
New Yalta Energy Policy

The 'energy conservation future' of Germany's Social Democrats

by Rainer Apel

The Nuremberg party convention of the German Social Democrats (SPD) (Aug. 25-29) resulted in drastic changes of program. The changes are most profound on defense policy, and on the economic/energy aspect of the program. Defense cooperation with the United States on missile stationing, the Strategic Defense Initiative, and wartime host-nation support, is to be ended. Nuclear technology is to be given up completely, and the economy is to be "ecologically restored."

The SPD is West Germany's official Opposition, and the second most powerful party after the Christian Democratic Union, which leads the current coalition government. The Social Democrats won a series of upset victories against the Christian Democrats in state elections over the past year, and have set up a coalition with the Moscow-steered, radical-environmentalist Green Party in the state of Hesse. Strategically, the SPD has been turned, under the tutelage of chairman Willy Brandt and the party's foreign-policy grey eminence Egon Bahr, into a tool of the Soviet foreign policy of "decoupling" Western Europe from the United States, also known as the "New Yalta" deal. With popular support shrinking for the Christian Democratic-led coalition of Helmut Kohl under that government's *laissez-faire* economic policies, the SPD has a strong chance to win power in the January 1987 general elections.

Since the Federal Republic of Germany is the industrial fulcrum of Western Europe, the SPD's energy and economic policies are no less dangerous to Western security than its blatantly pro-Soviet strategic policies. In fact, they are part of the same deal.

The SPD's ideas on energy and economic policy would have devastating effects on the West German economy. The bail-out from nuclear energy is supposed to be put into effect within 10 years, but already in 1987 the first nuclear plants are to be shut down. The nuclear laws are to be changed so that even nuclear research will no longer be possible. Already-existing nuclear power plants are to be replaced by coal-burning plants. Neither nuclear plants nor nuclear technology will be allowed to be exported, and the importing of electrical current from foreign nuclear plants will also be

prohibited. Fifty thousand jobs in the nuclear industry and research will be "wiped out," by the SPD's own admission, but there will be 60,000 new jobs in coal mining in their stead.

Monstrous costs

The costs for this bail-out would be monstrous, since a new coal power plant based on the best technology entails a minimum of 1.5 billion deutschemarks (about \$750 million)—as long as its construction is not delayed, for example by years of court actions by the Greens. The State of Hesse would have to replace the A and B reactors at Biblis, and put up 3 billion marks in advance to do it.

The immediate question that comes up is, how the 50,000 highly skilled workers from the nuclear sector will be "converted," since these skills can hardly be turned around and used in coal mining. What can be foreseen is either costly retraining programs, since a large part of those 50,000 will seek work in other high-technology areas, or, more likely, a steep rise in joblessness among the high-skill engineering and technical professions.

In fact, the bail-out from nuclear will directly hit not just the 50,000 jobs named by the SPD, but far more jobs, probably between 150,000 and 180,000. The further question arises, of what future high-technology industry has in a Federal Republic in which cheap atomic-generated electricity is not available either domestically or imported from other European countries. Either the price of electricity will have to be so highly subsidized that taxpayers will be asked to cough up billions, or the energy-intensive industries will pack up and go to countries friendlier to the atom. A gruesome spiral of austerity policy and high tax burdens, coupled with the emigration of whole industrial sectors and capital flight, can be predicted.

While playing these social-democratic futurist games, the SPD has not bothered to think through the problems which cranking up of coal production again entails. It is not so simple to reopen shut-down mines. When a mine is no longer worked on a day-to-day basis, the shafts sag and fill up with water and gases. Putting them back into working order in

Tomorrow, East Germany

If the Social Democrats ever put into practice their kinky ideas about economic and energy policy, the Federal Republic of Germany will soon be forced to implement a strict planned economy. Industry would be allowed to use only a limited amount of energy, and given the SPD-backed demand for a six-hour day (in a five-day work week), production would quickly sink. Probably per-capita work quotas would soon be decreed, to keep production at a minimal level within the framework allowed by lower energy supplies.

First of all, one could expect a massive emigration of the workforce, especially in highly skilled nuclear related trades. An SPD government must sooner or later decree strict bans on emigration, to keep labor in the country. Probably it would pass a corresponding ban on immigration for labor from Turkey or Yugoslavia (for example). Further, an SPD government could not tolerate millions of West German citizens sneaking billions of marks out of the country, to spend on their vacations. That would

imply obligatory exchanges for foreigners, who want to take their vacations in the German forest.

For private households, electricity would be on only part of the day: morning, noon, and evening cooking hours. Private washing machines would be replaced by public laundromats, and even the household garbage must be carefully sorted for recycling. Careless discarding of tin cans and so forth would be seen as an economic lapse, and in the worst cases, an economic crime. For the gravest environmental sins, military training in the Environmental Work Service would be mandated. Owning or spreading books on nuclear technology would be severely punished as "people-damaging."

Yes: We would then be in East Germany, or rather, the Soviet Occupied Zone of 1948. Perhaps the SPD wants to go back to what that was, economically. SPD official Egon Bahr has repeatedly said in public that the Berlin Wall can only vanish when the economic level between West Germany and East Germany becomes equal—when East German leaders need no longer fear massive flight of the workforce to the West. Since East Germany has not been able to reach the economic level of West Germany despite all its efforts, it will be met halfway—from below!

such cases, while sometimes possible, would cost the West German economy billions of marks—with the corresponding impact on the price of coal, and hence on costs to the utility consumer. To open new mines would also cost billions of dollars, with the same consequences for prices.

To make this coal future attractive to the economy, the SPD came up with the idea of covering a large portion of the expected coal needs by imports. Herein lies the next catch in the SPD's scheme. According to Saarland SPD boss Oskar Lafontaine—the "greenest" of the SPD's new leaders—of the required 23 million tons of additional coal, about half would have to be imported. But foreign mines produce significantly more cheaply than the West German coal industry. So, to equal out the price differential between German and foreign coal, the government must raise several billion marks, to make domestic coal "cheap." One already sees where the plan that SPD leaders Lafontaine, Rau, and Hauff put forward in their speeches to the Nuremberg party congress is going.

It is moreover rather cynical when a party like the SPD, which year in, year out has traveled up and down the land with the slogan "humanization of the work world," now considers cheap coal imports from international mines for its scenario of a coal future. It is well known that in broad strata of the foreign mining industry, safety protections, equipment, and working conditions are catastrophic, and that huge mining accidents are the rule, sometimes with hundreds of deaths. It is precisely because the high standards of German

mining are not practiced there, that the coal production price can be so low. Either the Lafontaines stick to the "cheap aspect" of imported coal, and hence, pre-program thousands of dead miners, or they stick to the price subsidies which have been applied up to now—a costly swindle in any case.

Conservation an energy source?

In the case of the SPD, the swindle does not merely lie in the question "atoms—yes or no," but extends to the entire energy field. Thus, energy conservation is supposed to be one of the important energy *sources* (!) of the future; but private consumers can't conserve enough energy, since private households use only 26% of the total energy consumption. The main burden of this conservation therefore must be borne by industry, especially by the energy-intensive branches. So a firm that refines aluminum, under an SPD government, would not only pay high environmental protection taxes, but also punitive energy rates. Whoever uses a lot of energy, should be penalized according to the SPD, and whoever uses little energy, will be monetarily rewarded.

How does one establish who is conserving and who not? A monstrous bureaucracy of conservation commissars, official experts, environmentalists, and so forth is visible on the SPD horizon. Probably tens of thousands of Greens, who have never learned anything, are hoping for jobs under the SPD energy policy. That would be the kernel of the "ecological renewal of the economy," which is the title given by the SPD to this policy.