

Criticism of Israel Even Breaks German Ban

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

There are many taboos reverently respected in German political life, which all have their origins in what is ritually referred to as “Germany’s special history.” Their basic force is that, since Germany was ruled by a Nazi dictatorship for 12 years, which committed atrocities against millions of Jews and non-Jews, and dragged Germany into a catastrophic war, all post-war political leaders, burdened with “collective guilt,” must observe certain rules and regulations. Among them, one should be very cautious in voicing any criticism of the United States, which, along with its allies, liberated Germany from the Nazi horrors.

But the most sacred taboo of all, is the one governing discussion of Israel. Given that the Jews were the leading victims of the Nazi holocaust, no German dares to criticize the policy of any Israeli government. Political careers can be ended if a wrong word is uttered.

Lyndon LaRouche has not respected such taboos. At a conference in Oberwesel, Germany in August 2001, he declared that as an American, he could say what Germans could not: that the current policy of the Ariel Sharon government and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) against the Palestinian population, is the same as that implemented by the Nazis against the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Five months later, the startling admission was published by the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* on Jan. 27, that the IDF is doing precisely that, and consciously so.

Straw That Broke European Backs

With LaRouche’s followup statement, “*Götterdämmerung* in Palestine,” circulating internationally, the unthinkable has happened: German politicians have broken the taboo, and openly attacked the vicious policies of the Israeli government. There are many factors leading to this. Most important has been Sharon’s preemptive liquidation of Palestinian leaders, demolition of Palestinian homes, armed incursions into Palestinian-ruled areas, and military aggression against Palestinian installations. For the Europeans, what hurt most was the fact that the Israeli government was systematically destroying basic Palestinian infrastructure—the Gaza airport, the Gaza port, radio station, etc.—all of which had been built with European Union funds, pursuant to the 1993 Oslo peace accords.

The straw that broke the camel’s back, was Sharon’s declaration in an interview on Feb. 1, that he regretted not having

“liquidated” Palestinian Authority President Arafat, in Lebanon back in 1982.

On Feb. 3, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Germany’s newspaper of record, featured in its Sunday edition a report on “harsh criticism of Sharon’s policy” in Germany. It came not from one politician or one party, but from the entire political spectrum. Leading the charge was the foreign policy spokesman of the Christian Democratic caucus in the Bundestag, Karl Lamers, who told the daily, “The current policy of Israel, which is no longer compatible with our conception of respect for human rights, is discrediting the West and its order.” The foreign policy spokesman of the Social Democratic (SPD) faction said, “Sharon demands that Arafat move against the Palestinian terrorists, but simultaneously he takes out of Arafat’s hands, all the means he has for doing this.” He described the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure as “disastrous,” and lamented that Sharon “is no longer to be influenced by arguments.” The Middle East expert of the SPD faction, Christoph Moosbauer, said that Sharon’s policy is “retribution/vengeance, without any political perspective.”

The newspaper went on to report that what was inducing politicians to speak out, was a new form of constituency pressure. Former Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said, “I am perceiving an almost anti-Israel mood, a sad change in vast layers of the population.” Lamers said outright that the taboo had to be broken: “If it is established that criticism of Israel’s policies is growing throughout all the factions in the Bundestag and also in large parts of the population, then the question is raised, whether it is correct to maintain this taboo.” He feared that if no open debate took place, “you would see undesirable feelings and attitudes emerging.”

Moosbauer has called for a Middle East policy debate in the Bundestag, because “the Parliament can no longer afford to maintain silence.”

Most remarkable is that this parade of politicians is speaking the truth about Israel, precisely in the name of Germany’s special historical responsibility. Lamers explained this in his lengthy interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. “Precisely if one feels responsible for Israel’s future, the time has now come to say something. . . . We also have responsibility for the consequences of the founding of the State of Israel,” which include “the millions of Palestinian refugees who have been living in camps for decades. Because of our guilt in the past, we must not, through our silence, render ourselves guilty again. That would be tragic.”

The settlements policy, “which the entire community of nations correctly considers contrary to international law,” is what for Lamers epitomizes the problem. “How should a rationally organized, civilized society come into being under these conditions? In a conflict where both sides are unreconciled, there is a clear, morally unimpeachable measure: Each has responsibilities, but each according to his capabilities. This means the stronger—in this case, Israel—has the greater responsibility.”