hundreds of parliamentarians, ex-government officials, trade unionists, and economists from around the world.

The BüSo is carrying out a very successful intervention,



Social Democratic Party Chairman Franz Müntefering took a bold step forward, with his attack on the rapacious looting of the physical economy and labor force by financial investors.

together with 15-20 activists of the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) mostly from Germany and other European countries, but also from the United States. The LYM, which emerged as the scourge of the neo-cons in the election campaign in the eastern German state of Saxony in the Summer of 2004, has since January been campaigning in North Rhine-Westphalia (N.R.W.). Three editions of an “Open Letter to the Voters of N.R.W.,” written by Zepp-LaRouche, have been distributed throughout the state, at election campaign events of the other parties—notably the SPD—and at universities, factory gates, and elsewhere. The traditional mine workers’ hymn “Glück auf” is sung by the LYM, with the text modified for political campaign purposes, and this, as well as other politically pointed songs, have caught the attention of citizens who have been “turned off” by the usual boring speeches of politicians. Especially a BüSo cartoon, depicting opposition Christian Democratic candidate Jürgen Rüttgers being “pumped up” by California’s Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, has had enormous impact in N.R.W., among Social Democrats who are asking themselves why they didn’t come up with the idea to hit Rüttgers with his Arnie connections, but also among many Christian Democrats who reject the policies of their party leadership. Most recent opinion polls show that more than two thirds of Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party members and voters agree with what Müntefering said.

The BüSo has growing credibility among voters, who doubt the sincerity of all the established politicians. Certainly it is the BüSo alone which has solutions to offer. For example, the BüSo ran a TV campaign ad in N.R.W. on April 25, arguing for the revolutionary underground cargo system “CargoCap,” developed by engineers at the University of Bochum. This idea is catching on in the labor movement, in particular. The same BüSo ad informed the voters about the New Bretton Woods initiative by the Italian Parliament, and the catalytic role that Lyndon LaRouche had in that. The broadcast could



This cartoon is being circulated in North Rhine-Westphalia by Helga Zepp-LaRouche's BüSo. It depicts N.R.W. Christian Democratic leader Jürgen Rüttgers being "pumped up" by Arnie Schwarzenegger. Rüttgers is saying, "What one lacks in brains. . ."

be watched also in the rest of Germany, via cable and satellite.

The BüSo campaign includes the circulation of a paperback on the German neo-cons and their Anglo-Dutch-U.S. connections, while also addressing the concept of the Common Good, of having a strong state intervention into the present world economic depression, with public infrastructure programs in the Roosevelt New Deal tradition. This particular aspect was the origin of the third freak-out article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, on April 24, which alerted its readers that the "problem" goes beyond what is generally addressed in the debate on Müntefering, namely that there is something really dangerous in his defense of Article 14 of the German Constitution: Its paragraph 2 states explicitly that "[private] property carries an obligation. Its use shall serve the Common Good." This, the daily warned, calls into question the liberal conception of property, of the cold rationality of the money economy as it was laid down under Roman imperial law (!)—in other words: before the American Revolution, which defined an anti-oligarchical orientation. The article noted with horror that Article 14 and 15 even explicitly allow expropriation

of property (with compensation), if necessary to serve the Common Good.

With that, all of Germany, beyond the boundaries of N.R.W., has entered a long-overdue public debate on what the foundations of the German state and society are and shall be. Once that essential feature of the German Constitution is addressed (which the neo-liberals and neo-cons always try to avoid), it becomes evident that even after several decades of paradigm shift from the producer to the consumer society, there still is broad support for the concept of the state serving the Common Good. Reawakening this dormant sentiment, is what the neo-cons fear just as the Devil fears the cross. The Common Good principle is a consensus among members of the SPD and CDU alike, as is illustrated by two interviews that appeared after this third *Frankfurter Allgemeine* article. On April 25, Franz-Josef Möllenberg, national chairman of the German food industry workers union NGG and a member of the SPD, told the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*: "What is at stake, is the social element in the social market economy. That is no class struggle, but the mandate of our Constitution: The Federal Republic is a social state, property implies an obligation, and the dignity of man is untouchable. He who thinks that is too radical, has a problem."

And in the April 26, issue of the Austrian business weekly *Trend*, Heiner Geissler (CDU), a former Family and Health Minister, said that there are many entrepreneurs of globally operating firms that "act as freely as the mafia, the dope dealers, the terrorists. . . . At this moment, this anarcho-capitalism, this resurrected early capitalism, is the dominant ideology." Geissler said that since the abolition of the Bretton Woods agreements in the early 1970s, a giant financial industry has emerged. "The right approach is an ordered competition, the ordered market," he added. "We are today miles away from that.

Capital has to serve man, not vice versa, he said. "Today, human lives are sacrificed for capital revenue. Modern capitalism is a modern form of totalitarianism. An economic totalitarianism that walks over corpses. It benefits only a few, who earn more and more, but it is to the disadvantage of more and more human beings."

The Hartz IV and other budget-cutting policies pursued by the present SPD-led government and supported by the CDU opposition, are doomed to fail, Geissler said. "You cannot pursue a policy that is alienating millions of citizens. . . . There are no useless citizens, in a democracy. That is the great error of the market fetishists. The citizens will either use their vote, or will abstain from the next elections, or even vote for a radical party."

Franz Müntefering added a third blow, with an interview on April 27 in *Bildzeitung*. "What I'm focussed on," he said, "is a fundamental question: Must the state really stand by idly, powerlessly watching sound firms getting razed to the ground, workers getting laid off because of illegal dealings, and profiteers stuffing their pockets?"