
Germany

Election Alternative To Establishment's Failure

by Rainer Apel

Germany's national election campaign this Autumn will be without precedent in the 56-year history of post-War Germany: Whereas there have been elections in times of deep economic recessions before, this campaign will take place in a time of deepening economic depression.

The latest reports of the German export and labor markets illustrate that, for everyone who wants to open his eyes to reality: In November (year-on-year), Germany suffered a drop in exports and imports by 4.5% and 7.0% respectively; exports to the other member states of the European Union—the importer of first resort for German products—dropped by 7%, imports even by 20%, in November.

National joblessness jumped up to almost 4 million in December, and a panicked federal government already speaks of a figure of 4.3 million to be reached in January. These are the officially published figures—real unemployment is much higher, as an internal survey of the Federal Employment Office, leaked to leading German media on Jan. 10, shows. With

the “hidden” categories of joblessness (like early retirement, state aid recipients, unemployed Germans between ages 58 and 65, etc.), an additional 1.7 million Germans ought to be included in the statistics, increasing the real unemployment level to almost 5.6 million. Economists independent of the German government even speak of 7-8 million, as being the appropriate figure for real unemployment.

Therefore, if some in the panicked establishment of Germany voice fears, that unemployment might hit the 5 million mark soon, they are really forecasting a jobless level of 9-10 million. Germany's total workforce is 34 million full-time workers, plus 4 million part-time workers. So more than one-third may be without a job by September election time.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche's Campaign

The German government is watching this disastrous trend, without acting against it, and even if it wanted to act, it cannot as long as it continues to respect the budget-balancing criteria of the European Union's Maastricht Treaty (signed in 1992, ratified in 1998). The treaty bans all generation of state credit for job-creating projects on a scale worth mentioning. And so far, the German political establishment has not seriously put that treaty, nor its criteria, into question.

That gives the campaign announcement by the German LaRouche movement's political arm, the BüSo (Bürgerrechtsbewegung Solidarität, or Civil Rights Movement-Solidarity) a catalyst role for a change. On Jan. 11, BüSo national chairwoman Helga Zepp-LaRouche issued an “Open Letter to Germans,” in which she declared: “I personally, and BüSo, have not only long correctly forecast the global financial cri-



The candidacy for the Chancellorship of Helga Zepp-LaRouche (shown at a November 2001 convention of her party) is the alternative to Germany's economic plunge under way; that of Christian Socialist Union leader Edmund Stoiber, as standard-bearer of the Christian Democratic opposition, is a sign of how that plunge is changing the German parties.

sis, while all our opponents have been completely wrong with their statements; we are also the only force, that has a comprehensive perspective to solve the crisis.

“Because my husband, Lyndon H. LaRouche, and I have been fighting for a new just world economic order for 30 years, there are today many forces in the world who regard our programmatic concepts as the only alternative” to economic collapse, Zepp-LaRouche’s letter said. “Such important forces are in Russia, India, many Eastern and Western European states, in Asia, Ibero-America, and Africa. [But] in this respect, the parties represented in [Germany’s federal parliament] the Bundestag have not the slightest thing to show.”

“The biggest political problem in Germany is that none of the parties seated in the Bundestag will be capable of governing our country during the coming existential crisis. . . . The striking proof of this assessment is the fact that none of these parties’ representatives has even approximately been willing to take notice of the global financial systemic crisis, and consequently they are incapable of offering even the most limited concept for overcoming this crisis. Likewise, these parties have proven incapable of preventing Germany from being drawn, militarily, into a premeditated *war of civilizations*.”

The BüSo party chairwoman also addressed the young generation of Germans, many of whom will vote for the first time, on Sept. 22, in a special way: “I know that many among you will ask yourselves, what should be your perspective, given the military deployments of the Bundeswehr [Germany’s armed forces], and growing unemployment under the conditions of the upcoming depression. I want you to know, that BüSo stands at your side. . . . The situation is very serious, but with us, you have a chance!”

Crisis Roils the Christian Democrats

The German election campaign is also featuring interesting changes in the establishment’s camp of political pragmatism: The opposition Christian Democrats, (CDU, the bigger of the two conservative German parties), whose leaders have been staunch supporters of neoliberal concepts during the past years, decided not to make national chairwoman Angela Merkel their candidate for chancellor. Instead, they decided for Edmund Stoiber, chairman of the CSU (the smaller opposition party), who has been a state interventionist within the outer limits of what economic liberalism would tolerate.

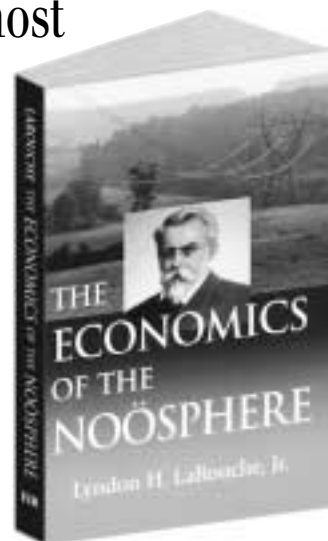
While resembling features of what socialists should look like (if there were any left among the governing Social Democrats), in his defense of the *Mittelstand* (small productive firms) and craftsmen against the banks and insurance companies, of the small people against the Social Democratic government, Stoiber is not a “socialist,” as many neoliberals have called him. He rather is a mercantilist operating within the limits set by budget-balancing. To a certain extent, this has kept unemployment disproportionately low in Bavaria, the southern German state of which Stoiber has been governor for two terms: At approximately 5%, Bavarian jobless rates

are only half of the Germany national average, and only one-quarter of the jobless rate in the deindustrialized regions of the formerly communist-run eastern part of Germany. But running an industrial nation of 80 million citizens poses bigger challenges than running Bavaria, the second-largest among the 16 German states, with its 12 million citizens.

Stoiber has declared the economic crisis his main election campaign issue. But to date, he has not clearly addressed the reality of global economic depression as such, and he has not proposed a viable alternative. Stoiber has not stated anything in public that would come close to the LaRouche call for a New Bretton Woods, nor has he seriously challenged the Maastricht fiscal straitjacket on the German economy. He is what Helga Zepp-LaRouche, in her open letter, termed a comparatively “competent” politician within the otherwise degenerate political parties of the establishment. But Stoiber is still far away from the required, real competence—he may improve, though, during the coming weeks of election campaigning, if he dumps the economic policy illusions and denial of the depression reality to which incumbent Chancellor Gerhard Schröder still subscribes.

Showing the way German politicians have to choose if they want to pull Germany—Europe’s leading industrial economy—out from the global economic depression, will be for the entire election campaign, the sole job of the LaRouche movement in Germany.

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