

American civil rights leader joins East German revolution

by Volker Hassmann

For the first time ever, the American civil rights movement joined the East German revolution at the traditional Monday demonstration in Leipzig on Feb. 19. Reverend James Cokley of New York City addressed the crowd of 50,000 on the invitation of the opposition party Demokratischer Aufbruch (Democratic Revolution) and with the consensus of all other opposition groups, although this right is usually granted to citizens of Leipzig only.

When the organizers of the demonstration announced "a guest from the American civil rights movement," and Reverend Cokley stepped into the spotlights of the TV cameras on the balcony of the old Opera House, he was greeted with frenetic applause. "To be or not to be, that is the question," he introduced his speech, in which he invoked the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King and the struggle of his movement for civil rights. He thanked the people, because their revolution "has given new hope to the generations that follow us," and urged them to help "make this planet a better place for living." He concluded: "Work all together, be peaceful, and you will overcome. We shall overcome!"

When the reverend joined into the singing of the German national anthem with his beautiful tenor voice, many citizens were moved to tears, and when he joined the traditional march afterwards, he was warmly embraced by many. A videotape of his intervention will soon be made widely available in the United States through the Schiller Institute.

Cokley's Leipzig speech opened up a four-day tour through East Germany, where he addressed churches and public meetings amid numerous private discussions in the cities of Gera, Halle, Zwickau, and Chemnitz. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," he underlined the necessity of German unity now. In Zwickau he was invited to deliver the Sunday sermon in the Lutheran church, while in Halle he addressed the local youth club.

The visit by Cokley had been sponsored by the Schiller Institute and the Patriots for Germany, who have gained enormous credibility in East Germany with the massive circulation of Lyndon LaRouche's proposal for a "Paris-Berlin-Vienna productive triangle" as a locomotive to revive the ailing world economy.

Cokley's reception in East Germany is explained by the fact that the American civil rights movement has been a beacon of hope for many opponents of the communist regime there during the 40 dark years of tyranny. This was expressed

by many resistance fighters whom he met. In the long years of oppression, they had had similar experiences to the black Americans in their fight for freedom. In Leipzig, the peace prayers in the Nikolai Church had started already 12 years ago, and again and again citizens were arrested, jailed, and tortured, because they had expressed their resistance against the Red dictatorship by lighting candles.

Western politicians move in

The hope and joy that he brought to the East German people was a most needed message at a critical turning point of the revolution. After the initial uprising against the hated communist regime and its "Stasi" secret police apparatus, which had prompted the mass demonstrations in the streets for German unity, a certain demoralization was induced by the current "second stage" of the revolution: a massive invasion of the newly developed political opposition structure by the professional campaign mafia of the big West German parties, the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and liberal Free Democrats (FDP), who



The Leipzig rallies abound with original expressions of political ferment. On Jan. 29, one demonstrator carried this sign: "At 17, anyone who is not interested in Marx's theories, has no heart; at 40, anyone who still believes in them, has no brains."

Birgit Vitt



Patriots for Germany spokesman Volker Hassmann addressing a candlelight rally of 30,000 in Chemnitz, East Germany. Inset: New York pastor Rev. James Cokley, who spoke to a Monday Night demonstration in Leipzig, the heart of the East German revolution.

make up the ruling coalition in Bonn, and the Social Democrats (SPD), who are the chief opposition party. Sometimes against the will of the rank and file of some new parties, they have imposed their party management, finances, and “proven” methods of political organizing upon these groups.

The statewide headquarters in East Berlin of the Eastern SPD, CDU, and the liberal LDPD and FDP, are now in the hands of the “political professionals” from Bonn, while in many regional offices campaign workers from West Germany are commanding the various campaigns. The result is a bad replica of the typical West German election campaigns, with all their empty slogans, shallow posters, and stereotyped campaign speeches. Before the new parties have a chance to develop their own cadre and intellectual leadership, they risk being absorbed.

While the population at large is concerned with the economic and social future, and is desperately looking for programmatic leadership, all they get is vague promises. A rare exception was the enthusiastic response of 150,000 in the Thuringian city of Erfurt to the first campaign rally of Chancellor Helmut Kohl in East Germany, which had been organized by the CDU-supported Alliance for Germany, an electoral front of the Eastern Christian Democrats, the *Demokratischer Aufbruch*, and the Munich CSU-linked German Social Union against the Socialist International’s Eastern Social Democratic SPD. Chants like “Germany—United Fatherland” welcomed a visibly moved Chancellor, who was the first politician from Bonn to introduce the practical economic

perspective along the lines of LaRouche’s concept of a 430-million-person market in continental Europe.

Meanwhile, the Social Democrats are campaigning for a “better socialism,” and they have a hard time distancing themselves from the “Party of Democratic Socialism” (the new name for the old communist Socialist Unity Party). Numerous reports have been published concerning the massive infiltration of former communist party members into the new SPD. While there is a huge media promotion in the West in favor of the SPD, which is portrayed as the probable winner of the March 18 elections, the mood in East Germany is slowly moving back against the SPD. All polls agree that 50% of all East German voters have not decided whom they will vote for, and the initial good results of the SPD are now shrinking down to 25-30%.

Ironically, one of the main stumbling blocks of the Social Democrats could be the campaigning of Western SPD figure head Oskar Lafontaine, a radical opponent of German unity, who had won the recent state elections in the West German state of Saarland with a Mussolini-style demagogic hate campaign against East Germans who have come to settle in West Germany. With his rabid tirades against Chancellor Kohl and an early economic and currency union between the two parts of Germany, which he delivered during an address to the Eastern SPD in Leipzig, Lafontaine, who is known for his longstanding ties to the former communist leadership around Honecker and Krenz, could well backfire and actually cost the SPD crucial votes.