

Swine fever as a market strategy

by Rosa Tennenbaum

The machinations around the outbreak of swine fever in Germany are indeed a piece of piggishness of the first order. The European Commission of the European Community used the outbreak of the disease in a few hog farms as an excuse to impose measures which are exaggerated and completely unnecessary from a veterinary standpoint. First, the EC Commission in Brussels prohibited the export of pork or suckling pigs, not only from the immediately affected areas, but from anywhere in Germany! This was something entirely new. Never before have measures such as this been imposed upon a country where swine fever was detected. Finally, after tough negotiations, Brussels lifted the ban on imports, but only after arbitrarily expanding the size of the blockaded areas. Previously, the customary procedure had been to blockade an area within 3 km of the infected locations. Within those areas, all trade in hogs and pork would be forbidden, and the area within a radius of 7-10 km would be put under strict observation.

But Germany apparently enjoys a special status with the Brussels authorities. The cordoned-off areas were extended to a radius of 100 km around the points of infection—a step which is entirely out of proportion with any consideration of how the health of man and beast can be protected. By drastically expanding the cordoned-off areas, approximately 20% of all the hogs raised in Germany, i.e., about 10,000 slaughter-ready hogs per week, were suddenly withdrawn from the market. That has spelled catastrophe for the hog breeders and feeders. Prices have been dropping precipitously, and over the past few weeks have not even been high enough to cover feed costs.

Brussels finally permitted a buyout of the banned hogs, but this came almost three weeks after the detection of the disease and the drastic sanctions. In the meantime, about 400,000 hogs have been “taken off the market,” as the politicians put it—i.e., they were bought up and killed. Hundreds of thousands of perfectly healthy hogs were liquidated by means of the “politically cordoned-off areas” and were sent to the glue factory to be processed into soap or meal.

Fight for market share

Behind these measures is a bloody battle for control of market share, a competition to crowd out the weakest, which Germany’s free market-oriented Agriculture Minister Wolfgang Borchert is incapable of countering. Indeed, sources in

Brussels report that the cordoned-off areas were only expanded to 100 km on Bonn’s express urging. Bonn has disputed those reports, but the fact remains that the EC Commission can only act on decisions which have received the blessing of the Council of Ministers—and that includes a minister named Borchert. This minister, whose long years of screaming about agricultural overproduction have apparently left him incapable of responding to rational argument, has evidently seen the outbreak of the swine fever as a welcome means of tackling this perceived “problem.” Fully 70% of all the pork consumed in Germany comes from German pig farms, yet Borchert has agreed to maintain the cordons through next May. By that time many thousands of breeders and feeders will have been ruined. The reduction of the cordoned-off areas to a radius of 30 km is still arbitrary and doesn’t change the fundamental problem.

The net result of the huge cordoned-off areas, the marketing ban, and the buyout action has been the disappearance of German meat from the market; Belgian, Danish, and Dutch slaughterhouse chains are all too willing to fill the gap. On top of that, next year more meat is supposed to be imported from Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and Bonn is pushing this in a big way. So some space had to be made on the German market: There are 50,000 too many pig feeders in Germany, and they must be made to disappear, according to the market analysts, in order to make room for the new imports. Borchert is now coming within grasp of his long-cherished goal.

So far, about one-half million animals have been liquidated, but this could easily rise into the millions if the plans made in Bonn and Brussels are carried through. This is the biggest “swinicide” in history, and reflects the degree of cynicism and hatred of humanity which is increasingly coming to dictate German agricultural policies. During this winter, 4 million people are in danger of starving to death in the middle of Europe, and not all of them are Muslims, whose creed forbids them from eating pork. The number of healthy hogs which end up at the glue factory each week would be enough to provide at least 30 million meals.

During the years of hunger immediately following World War II, we learned that it is a sin to throw out leftovers. But now politicians throw out huge quantities of meat without batting an eye. Unless citizens see to it that ethical considerations are brought to bear on policymaking, we will become the victims of our own mistaken policies.

The Civil Rights Movement-Solidarity, co-founded by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, is demanding: 1) Stop the swinicide! Revoke the “politically cordoned-off areas”! 2) return to the classical, traditional methods of combatting disease; 3) generous winter aid for the starving population in the Balkans; 4) stop the cheap imports, especially from countries whose own people suffer from shortages, such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic; and 5) raise producer prices up to parity levels.