

## Zepp-LaRouche Is Shaping Crucial Election in Germany

by Rainer Apel

Just ten days before the Sept. 18 elections for national parliament in Germany, approximately one-third of all voters, 20 million, are still “undecided” about their vote. Of these, 5 or 6 million are expected to decide for one or the other party and candidate, during the last few days before the election.

This high percentage of undecided voters is one of many unprecedented aspects of these elections, which themselves are without precedent. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) decided on the evening of May 22 to call early elections in September, after his party had lost the parliamentary elections in the crucial state of North Rhine-Westphalia. He did so, although he could have stayed on as Chancellor for another year. But Schröder’s SPD was down to a rating of 25-27%, mostly because of the population’s deep discontent with Schröder’s economic and budgetary policies.

The main problem the SPD faced was not the loss of votes to the opposition Christian Democrats (CDU), but the increasing election boycott by former SPD voters. Schröder

took the admittedly big risk of early elections, in hopes of halting the unabated drain of support.

The only chance for the SPD to regain voters’ confidence was to use the four months between May 22 and Sept. 18 to launch an emergency mobilization for a new policy. This was possible, because under the programmatic impact of the LaRouche movement’s Civil Rights Movement Solidarity (BüSo) party during the North Rhine-Westphalia campaign in May, the SPD had begun to address the ongoing neo-con attack on the state, and to come out in defense of the Common Good. Also, the SPD had begun to openly attack the hedge funds and other speculative interests.

Unfortunately, the SPD did not mobilize at full speed, and any momentum it had been able to build on the issue of the Common Good got lost in bickering over secondary issues, while the party neglected to address crucial international issues. Only towards the end of August, when the SPD had “improved” to a rating of 29-30%, did Chancellor Schröder begin addressing the escalating international crisis around Iran. This came after nearly four weeks of widely circulated leaflets and press statements of the BüSo and its candidate for Chancellor, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, on the “Guns of August” war threat of Vice President Dick Cheney.

### Schröder Takes Up Economic Recovery

The Katrina hurricane disaster and its international repercussions, and a special campaign statement by Helga Zepp-LaRouche Sept. 2 (see *EIR*, Sept. 9) gave a new, crucial input to the election campaign. The scene resembled that of exactly three years ago. In August 2002, at a moment of almost certainty that he would lose the national elections, Chancellor Schröder decided to take up two crucial issues addressed by the BüSo: an economic recovery program, and a categorical “no” to a war on Iran. When Schröder suddenly put these two



EIRNS/Maria Schmitz

*The message of Helga Zepp-LaRouche, BüSo candidate for Chancellor—that Germany needs leadership, not neo-con ideologues—is resonating in local press coverage of her campaign.*



EIRNS/Karsten Werner

*"Stop Bush's Iran War" reads the banner at a BüSo morning rally in Leipzig in late August. At the microphone is BüSo candidate in Leipzig Thomas Rottmair of the LaRouche Youth Movement.*

issues at the center of his campaign, this last-minute effort won him the elections, with a few thousand votes ahead of the opposition Christian Democrats.

The question of economic recovery came in with the need to have the state intervene in the national emergency created by the giant flood of the Elbe River of Aug. 12, 2002. Now, in 2005, Schröder decided again to address the recovery issue, this time in connection with the Katrina hurricane disaster, and he did so quite effectively in the nationally televised debate on Sept 4, with the opposition's candidate for Chancellor, Angela Merkel. Neo-con Merkel avoided answering a question on Katrina, but Schröder did answer, in a way which will remind many of the 21 million Germans watching this prime-time debate, of what the BüSo and Helga Zepp-LaRouche had said in the days before the debate.

Schröder said that the New Orleans disaster and the evident inability of the Bush Administration to deal with it, showed "that we are well-advised to look very carefully at the question how much state we need and how much we don't need. For, if you look at how we over here managed such national catastrophes, you see clear differences. I say that is related to the specific way that we say for such situations, of people being in emergency, that we do not need a weak state, but we need a strong state."

Schröder also reiterated in the debate, that a Germany governed by him would stay committed to a preference for peace and development, which included also saying "no" to a powerful friend like the United States, if there is a question of a war that Germans think is not justified.

Schröder, furthermore, very harshly denounced the exploitation in the global oil markets: "We have pointed out, at the beginning of the debate, that the supply situation that has been created by the hurricane in America, is being exploited, and this in a really extreme way, by the oil firms, at the expense of the consumers and for the benefit of the profits of the big

oil firms. . . . I proposed at the G-8 summit that we bring more transparency to the market. That failed, because of Great Britain and because of the United States of America. I hope a rethinking process begins."

Schröder continued: "In the oil price, and this depends on which expert you ask, there are \$20 to \$30 of the now \$70 total which the barrel costs, that are mere speculation. That has nothing to do with consumption, nothing with production. And that what we must get at. That is currently being blocked by the interests in London, in New York. And I hope we make progress on that."

## A Quality of Leadership Needed

Helga Zepp-LaRouche welcomed these remarks by Schröder, in a statement she issued shortly after the television debate. She said Schröder reflected an ability to relate to reality and its challenges, which was a first step toward building the very quality of leadership which would also convince voters to vote against Merkel, a neo-con ideologue who has lost all contact to reality.

Indeed, opinion polls conducted by the leading polling institutes after the television debate, showed that Schröder's remarks were widely appreciated, giving him a wide lead—20%—over Merkel in the debate. Overall, this brought the SPD ratings up to 33-34%, while Merkel's Christian Democrats remained stagnant at 41-42%. Therefore, with an all-out mobilization during the remaining two weeks of the election campaign, the SPD did have a potential of getting close to the CDU, or even equalling Merkel's support (although this is less likely, because of the many missed chances of the previous weeks).

And indeed, the SPD has kept up the momentum, with an impressive speech given in Berlin by SPD national party chairman Franz Müntefering on Sept. 6, and a parliamentary address by Schröder on Sept. 7. In his speech, which was

widely reported by the media, Müntefering said, "Oil is more expensive at the moment than it should be." Experts, he said, had told him "that there are \$20 to \$30 in every single barrel that are based on pure speculation. There are people at work that want to make a lot of money with that, globally." Müntefering continued: Once you decide to take on those, who as a financial industry try to make as much money as possible in such situations, you get a lot of flak. It is the right thing to do, nevertheless."

Schröder, in his Sept. 7 Parliamentary address, reiterated, almost word for word, the main aspects of his remarks on the role of the state and on the oil issue during the television debate. He also included a section on the importance of developing good relations between Germany and Russia, because the long-term agreements signed by both governments on Russian gas supplies and German-Russian cooperation in the gas exploration sector were of a strategic character for Germany's energy supply security. Russian President Vladimir Putin came to Berlin on Sept. 8, for the signing of the relevant agreements with Germany.

Schröder's Russia policy of cooperation has broad support among Germans, among German industry in particular, and although not presented that way officially, it is a policy generally going in the direction of the much broader-in-scope Eurasian Land-Bridge Development proposal of the LaRouche movement. By contrast, the dumb polemics against Russia and Putin which have been practiced by Merkel and the neo-cons around her, are a burden on German-Russian relations. Reminding the voters of Germany about this was the right thing to do for Schröder.

If Schröder had been less hesitant to listen to Zepp-LaRouche in recent weeks and months, he and his SPD would not be forced to fight such an uphill battle to stay in power. The LaRouche proposal for a "New Bretton Woods," for example, is something that does interest the average German voter, who is now very worried about the future of finances and jobs. Zepp-LaRouche has been the only prominent politician in Germany to campaign publicly with the New Bretton Woods proposal, and her efforts for it have made her a well-known figure also internationally. In contrast, for much too long, the German political establishment has preferred to discuss such issues behind closed doors.

But there are some surprising new aspects that have emerged during the last phase of the German elections, with developments that will have an impact on the German situation beyond election day. One of these is the visibly increased direct public recognition and media coverage of the LaRouche movement and its BüSo party. And one can be sure that every additional vote that BüSo candidates like Helga Zepp-LaRouche—who runs in Leipzig, the largest city of the state of Saxony, where the LaRouche Youth Movement is especially strong—receive on Sept. 18, will strengthen the proverbial shoestring by which the political and economic future of Germany hangs.