

## Report From Germany by Rainer Apel

### A New Phase for the Monday Rallies

*The establishment wants to kill the protests, but the LaRouche forces are intervening, and citizens are still on the move.*

Only one week after their disastrous 15.8% vote loss in the Sept. 19 state parliamentary elections in Saxony, the German Christian Democrats (CDU) were hit by another severe blow. In the Sept. 26 municipal elections in North Rhine-westphalia (N.R.W.), Germany's most populous state with almost 18 million citizens, the CDU lost 6.9%. Although the figure is a statistical projection, because the real votes were cast on a municipal level, with results differing from city to city, the statewide figure gives an indication of what the vote would be, were there state parliament elections in N.R.W. right now. The next elections for state parliament in N.R.W. are in May 2005, and the vote losses on Sept. 26 are another "no" of the CDU voter base against hardline neo-con party chairwoman Angela Merkel. During recent weeks, she has repeatedly stated that she would even go beyond the austerity measures (the Hartz IV package) of the present German government of Social Democratic Chancellor Gerhard Schröder.

Merkel and the CDU leadership have ignored the fact that German citizens have joined Monday rallies in more than 240 cities (at their pre-election peak in mid-August) in protest of the Social Democratic Party-led government, but even more of Merkel herself. Shortly before the Sept. 19 elections in Saxony, opinion polls showed that 75% of CDU voters there were in favor of the Monday rallies. This is why the Merkel-CDU lost so heavily in Saxony and in N.R.W. Despite that, Merkel and the Chancellor prefer to close their eyes to reality, claiming in-

stead, as the Chancellor has, that "people have come to realize that you cannot change anything with these protests."

Turnout in many of the Monday rallies, especially in the big cities like Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, and Magdeburg, has dropped, down to maybe 25% of what it had been at their peak of four weeks ago. But the number of cities that held rallies on Sept. 27 still was more than 220. And although there is a concerted effort of the political establishment—government and opposition alike—and the mainstream media to declare the Monday rally movement "dead," the protest ferment is still there. People do not want to just go home and wait until the Hartz IV austerity legislation goes into effect in January next year. Although the leftists among the rallies' organizers want to shut the rallies down, citizens want to continue taking to the streets, still hoping to be able to prevent the legislation from going into effect. Thus, when Peter Wahl, spokesman of the German organization attac, announced on Sept. 27 that he saw no reason to have any more rallies from now on, citizens in many cities put so much pressure on their local attac offices, that Wahl was pressured to back down 24 hours later, letting local offices of his organization decide what to do now.

This just made it clear that organizations like attac never sympathized with the opposition of a large part of the population to the austerity measures, and never liked the Monday rally idea from the start, because the LaRouche movement had revived the

rallies which, in 1989, had swept East Germany's communist government from power. Organizations like attac, after they suddenly decided to "join" the protest ferment on Aug. 9, five weeks after the LaRouche movement's first Monday rally in Leipzig, always tried to distort and sabotage the rallies, and close out the LaRouche movement from the rallies' organizing committees. But in many cities, citizens intervened, making sure that the LaRouche BüSo party and the LaRouche Youth (LYM) could speak. During the first three weeks of September, BüSo/LYM representatives spoke or intervened prominently at between 15 and 21 rallies, every Monday.

Now, with most of the pompous leftists cowardly deserting the rallies, protesting citizens in many cities are desperately looking for speakers, which will increase speaking engagements for the LaRouche movement. It may also be that in many cities, rallies will be replaced by roundtable gatherings which will put serious discussion of an alternate economic program, with an emphasis on the creation of new, productive jobs, on their agenda. Here, the programmatic input of the LaRouche movement will be essential.

While many in the establishment want to bury the Monday rally ferment after the last big national protest rally in Berlin, on Oct. 2, the memory of the original Monday rally wave in the Autumn of 1989 is just being refreshed for east Germans, with commemorative exhibits, panels, official and non-official events in many cities, including pictures from that protest 15 years ago. And, as in late 1989, when the East German leadership thought that the protests would simply stop—which they didn't but even expanded—those that think the same today, may be in for a surprise surprise.