

Genscher, Trilateral Commission are the winners in German election

by Rainer Apel

The West German parliamentary elections on Jan. 25 resulted in victory for Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the politician best known for his appeasement of Moscow and the support he receives from the Trilateral Commission grouping of Western bankers and oligarchs. Genscher's Free Democratic Party, the junior coalition partner of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats, won 9.1% of the vote—compared to 7% in the last federal election in 1983. The FDP now has 45 seats in parliament, and the hand of the treacherous Genscher is significantly strengthened within the ruling coalition.

Genscher promptly boasted, "The vote fully confirmed my foreign policy." The Kremlin was equally delighted, as the Soviet Central Committee's Germany expert Nikolai Portugalov welcomed Genscher's gains as "a vote against the revanchist 'steel-helmet faction' in Bonn." The epithet refers to those conservative, pro-industry, and pro-defense politicians in West Germany who have resisted Genscher's drive for a "New Yalta" deal with Moscow.

Genscher will now use his added leverage to oppose German collaboration with the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, to enhance economic cooperation with the Warsaw Pact countries, and to abolish NATO's COCOM restrictions on transfer of sensitive military technologies to the East.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, the chairman of the new party called Patriots for Germany, stressed that the new government is destined to be short-lived, because of the utter failure of the ruling parties to address the critical issues of economic crisis, foreign policy, and the AIDS epidemic. The conspiracy of silence with which the media and the established parties attempted to smother real political debate, cannot last. "This was the last election in our postwar history," she said, "to allow our pressing problems to be swept under the rug. No longer! The threat to humanity posed by the AIDS epidemic, the world economic crisis, the threat of decoupling, Moscow-controlled low-intensity terrorist warfare, and the acute threat of trade war with our chief ally, the United States—all these threaten us now as before, but even more so than in the past. . . ."

"Today's election results have not changed this situation in the slightest degree. We Patriots have staked our claim to

all these survival issues—issues which will be critical for our future—and we intend to bring them before the citizenry."

Appeasers strengthened

The liberal FDP did not achieve its gains because of any actual voter support for its policies, but rather because of behind-the-scenes vote-swapping by the party bosses, including the notorious practice of *Leih-stimme*, the "vote loaning" by which the Christian Democrats threw a portion of their votes to the FDP, for party factional reasons of their own.

The result of the election is a strengthening of the anti-NATO currents in all parties of the Bonn parliament, a process that became most visible in the vote increase of 2.7% which the extremist anti-NATO movement of the Green Party scored (from 5.6% in 1983 to 8.3% in 1987). The Greens will be represented in the new parliament with 42 seats, and will enter the parliamentary commissions on the secret services and diplomatic secrets, giving them—and their Soviet controllers—access to classified intelligence.

The Social Democratic Party, West Germany's largest opposition party, lamented its losses (its vote total was 37%) and set out to purge its more moderate executive members. Its defeated chancellor candidate, Johannes Rau, promptly renounced any ambitions to replace the aging Willy Brandt as party chairman (Brandt is retiring from the post in 1988). What remains of the SPD's more moderate wing will be replaced, by 1988 at the latest, by representatives of the anti-defense and anti-American faction, whose leading spokesman, Oskar Lafontaine, has emerged as the leading hopeful to replace Brandt. He was even praised by Hans Apel, defense minister under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and one of the most pro-defense of the SPD leaders, who said, "Of all the state dukes running for party chairman, Lafontaine is the one with the best chances. . . . After this depressing election defeat, the party needs a charismatic leader."

Lafontaine has demanded the withdrawal of West Germany from the Western alliance, and a complete withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from German territory. He gave a press conference in Bonn Jan. 26 saying that the party's mistake was that it did not work more closely with the Greens.

Even if Lafontaine's march to power in the SPD provokes a walk-out of party moderates, he will have a party machine which controls nearly 25-30% of German voters. Add to this the Greens, whom Lafontaine considers a potential political coalition partner: A "red-green" anti-NATO bloc would have 35-40% of the vote—almost as much as the two Christian Democratic parties, which polled 44.3% on Jan. 25.

Both Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU) and the allied Christian Social Union (CSU) of Bavarian state governor Franz Josef Strauss lost votes to Genscher's party. They also lost votes among their traditional conservative constituencies, and those social layers hit worst by the government's fiscal austerity policy, such as farmers, steel and shipbuilding workers, craftsmen, and small businessmen. They lost among religious voters, who were particularly disgusted at the Kohl government's "safe sex" approach to the AIDS problem and at liberal compromises on questions of family, education, and abortion.

As a result, the Christian Union parties are in turmoil: CDU manager Heiner Geissler attacked Strauss for creating the fear that if he came to power in Bonn (Strauss has long sought to replace Genscher as foreign minister), he would put an end to détente. Strauss in turn denounced Geissler for his "impertinence."

Cabinet members lose the most

Most striking among the election results was the disproportionate loss of votes by members of the Bonn cabinet and other ranking CDU/CSU officials in their own election districts. While the CDU/CSU suffered an average nationwide loss of 4.5% of the vote, compared to the 1983 elections, Cabinet members and other prominents lost between 6.0% and 8.5% of the vote.

Chancellor Kohl himself proved incapable of winning his own election district, which went to the Social Democratic contender. Kohl's district, Ludwigshafen, is the home of BASF Corporation, one of the three largest German chemical producers; it means that chemical workers voted against Kohl's pro-environmentalist populism, which endangers their jobs. While Kohl may believe he is succeeding in fighting the economic depression, the voters disagreed. The wind is blowing against the chancellor, as it did against President Reagan in the U.S. elections on Nov. 4. Even ranking CDU members in the German labor unions, such as Gustav Fehrenbach, vice-chairman of the national labor federation, warned the government not to continue its austerity policy: "A lot of worker votes were lost to the Chancellor in these elections, and more will be lost in the next elections!"

Perhaps most dangerous of all, the elections strengthened the "Moscow Faction" of the Christian Democrats, those who have recently proposed the reunification of Germany on Moscow's terms. The first statements by prominent Christian Democrats and Chancellor Kohl himself on the elections tried to blame the bad result on "those who attacked détente in the

past weeks." Kohl announced that there would be "no alteration in the government's détente policy after the elections."

The leading spokesman of the Moscow faction, Baden-Wuerttemberg state governor Lothar Späth, who plans to replace Kohl in the chancellorcy in the not-too-distant future, announced on Jan. 27 that he would meet with East Germany's ruler, Erich Honecker, March 14-16, to discuss "extended economic cooperation between the two Germanies."

Given the orientation to strict fiscal and monetary austerity of both the German and American governments, trade and monetary conflicts are already pre-programmed. With Genscher's refusal to support the United States against terrorist regimes like Libya, Iran, and Syria, even during the current international hostage crisis, relations will soon get much worse.

The Patriots: a new factor

Despite these dim prospects, the Jan. 25 elections have propelled the new Patriots for Germany party into national and international prominence. It is the only real pro-American party on the country's political landscape, and was the only party which addressed the real issues in the election campaign. Through several million-run leaflets, television and radio spots, and programmatic campaign posters, the Patriots created a stir that shocked the established party leaderships and elites.

The Patriots, running for the first time in national elections, officially gained only between 0.1% and 0.2% of the vote on Jan. 25. The vote was kept low by a media blackout, and by the extremely restrictive nature of the German election system, designed to make the rise of new parties almost impossible. Nonetheless, the Patriots' campaign did reach a significant part of the population, and most important, many of those critical voter constituencies who "deserted" Chancellor Kohl's Christian Democrats.

The prestigious *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a liberal daily close to the Bonn government, warned its readers in an editorial on Jan. 27 not to "underestimate" the smaller parties. Without naming the Patriots, it stressed that nobody should be misled by the fact that the "fringe parties" combined gained only 1.5% of the vote in the elections. "Since [the last elections in] 1983," warned the paper, "a considerable transformation has taken place. . . . The dwarfs among the parties should not be easily discarded as scurrilous signs of the time. One or another of them could emerge to represent a real ferment."

The impact of the Patriots for Germany will be felt in the four state elections that Germany is facing this year. Many voters who abstained from voting on Jan. 25 may return to the polling place in these four elections—to vote for the Patriots. The next elections will take place in May 1987, in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate, which happens to be the state where almost two-thirds of all U.S. soldiers in West Germany are currently stationed.