

EIR Feature

'Patriots' raise the real issues in German election

by Rainer Apel

The "hot phase" of the Jan. 25 elections for West German parliament, which began on the weekend of Jan. 3-4, is taking a shape quite different from what the three established political parties (Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and Free Democrats) originally wanted the election campaign to look like.

Before the Christmas recess, a pact was reached among these parties to circumvent the real, alarming issues, like the state of the economy, the threat of trade war between the United States and Western Europe, the threat of terrorism and Soviet-sponsored irregular warfare, and, most of all, the threat of the lethal disease AIDS. The three parties agreed not to talk about the "gloomy" present, but to campaign around vague slogans about "Germany's future" and "optimism." The parties hoped to do the impossible: to gain votes without telling the voters why they should vote at all, and what for.

The new, rising party in West Germany, the Patriots for Germany, chaired by Mrs. Helga Zepp-LaRouche and Gen. (ret.) Friedrich Grunewald, had warned against this unprincipled pact of silence, demanding that the real issues be put on the table, so that the voter would be informed of the situation, before he decided which party to cast his vote for.

To the pronounced discomfort of the established parties, a cold shock of reality intervened on the side of the Patriots, right at the beginning of the election campaign. Dramatic developments involving the threat of trade war and of U.S. disengagement from Germany, the Soviet threat, and the AIDS question have suddenly become number-one items in the political debate. This places the Patriots for Germany in a good position to make their impact felt in the last phase of the election campaign.

Trade war builds

Following the bad example of the U.S. administration, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his coalition government in Bonn (Christian Democrats and Free Democrats) have been spreading the line that the economic situation was "basically sound," that a "visible, though still slow upswing" could be observed. The pres-



Campaign posters of the Patriots for Germany. From left: "Stop AIDS!" "Only Patriots have a future," and "No to the empire of evil."

asures of the U.S. Gramm-Rudman budget-slashing amendment and the ongoing collapse of world trade have upset this rosy scenario, as the Trilateral Commission's networks on both sides of the Atlantic seek to launch a full-scale trade war between the United States and Europe.

The ultimatum which U.S. Special Trade Representative Clayton Yeutter posed to the West Germans concerning the export of machines and machine-tools to the United States, has exposed the foolishness of the Bonn talk about the "up-swing." By Jan. 31, Yeutter announced, the Germans would either have signed a "voluntary" agreement with the United States to reduce machine exports to America, or they would feel the American import restrictions on machinery from West Germany.

For the Germans, this is a lot to swallow: 41% of all German machinery exports went to U.S. markets in 1985 and 1986, and in some categories of highly developed machinery, the percentage is even higher. The American market has been the main engine for keeping the German machine export

branch alive, in a situation which has otherwise seen only the collapse of clients in the Third World, and in Ibero-America especially, as a result of the austerity demands of the International Monetary Fund and the bankers' cartel.

Most politicians in Germany see only two false alternatives to meet this threat from the U.S. side: either to launch import restrictions on U.S. goods, or to look for new markets in the East bloc. Both alternatives lead to decoupling of the German economy from the United States—as the Trilateral Commissioners intend.

Yeutter, as well as his main "opponents" in the treasury and trade departments on the European side, are all current or former members of the same Trilateral Commission that has adopted the scenario for "controlled economic disintegration," which was worked out in the mid-'70s at the New York Council on Foreign Relations. This is the economic complement to similar scripts for U.S. military disengagement from Europe.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the current U.S.

ambassador to Bonn, Richard Burt, a proponent of military disengagement, warned the Germans, in an interview published on Dec. 27 in the daily *Bild Zeitung*, to play by Yeutter's rules, or face a trade war they could only lose.

Yeutter's ultimatum does not only affect the German machine branch, but also farmers. With the U.S. import restrictions on food products from Europe going into effect Feb. 1, Germany's agricultural export branch will lose \$500 million in 1987. Given the already catastrophic income losses of the German farmers, the loss of a major portion of the American markets cannot be tolerated. Pressure is building against the Bonn government's efforts to pacify the farmers, which the government is almost certain to channel into counter-restrictions on U.S. food exports to Germany.

The Bonn government, and the three established parties, reacted with frantic statements of appeasement toward the United States. The German politicians, smelling that their delicate agreement for an election campaign devoid of issues was being torn apart, decided to pursue a double-track policy: warning of a trade war in the most alarming terms, but telling the German population at the same time that there was no reason to feel "alarmed." The voters were, predictably enough, bewildered at the changing political weather report.

Posing such questions will lead many voters to the conclusion that the Patriots for Germany, who warned of this kind of economic disintegration throughout 1986, were right. The Patriots, since their founding at the end of 1985, have demanded the creation of a new international economic order which would settle the world debt crisis and launch a trade and industrial boom.

Especially German farmers, who for years have been treated as the underdogs of the German economy, are becoming enraged now, and many are looking back to the programs and pamphlets which the Patriots for Germany handed out during a nationwide campaign on agricultural policy between March and December 1986. The Patriots are calling for a return to productive farming and parity prices, an end to the European Community's restrictive production quota system, and a sizable contribution of Germany's farmers to future world food supply.

These are the ideas which are gaining popularity among farmers, as the institutions which have hitherto represented them crumble. Indeed, the latest reports from the election campaign indicate that whole sections of the traditional farm vote are deserting Kohl's Christian Democrats and becoming the new constituency of the Patriots.

The Christian Democrats are panicked: All of a sudden, Bonn Agriculture Minister Ignaz Kiechle promised new "subsidies" to the farmers, although he had just told them several weeks before that there was no money in the budget for new support payments. But the Christian Democrats will come to see that there are limits to such blatant pre-election bribes.

The Patriots against the decouplers

The economic policy of the Bonn government and the three established parliamentary parties has its complement in relations to the Soviet Union and to the tendency toward U.S. military disengagement from Germany, which is strengthened by the effect of the Gramm-Rudman law on the American defense budget.

For three years after the March 23, 1983 announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative by President Reagan, the Bonn government almost hysterically refused to take any notice of the new strategy. The SDI did not fit into Chancellor Kohl's world outlook, which was ruled by the principle of "peace with fewer weapons."

Under the strong influence of his foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher (a liberal Free Democrat), Kohl even considered the SDI an obstacle to "good relations with the Soviet Union." The fact that the SDI, which would bolster the defense of Europe as well as of the United States, would thereby undercut the "decoupling" lobby on both sides of the Atlantic, escaped the chancellor's view.

It was particularly this blunder that led to the founding of the Patriots for Germany. At the end of 1985, concerned military, retired military, and other citizens worried about the future of the German-American alliance, took the initiative for founding the Patriots. It was conceived of as a movement to oppose the decoupling policy, to secure German-American cooperation on the SDI, and to reinstate, in view of the Soviet arms build-up, a policy of "peace with more weapons."

The initiative came just in time: At the end of 1985, the Social Democratic parliamentary opposition was about to form an alliance with the anti-NATO movement of the other opposition group, the Greens, and it was becoming clear that, at the same time, the pro-Soviet currents in the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) were about to take control of Chancellor Kohl's party.

From the start, the Patriots were in contact with the LaRouche wing of the U.S. Democrats and co-thinkers among the Republicans, which U.S. connection established them as the principal opponents of decoupling.

A forceful campaign by the Patriots, through mass leaflets, newspaper ads, and local rallies and conferences in many cities, calling for a strong defense and partnership with the United States in the SDI project, helped to stabilize the pro-defense current in the CDU, so that an agreement between Bonn and Washington on SDI cooperation could be signed shortly before Easter 1986. The agreement was limited in nature, reflecting the influence of the aforementioned opposition currents, but at least it was signed.

The Gorbachov question

Another key aspect of the Patriots' campaign involved the "Gorbachov question." It was generally believed among

the established parties in Bonn, that with the change of leadership to Mikhail Gorbachov, the Soviet regime would become more liberal, more favorable to reforms and disarmament. The Patriots were the first to warn against this image of Gorbachov, which could be traced back to massive Soviet disinformation in the West; instead, the Patriots insisted that the basic character of the Soviet regime as an "Empire of Evil" would not change in the least under Gorbachov; that the Red Army would not cease to exist, because politicians in the West wished not to take notice of Moscow's uninterrupted military build-up.

Especially following the Reykjavik summit in October 1986, the misevaluation of the Gorbachov question in Bonn was accentuated. Under the influence of Foreign Minister Genscher, Chancellor Kohl was showing signs of blaming President Reagan for the "failure of Reykjavik," instead of recognizing that Gorbachov went into the summit intending to force an American capitulation on the SDI and a U.S. nuclear withdrawal from Europe. To a growing part of the chancellor's own Christian Democratic constituency, it was apparent that the Bonn government had maneuvered itself into a policy trap. And worse, the pro-Soviet currents among the Christian Democrats, the "Moscow Faction of the CDU," saw their chance to exploit the post-Reykjavik disorientation and present proposals for U.S. military disengagement and strategic deals with the Soviets. This included a settlement of the "German Question," a deal with Gorbachov on some kind of German reunification. The Moscow Faction was gaining dominance in Bonn toward the end of 1986.

Sizeable sections of the pro-American constituencies of the Christian Democrats began to show interest in the policy of the Patriots for Germany, which were meeting for their national party convention on the "Reykjavik weekend" of Oct. 11-12. This was a warning signal to Chancellor Kohl, who was facing the threat of losing a larger section of pro-defense voters than he could afford.

After Kohl's meeting with President Reagan in Washington on Oct. 19, he decided to correct his public posture on Gorbachov, and made his famous remarks to *Newsweek* magazine, likening the Soviet leader to Josef Goebbels, the Nazi propagandist of the "big lie." It was an effort to co-opt the anti-Gorbachov campaign of the Patriots, but it had the inconvenient side effect for Kohl, that he embarrassed the Moscow Faction in his own party. All of a sudden, there was talk among Christian Democrats about Kohl's replacement sometime after the 1987 elections.

Caught in the middle, Kohl added on critical remarks about the system in East Germany, about Soviet genocide in Afghanistan, and about the need for "patriotism in Germany." All of this naturally increased the public recognition of the Patriots for Germany, and when Gorbachov reacted with a vicious black propaganda campaign against Kohl personally, the Soviet leader's carefully crafted image as "the

Kremlin's Mr. Nice Guy" was considerably tarnished. Since the Soviets canceled all diplomatic meetings with Bonn government officials between mid-November and Christmas, ostensibly in retaliation for Kohl's "Goebbels" remarks, the image of the "ugly Russian" returned to the minds of many Germans. Again, it looked like what the Patriots for Germany were saying was right.

The Patriots decided, in this situation, to issue a leaflet and poster depicting Josef Stalin and Mikhail Gorbachov together, under the warning headline "No to the Empire of Evil!" One million copies of the leaflet were distributed nationwide, and had a considerable impact on the political debate in Germany before the Christmas recess and beyond—as Chancellor Kohl and the three established parties recognized, when they returned to Parliament, to open the hot phase of the election campaign on Jan. 3.

It came as no surprise then, that it was the liberal pro-Soviet weekly magazine from Hamburg, *Der Spiegel*, which warned in no uncertain terms of the "danger of a new right-wing party," in a Jan. 5 cover story. Although the article did not name the Patriots for Germany, the target of *Der Spiegel's* warning was clear enough.

The AIDS threat

Already with their formation at the end of 1985, the Patriots for Germany began a public information campaign on the threat of AIDS, demanding emergency public-health measures and budget allocations to deal with the epidemic. Throughout 1986, the established political parties in West Germany, all of them subscribing to the idea of budgetary cuts in the public-health system, sought unsuccessfully to silence this campaign.

By the summer and fall of 1986, the German media began to cover the campaign in California to implement Proposition 64, the ballot referendum which would make AIDS a reportable disease. This, plus coverage of the March 1986 primary election victory of the LaRouche wing of the Democratic Party in Illinois, drew public attention to the Patriots, which ran its first electoral campaign in the June 15 state elections in Lower Saxony. The new party scored an official 0.3%—not an insignificant total, given the restrictive election system in West Germany, which seeks to discourage the formation of new parties, and given a near-total media blackout of the campaign. In terms of voter turnout, the Patriots were established, on June 15, as the fifth-largest party in West Germany.

This made its impact felt on the debate on AIDS.

When the Patriots held a national congress in Bonn on Nov. 9, demanding that AIDS be made a reportable disease under the national plague laws, the Bonn government was still confident that it could suppress public debate on the disease, because Proposition 64 had been voted down in California a few days before, on Nov. 4. The orders came

down for a general media blackout of the Patriots.

But again, reality intervened. Because of growing concern in the population, including among the medical and scientific professions, and because of the campaign of the Patriots, the government felt it necessary to co-opt at least part of the unwelcome ferment, by announcing the formation of a National Council on AIDS on Dec. 18. The council's first public statement was against mandatory registration of AIDS, and there was general agreement in Bonn not to make AIDS an issue in the election campaign, but to wait until *after* election day on Jan. 25.

But on Dec. 22, *Blick auf Hoechst*, a throw-away tabloid funded by Hoechst Chemical Corporation, went to the printer with a story on AIDS, "Reality and Hysteria." The paper, with 700,000 circulation, was distributed in the Rhine-Main area on Jan. 5, and dealt prominently with the role of the Patriots.

Reiterating the Bonn government's line that the population at-large was relatively safe from infection with AIDS, the tabloid admitted that people might get infected with "AIDS hysteria." Behind such hysteria, there were "Patriots for Germany, the German section of the European Labor Party of Helga Zepp-LaRouche, who wants to make the AIDS question the center of the coming election campaign." Not only that: The reader was also informed that behind all this was

"Lyndon LaRouche, who wants to succeed Ronald Reagan as President under the call for a 'Biological SDI against AIDS.'"

Blick auf Hoechst concluded with the exclamation, which can certainly also be heard in Bonn these days, that "worse things are yet to come!"

Two days after 700,000 Germans found *Blick auf Hoechst* in their mailboxes, on Jan. 7, the Patriots for Germany distributed 1 million leaflets on the AIDS question, encountering intense interest in the problem among the population and a general rejection of the government's do-nothing line. On Jan. 8, the Bonn ministry of public health felt compelled to announce that it would transmit two educational spots on AIDS over the two national television channels—on Feb. 5, *after* the elections.

This announcement highlights, more than any other recent development, the growing political influence of the Patriots for Germany, less than three weeks before the national elections.

Thus, contrary to what the three established parties originally intended, the "hot phase" of the West German election campaign seems to be everything but fixed. And, whether the parties and the government want it or not, the post-election period is not fixed either. The Patriots have more surprises in store.

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