

Report From Germany by Rainer Apel

Time Is Running Out for the Neo-Cons

The prospects for an end of the Bush era herald the political demise of German CDU chief Angela Merkel.

The American voter has not yet decided, but the mere prospect that John Kerry might be elected as the new U.S. President, and the increasingly bad headlines for the Bush camp, have forced the German political establishment to rethink its positions. With the exception of Defense Minister Peter Struck, who on Oct. 12 openly, if rather vaguely, welcomed Kerry's proposal for a new international conference on Iraq, leading German politicians have not overcome their traditional cowardice concerning intervention into U.S. affairs. None of them, therefore, has dared to state clear sympathy or support for Kerry (or for Lyndon LaRouche).

Nonetheless, the tectonic shift that would accompany a voting-out of Bush, already has had its first pre-effects on the hard-line neo-cons in German politics, those who have clearly stood in the camp of Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and others of the American war party. The number one "victim" of this phenomenon is Angela Merkel, national party chairman of the Christian Democrats (CDU), and this has to do with two aspects of the international LaRouche campaign activities.

When Merkel was in the United States for her scandalous February 2003 hand-shaking tour through the offices of Cheney, Wolfowitz, Richard Armitage, and others, she had her first direct encounter at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., with LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) members, who confronted her on her pro-war positions. And soon after her return to Germany, her popularity rat-

ings dropped from 42 to 21%, because the vast majority of the German population opposes the war on Iraq. Dropping way behind the admittedly low popularity of incumbent Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (a Social Democrat), Merkel was in danger of losing her options for "regime change" in Berlin, because of lack of support in her own party.

The loss of her CDU support also had to do with the tactics of the CSU (Christian Social Union), the autonomous Bavarian state sister-party of the CDU. Edmund Stoiber, Bavarian State Governor and CSU party chairman, whose close links to the machine of George Bush the Elder are well known, apparently was inspired to contain Merkel's influence, in a way parallel to efforts in the U.S. to contain George Bush the Younger. Thus, whenever Merkel went public with support for Cheney's war, Stoiber would intervene with some kind of "differentiated view," never diametrically opposed to her, but outspoken enough to be read as an oppositional view. This also extended to other fields of policy—public health reform, and labor and tax reforms, for example.

The impact of the hard-hitting LaRouche campaign against Cheney was also noted by German media, some of which started covering the LaRouche campaign, beginning with the LYM intervention against Merkel in Washington, D.C.

In Summer 2004, the second aspect of the international LaRouche campaign entered the stage: the Monday Rally movement, which the LaRouche Youth kicked off in

Leipzig, at the start of the Saxony state election campaign in early July. The Monday rallies soon sparked a nationwide wave of protests against the government's Schachtian revival (the Hartz IV brutal austerity package) in more than 240 cities by mid-August.

Although nominally, the rallies were against the Social Democratic-Green coalition government in Germany, the main target of popular outrage was Angela Merkel's policies. In the state elections of Saxony and Brandenburg on Sept. 19, the CDU lost a full third of its vote, and in the Sept. 26 municipal elections in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the CDU lost about 20% of its vote.

What Merkel was too arrogant to take notice of, was an opinion poll published at the end of August, showing that 75% of the CDU members and voters in Saxony supported the Monday rallies, which implied that they were against Merkel's policies. The fact that the CDU was so polarized on the austerity issue, with a majority of the party's members and supporters turning against their national party leadership, is one of the direct achievements of the LaRouche movement's campaign in Saxony, from early July to mid-September.

Now, even the mainstream media which had mostly supported Merkel in the past, have begun posing the question of whether she will still be the leader of the CDU in 2005. Posing such a question, usually is the prelude to a German politician's fall, sooner or later.

In an Oct. 8 local party convention, one questioner after the other charged Merkel and the CDU leadership with selling out to neo-liberalism, and pointedly asked her where the "C" (Christian) was in her kind of CDU.

It is not even certain, now, whether Merkel will still be at the head of the party in 2005.