

West Germany

Strauss's stature shrinks with vote

by Michael Liebig, Contributing Editor

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The results of the Oct. 5 election in the Federal Republic of Germany are double-edged. On the one hand, the West German population made it unmistakably clear that it does not intend to have itself represented by the person or the politics of Franz-Josef Strauss. But the victory for Helmut Schmidt is far from unequivocal. Difficulties for Schmidt are going to increase, issuing from the left-"greenie" forces in his own Social Democratic Party (SPD) and from the significantly strengthened liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP). Nevertheless, for the moment the political basis is secure for continuation of the Franco-German policy of war avoidance.

On the average, the losses for the CDU/CSU and their chancellery candidate Strauss ran at 4.1 percent in the federal elections. Around 2.1 million voters of the CDU/CSU from the 1976 elections either did not vote, or voted FDP. With these worst of all results since 1953 for the CDU/CSU, Strauss's national political career may be considered at an end.

CDU/CSU losses in general swung over into votes transferred to the favor of the FDP, and this was the essential factor in the "balanced" victory of this party, with 10.6 percent for these 1980 elections, a gain of over 3 percent compared with only 0.3 percent for the SPD. The FDP is being declared the real winner by the Anglo-American press, and played up against Schmidt.

Why the FDP gained

It is a fact that many former CDU voters who wanted to keep Schmidt as chancellor, but did not want to vote for the antitechnology SPD under Willy Brandt, gave their votes to the FDP. The FDP's personnel and program are far too amorphous and contradictory to be inherently attractive to even 10 percent of the voters.

At the same time, many committed SPD voters and Schmidt followers voted FDP, in order to make sure that the FDP did not slip below the 5 percent line, which would have disqualified the party from the Bundestag. Five months ago the FDP lost its seats in the

state election in the densely populated state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

In judging political events in the Federal Republic, it is crucial never to forget the immense influence exerted in West Germany by Anglo-American factions, whose "assets" are powerful in all political institutions and parties.

The original Anglo-American script called for a Strauss victory. According to this plan, the FDP was to have slipped near or below the 5 percent line, while the "green" party was to have captured over 5 percent. This script fell apart, on the one hand due to counterpressure and resistance on the part of Schmidt and broad circles in German industry, and also due to the fact that it turned out to be impossible to sell Strauss and the greenies to the West German population. This summer saw hectic traffic by German political managers to the United States; after meetings with Brzezinski and others, an understanding was reached, primarily between the Anglo-American "assets" in the three German parties. The script changed, dumping the greenies and strictly excluding the Europäische Arbeiterpartei (EAP) from the official electoral arena. Suddenly the greenies disappeared from the media. The word then went out from the CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP: secure the three-party system, to preserve a "commonality of the democrats." The precarious existence of the FDP was taken off the list of public issues. The Anglo-Americans let it be known that they would accept the likelihood of Schmidt's reelection, under the condition that a strengthened FDP hold him in check.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Thus the election proceeded in a lukewarm, boring fashion, despite Strauss's angry slanders against Schmidt. This setup created extremely negative circumstances for the campaign of Helga Zepp-LaRouche, leading candidate of the EAP, containing the impact of television appearances in which she aggressively addressed basic questions of national policy like securing détente against the policies of the Carter administration, expanding nuclear energy development and smashing the proliferation of drugs. She succeeded in achieving extraordinary recognition and political sympathy among the population. Zepp-LaRouche was acknowledged in leading industrial circles as an exceptional leadership personality for the future. Nevertheless, restricted media coverage and a nearly hysterical effort by the other parties to keep the EAP on the sidelines could not be broken.

Schmidt is going to have trouble in the immediate future with the FDP and the SPD's environmentalists. The FDP's influence ought not to be overestimated, however; the FDP has its coalition with Schmidt to thank for its electoral gains and its continued existence.