

## Report from Germany by Rainer Apel

### The Bell Tolls for Joschka Fischer

*Revelations about the Foreign Minister's anarchist past are feeding a broader crisis of confidence.*

On Jan. 16, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer made his long-awaited appearance at a Frankfurt trial on terrorism. He had arranged not to testify under oath, but to give a background briefing on the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when he and Hans Joachim Klein, the former terrorist on trial, were close friends in the Frankfurt underground. Klein and another former terrorist, Rudolf Schindler, are on trial for their role in the 1975 hostage-taking at the Vienna OPEC summit, which caused three deaths. The plan to take the assembled OPEC oil ministers hostage was carried out under the command of the infamous "Carlos the Jackal."

Fischer is not among those accused, but recent revelations have it that he played an active role in the promotion of street violence, in Frankfurt. Most of the revelations contain nothing new for insiders, but a series of pictures showing him and several others beating up a lone policeman in 1973, was quite a shock for the nation, when published on Jan. 6 by the weekly magazine *Stern*. The last time those pictures were published, was in April 1973, immediately after street riots in Frankfurt, during which this incident occurred. The attackers in those pictures had not been identified then, but now they are revealed to be Fischer and Klein. More pictures, and interviews with people who recall those events, have been published, during the last two weeks.

Fischer's initial response was to concede that he was in the Frankfurt violence-prone underground, but stressing that he has changed his atti-

tudes. This has backfired, however, because the whole debate brings back to public consciousness how Fischer's Green Party made it into parliaments and governments, in the 1980s. They used intimidation, psycho-terror on the environmental issue, and real terror against nuclear power projects and the policemen protecting those sites. All the ugly scenes of confrontation between policemen and violent protesters are back in print and on prime-time on television. And this is not at all a thing of the past: Even today, Green activists cut railroad tracks to block nuclear fuel transports, attack policemen, set vehicles of nuclear power producers on fire, cut overland power lines, and blockade roads. The intensity of violence is not equal to the 1980s, but the violence is still there.

To those Germans who can look through the pro-environmentalist coverage that usually dominates the media, the revelations about Fischer bring back to mind that major industrial and infrastructure projects can no longer be carried out in the Germany of today, under the impact of legal and political concessions made by gutless politicians to the Greens. A pact between Greens and budget-balancers killed the planned first project for a fully commercial maglev train between Hamburg and Berlin, Germany's two biggest cities. Airbus Industries cannot expand its production site in Hamburg, which is an urgent project, because of environmentalist worries about fish and frogs in the Elbe River. And the high-speed railroad between Cologne and Frankfurt, which is crucial for the establishment of an

east-west modern rail connection across the middle of Germany, has been delayed by ten years, because of environmentalist objections.

Twenty years ago, street violence was required to force concessions to the Green cause, but today, the courts almost automatically rule in favor of ecologist arguments, or in favor of courtroom deals which allow the ecologists to prevail.

But the Greenie Revolution that has changed Germany for the worse over the last 25-30 years, is not uncontested in the population: Costly projects like the ecology tax, which the Socialist-Green coalition government introduced when it took power after the national elections of September 1998; deep fiscal cuts in the social welfare, labor and pension budgets; and tax cuts for the banks and investment funds, at the expense of the producing industry, have enraged German citizens. The Green party would not be re-elected into the national legislature, again, and it has been voted out of numerous regional and local legislatures since 1998. Radical ecologism is broadly opposed by Germans, and this was underlined, when thousands of farmers took to the streets in January in protest of the government's plans to misuse the crisis over "Mad Cow" disease, for the transformation of farming into ecology-farming.

The discontent among Germans with their "red-green" government has now been given a name: Joschka Fischer. And since, as Vice Chancellor, he is the number-two person in the government, the entire government is in deep trouble. It is generally expected that if the crisis of confidence deepens, Fischer will be forced out of office, soon, either by new revelations, or by an emergency decision by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to dismiss him, in order to save his own neck.