

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Food for unity

Lyndon LaRouche's offer that the West feed the Soviets in exchange for German unity is fast gaining currency.

When Lyndon H. LaRouche made his proposal two years ago for a Western offer of "Food for Peace" to the Kremlin, on the condition that it redirect its efforts from building up a giant war machine to a sound policy of economic development and German reunification, his idea was termed "exotic" by many. Politicians held on to the idea that arms control talks would suffice to get along with the Soviet Union. Ironically, even in West Germany, which would profit considerably from such an initiative, the LaRouche proposal was considered a "maverick" venture not really worth considering for official action.

Now, politicians in the two Germanys are actively considering a policy which resembles certain aspects of the 1988 LaRouche proposals. The basic idea being discussed in Bonn and East Berlin is that, on condition that Gorbachov remove all artificial obstacles to German reunification, the Germans will commit themselves to substantial emergency shipments of food to the U.S.S.R.

Going beyond that, there is the option of lending assistance to develop a farm sector in the U.S.S.R. that can feed the population in the near future. Experts in Germany have come up with the idea that the food supply in the Soviet Union can be improved if very fertile, but abandoned, lands in Ukraine, which had a large export market in Western Europe before World War I, are restored to use. With the appropriate inputs of irrigation, seeds, fertilizers, and modern agricultural equipment, it should be possible to achieve that.

The current Moscow leadership,

otherwise desperate for Western food deliveries, seems still unwilling to make concessions on the issue of German sovereignty, but prefers to muddle through with the usual, insufficient barter deals. On May 31, for example, an agreement on extended barter trade between East Germany and the Soviet Union was signed by the respective cabinet ministers, Gerhard Pohl and Konstantin Katushev. Over the next seven months, the East Germans will deliver food products as well as machines and spare parts, for a total value of DM1.5 billion, to the Soviets, who will send more natural gas and crude oil to East Germany.

An additional trade agreement of over DM1 billion is already being discussed between East Berlin and Moscow.

Moreover, it seems that Gorbachov is setting most of his hopes on new grain deals with the U.S., like the one signed with Bush at the Washington summit. This policy is meeting strong criticism in Bonn.

In a discussion with *EIR* on June 6, Kurt Eigen, farm policy spokesman of the Christian Democrats in the West German federal parliament, said: "It is quite apparent that these kinds of grain deals have not really helped to improve the situation in the Soviet Union. . . . It is not clear, anyway, where the grain has been ending up in the past. . . . We should rather deliver something that is certain to reach the Soviet consumer, and that is finished food products."

Eigen said that, on condition that Gorbachov give a clear "yes" to a rapid reunification of the German nation, Bonn should even be committed to

footing the entire bill for the food products that are to be delivered to the Soviets. Along with other Christian Democrats in Bonn, Eigen has launched a parliamentary initiative calling on the government to make a formal proposal to Moscow. Eigen referred to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's own exemplary gift, in Moscow on Feb. 10, of DM220 million for Soviet emergency food purchases in the West. Most of this money has already been used up.

"If it is really internal problems," another member of this new Bonn initiative told us, "that prevent Gorbachov from moving ahead on the German issue, we should take the approach that German unity mustn't fail because of a shortage of, maybe, several hundred thousand tons of beef in Soviet food stores."

Eigen put it another way: A worsening of the food situation would add to the grave instability in the Soviet Union, and a hardening of Moscow's views on the German issue that could dramatically aggravate the international strategic situation. If a special German initiative could help to prevent that, it shall be done regardless of cost. Eigen continued, "The costs [for new deliveries] should be bearable, if compared to the costs of a further worsening of the situation in the Soviet Union . . . after all, one minute of war would cost us far more than the entire sum we would spend on these food deliveries."

This would, however, only alleviate the immediate crisis, Eigen admitted. Durable solutions to improve the Soviet food supply must yet be worked out.

He and a group of other members of the Bonn parliamentary farm commission will tour Soviet farm regions in late July, including a trip to Ukraine, and probe the Soviets' thinking.