

No More 'Eco,' No More 'Euro'

by Alexander Hartmann and
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Editor's note: We publish here the opening section of Alexander Hartmann's editorial in the German weekly *Neue Solidarität* of June 12; the documentation is supplied by Elke Fimmen of our Wiesbaden Bureau.

June 8—What is an “ecological catastrophe”? A catastrophe for which the “ecologists” are to blame.

Do you doubt it? From the beginning of human civilization, man has always interfered with nature, to protect himself against its dangerous forces, and to improve his living conditions by continuously inventing new technologies to turn these forces to his advantage. Whenever a civilization has refused to do that, its demise was not long in coming, because, as the flooding in Europe of recent days shows, “Mother Nature” is brutal, and only if mankind civilizes her can we live with her.

This is true not only in far-off Africa, but also here in Central Europe, but we mostly do not notice it here, because our forebears already worked for centuries to tame nature before we came along. But things change as time goes by, so this is a task that must be passed down from each generation to the next. If that does not happen, the society will perish.

Those to blame for such a downfall are always those who stand in the way of progress. Thus the recent flood disaster demonstrates the truth of the statement made at the beginning of this article. Even more than the European Union's austerity policy, there have been many cases in which the resistance of self-proclaimed “environmentalists” and similar opponents of progress has delayed or completely blocked the

measures that would have protected towns and cities from the floods. Thus the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on June 4, that of the 351 mitigation measures that were adopted in the state of Saxony after the terrible floods of 2002, only 80 have so far been implemented, while 216 (about two thirds) are still stuck in the planning and licensing process. Only 143 kilometers of the 450 km of levees that were supposed to be constructed were actually realized.

Wherever these new mitigation measures were completed, they served their purpose. Where they were not, disaster struck. In the town of Grimma the mitigation measures are under construction, with completion expected in 2017, because complaints by residents delayed them for years. In Dresden-Laubegast, such protests even led to the plans being abandoned; perhaps the renewed flooding will revive the debate about the need for mitigation. Hopefully, that will happen soon. Otherwise, the levee will be too late for the next flood (or, as one commentator wrote about Grimma, the flood will occur “four years too soon”).

Documentation: Why Didn't the Infrastructure Hold?

June 4—The east and south of Germany, along with Austria, Slovakia, and Hungary, are suffering badly from the huge floods. A consistent low-pressure area associated with the stationary warm front over parts of Europe had triggered extreme amounts of rainfall (a so-called Vb weather situation) in these areas. The German



Flooding in Passau, Bavaria, June 3, 2013.

Creative Commons/Stefan Penninger

states of Bavaria, Thuringia, and Saxony declared emergency alerts in many regions, with 28,000 firemen and 1,760 soldiers deployed, nationally, as of yesterday.

All municipalities along the Elbe River, including Dresden, expect a similar, if not worse, situation than in the “century flood” of 2002. In several places, such as the county around Leipzig, efforts to shore up dams had to be abandoned. In the small city of Grimma, south of Leipzig, 2,000 people had to leave their homes, with parts of the city destroyed again; residents had just completed their renovations from the catastrophe of 2002. This case also shows how far behind the building of dams and other mitigation measures is—despite nominal programs in place: In Saxony, which worked out a long-term mitigation concept after the flood of 2002 (EU1 billion was allocated up through 2020), only 80 of 351 projects were completed, with 55 more under construction. There are 216 projects still to be planned or approved. Of a projected 450 km of dams, only 120 km were expanded, and 23 km were newly built.

In the case of Jessnitz, a small town in Sachsen-Anhalt, the mayor reportedly tried for ten years to secure promises to rebuild the dam, including a petition campaign to the state governor, but nothing happened. Now, the old dam has broken, and the entire “old town” area

had to be abandoned. The state of Sachsen-Anhalt is one of those in the East which was worst hit by the deindustrialization of the last 20 years after reunification, and has major fiscal problems.

Streets and bridges have been hit heavily, with damage already in the millions of euros. Agriculture has suffered similarly, with up to 60% crop loss of seasonal produce, such as strawberries and asparagus, and large areas of farmland under water. As far as damage to the harvest is concerned, insurance pays for hail damage but not for other weather-caused problems. About 40% of the population in Saxony and Thuringia, where floods are more common than elsewhere in Germany, have special insurance for these cases, which is, however, hard to get in the high-risk areas.

So far, apart from an announced EU150 million emergency program in Bavaria, government representatives are only uttering generalized statements about “help,” like that of Interior Minister Friedrich Zimmermann, who said that “the population can be assured that we will do everything to alleviate damage to them.”

While the flooding has not ended, and complete damage cannot be assessed yet, one thing is clear: Without Glass-Steagall and an overall credit-fuelled economic reconstruction policy, there is no future.

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—Lyndon LaRouche, Feb. 11, 2013



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