

Resistance Grows as Battle Over Lisbon Treaty Enters Decisive Phase

by Rainer Apel

In terms of parliamentary action, the first two weeks of April might be seen as a setback for the movement against the European Union's Lisbon Treaty because three more national parliaments ratified the document—Poland on April 2, Austria on April 9, and Slovakia on April 10. But Europewide, outside of parliaments, popular resistance to the Treaty is growing.

Although the line-up for the ratification vote in Austria was not much of a surprise, Poland and Slovakia both had a live option for defeat of the Treaty, although the opposition there was not based on very solid ground.

The Polish opposition party, PiS, is the same one that had formed the previous government and negotiated its country's "yes" to the Treaty when it was signed by the 27 EU member governments in Lisbon on Dec. 13, 2007, so its sudden threat not to ratify the same Treaty this year, came as a surprise to many. But fear of a mobilization of the Polish population with a referendum, if the parliamentary vote had failed, drove several PiS members into the pro-Treaty camp, when it came time to vote on April 2.

In Slovakia, the situation is more complicated. After the Treaty was signed in Lisbon by the EU governments, it was generally expected that the ratification would pass the parliament with a majority of 80 or 90%, because of the overwhelmingly pro-European mood in the Slovak population. But, all of a sudden, the opposition parties fell at odds with the government over a new law on media restructuring, and in retaliation, these parties threatened not to ratify the Lisbon Treaty. And indeed, when the



LaRouche organizers in Milan, Italy. The banner reads, "Attention Citizens: By the fraud that seems good, they want to make us into subjects with the Lisbon Treaty." IRNS



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"The EU's Lisbon Treaty means an offensive military pact instead of economic union," "Against EU Dictatorship," and "Demand a referendum" are some of the slogans on the posters of these *BüSo* (Civil Rights Solidarity) party organizers in Heidelberg, Germany.

parliament voted on April 10, almost a third of deputies—most of the opposition—walked out in protest. The problem is that the protest was primarily against the media law, not against the Treaty.

However, a political side effect, even of the unprincipled opposition in Poland and Slovakia, has been that the population has now been alerted, and that the first indications of a mass protest movement against the Lisbon Treaty have surfaced.

The ‘Save Austria’ Opposition

A somewhat different situation exists in Austria, where for several weeks, there has been a broad mobilization of the population around two political initiatives. One of these, organized by the centrist “Save Austria” movement, has collected 103,313 signatures, which it presented on April 8, to the chief speaker of the national parliament, Barbara Prammer, and Assistant Foreign Minister Heidrun Silhavy.

As Karl Walter Nowak, spokesman for the anti-Treaty initiative, announced at a mass rally of his movement in Vienna that same day, the signature collecting will continue, even after the ratification of the Treaty by the parliament. This will serve as a symbolic nationwide referendum, which, although not binding on the parliament, will have a moral and political impact. This is underlined by the simple fact that whereas in 1994, two-thirds of the Austrians voted in favor of their nation’s EU membership, today two-thirds of the population is both for a referendum, and against the Lisbon Treaty.

At the same time, a flood of lawsuits against ratification were issued in the constitutional court of Austria. The impact of this legal mobilization could be seen in the days immediately before the parliamentary vote, as more and more members of government and of the parliamentary majority took to the media, calling on citizens to support the Lisbon Treaty. Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, Vice Chancellor Wilhem Moltner, and Justice Minister Maria Berger even held a joint press conference at the same time that the 103,000 signatures against ratification were presented to the parliament by Save Austria.

The debate in the parliament showed that the opposition to the Treaty is not at all demoralized over its minority status, but that it is actually in a fighting mood. Before the Austrian national parliament finally ratified the Treaty (151 for, 27 against, and 5 abstentions), it was forced to engage in an intense debate, that lasted for more than eight hours. The debate also featured some sarcasm from the opposition, especially when Hans Christian Strache, chairman of the Free Democrats’ (FPÖ) parliamentary group, said that the government and its majority, plus the pro-Treaty Greens, were about to “send our national eagle [the state symbol—ed.] to Brussels, to get it back only as a plucked chicken.”

In his speech, Strache addressed the militarization of the EU and the loss of neutrality and sovereignty for Austria. He provoked some turbulence in the parliament when he addressed the fact that the Treaty has a clause that would introduce the death penalty into Europe. Strache also handed a muzzle to Chancellor Gusenbauer, in protest against the official attempt to ban anti-Treaty arguments.

In spite of the defeat, the anti-Treaty campaign plans to escalate its actions. For example, a number of professors of law, including the expert Walter Holländer, announced April 10 that they are now preparing legal cases against the ratification vote at the constitutional court, and they said that the same would occur in neighboring Germany. There was broad media coverage of the issue and the debate in Austria, during the days before the debate, the debate itself, and the days after, led by the appropriate headline, April 10, “Break of Constitution in Parliament,” in *Kronenzeitung*, the main mouthpiece of the Austrian anti-Treaty movement.

Parliament’s vote is just a first step. Now, the various states of Austria also have to vote to ratify, and if one of them does not, this will block the Treaty. The state of Carinthia (Kärnten) is the most likely to block it; its governor, Jörg Haider, is an opponent of the Treaty.

Anti-Treaty Protests Growing

In Denmark, a nationwide protest movement is headed by Jens-Peter Bonde, who gave up his seat at the European Parliament in order to have more energy to concentrate on the fight against the Lisbon Treaty. Bonde has collected signatures, and presented 48,000 to the government on April 8. The other nationwide protest movement, led by the Schiller Institute and the LaRouche movement in Denmark, presented a couple of thousand more signatures on April 9. The chief LaRouche representative in Denmark, Tom Gillesberg, has gained support among Danes in recent months with his campaign for a Eurasian Land-Bridge development alternative to the onrushing financial crash, especially with his call for Denmark to start building a national maglev grid that could be extended to neighboring countries like Germany.

In France, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, the LaRouche movement is at the core of the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty. Its role is that of a catalyst for a long-overdue debate on the systemic nature of the financial collapse that has been the main driver for the financial oligarchy, centered in London, to push fascist control measures like the Lisbon Treaty.

As the movements against the Treaty reach more widely into the population, the LaRouche Youth Movement activists, in their daily street organizing across Europe, have reported an upturn in people’s awareness of the economic and financial aspects of the Lisbon Treaty’s “Europe.” The de-ratification of the Lisbon Treaty already is visibly on its way.