

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### 'Nuclear wars' resume

*The scandal about "radioactive sweat" only makes sense in the context of election politics: moves toward a Grand Coalition.*

There are many international crises, financial and economic especially, which a leading industrial nation such as Germany should be responding to. But, once again, the elites are divorced from world reality, and are busy with party politics related to the Sept. 27 elections for the national Parliament. Here, scandal-mongering plays a role, and unreal issues seem to take on a life of their own.

In late April, a new scandal erupted when French technicians discovered "radioactive sweat" on some waste storage containers used to transport nuclear waste from German power plants to France. (Germany, as a result of anti-nuclear policies imposed by the ecologists in the late 1970s and 1980s, has never built a reprocessing capability of its own, and several hundred containers of nuclear waste are sent to France every year.) The containers were delivered to the French Cogema plant, and were to be transferred to Cap La Hague for reprocessing.

The affair provided the pretext for a new psywar campaign against the German government and Environmental Affairs Minister Angela Merkel, for not anticipating what the French government and its Green party Minister of Environmental Affairs, Dominique Voynet, had found out about the "radioactive sweat." The question, is why French authorities suddenly "found out" about something that has been known for years. And, whether Voynet's "discovery" may have more to do with propping up the election chances of the German Greens. Indeed, the scandal helps the Greens to arm-twist the government,

and the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD), which wants to defeat the governing Christian Democratic Union (CDU), into cooperating with the Greens. Indeed, this is the way the Greens have operated for the past 20-25 years.

What is surprising, however, is that neither the power industry, nor the CDU, have come to the defense of besieged Environmental Affairs Minister Merkel.

Over the years, the CDU has backtracked on concrete steps for nuclear investment, and sacrificed several of its own politicians to the green wolves, but otherwise kept its traditional endorsement of nuclear technology — at least on paper, in the party programs.

This has now changed. And, suspiciously, it changed even before the new scandal broke. At the mid-May election campaign convention of the CDU in Bremen, an endorsement for solar energy prevailed over nuclear energy. What was also revealing was how an April resolution passed by the biggest state section of the Junge Union (the youth organization of the CDU), in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, was ignored. That resolution not only supported the existing national capacities for nuclear technology, but even called for optional construction of new nuclear power plants — none have been built in Germany since 1978! It was quite a surprise to many, to discover that there still seemed to be ardent supporters of nuclear technology left in the CDU, but none of this was reflected in the "Future Program" of the party, which was passed by the CDU at its convention in Bremen.

Does this mean that the CDU is now turning openly ecologist, joining the SPD, the Free Democratic Party, and the Greens, in promoting ecologism before jobs and industrial investment? Is the CDU trying to attract greenie voters?

Behind the facade of election campaigning and "we will win" verbiage, the CDU leaders know that they don't have the votes to defeat the SPD in September. They are losing voters because of the worsening economic situation. They are, therefore, making secret preparations for a "Grand Coalition" government with the SPD, and such a coalition, as things stand, would only work if the CDU were to substantially sacrifice its support for nuclear technology, and make more concessions on the ecology issue.

In this kind of scenario, the CDU might still voice support for nuclear technology, but would agree with the SPD that no new power plants would be built in the next 10-15 years, while, at the same time, unworkable "alternatives," such as solar energy and similar low energy-density options, would be promoted to replace the energy from the power plants that would be retired from service by 2010-15. Alleged "unresolved waste storage problems," such as those invented in this new "radioactive sweat" affair, would serve greenie aims by putting nuclear technology on hold, for the sake of reaching an all-party consensus.

A certain category of bankers, who consider the investment of billions of deutschemarks into big projects a "waste," preferring to use those billions for speculative gains on the global financial markets, would welcome such an SPD-CDU consensus on the nuclear issue. From their viewpoint, the advantage of a Grand Coalition, is that the CDU would stay in power, while the SPD would take power at the same time.