

Next task: rebuilding a ruined country

The countdown to the March 18 East German elections was marked by dirty tricks and threats from the communists. Rainer Apel reports.

The election campaign for East German parliament—the first free vote since 1946 in this part of divided Germany—closed two days before election day, March 18. Mostly because of East German news media which are still under communist control, the campaign took a very dirty turn toward the end, showing that the regime that had ruled the country for 44 years, would not pass power to the new, freely elected government without leaving behind a kind of “scorched earth,” a political territory filled with land mines set to explode at a later time.

The dirty trick against Wolfgang Schnur, chairman of the anti-communist Democratic Revolution (Demokratische Aufbruch, DA) party, 10 days before election day, was typical of the old regime’s methods. Out of the blue, sources whose real identities have never been revealed, circulated secret documents from the former Stasi secret police apparatus, charging that Schnur had been a “longtime collaborator and informant of the Stasi.”

From what information was available as of March 15, it seems that Schnur indeed did have closer contact to the Stasi than most East Germans. Five days after the campaign against him began, Schnur stepped down from all party posts and from his position as slate leader of his DA party, admitting “partial collaboration with the Stasi” over a period of several years. A lawyer who specialized in the defense of political dissidents and other oppositionists over the past 20-odd years, Schnur had to deal, and made deals, with the agency. He may have passed on information on some dissidents, in order to help others. On the other hand, according to the assistant minister of German-German affairs in Bonn, West Germany, Schnur also provided the West German government with vital information on human rights cases and regime crimes in East Germany, over many years. In a strict sense, then, Schnur is probably guilty, but his case certainly is a complicated one, since Schnur was under heavy blackmail and was as much of a victim as most East Germans.

The “get Schnur” operation came in the context of slanders against West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and death threats and other forms of intimidation against other non-socialist leaders. Prominent in this pattern are disruptive leftist counter-rallies against Kohl’s speaking events in East

German cities, like Erfurt and Chemnitz, where banners openly threatened to assassinate him and slandered him as “the new Adolf Hitler.” The leftist-dominated “citizen roundtable” in Leipzig first voted to cancel a scheduled rally on March 14 at which Kohl was to speak, but a court decided in favor of Kohl. On March 8, the same roundtable published a release stating that if Helmut Kohl came to Leipzig, he should know that nobody would be able to guarantee his personal security.

What about the big culprits?

After the elections, Schnur’s case will soon look like a relatively minor affair, however. The really big scandals involving the role of the former Stasi were not investigated in public before March 18, because the regime of Prime Minister Hans Modrow insisted that all files and other documentary material be sealed until after the elections.

Some of the culprits will first have to be brought back into the country: Markus Wolf, for example, head of the former foreign and domestic espionage and blackmail network, sought refuge in Moscow; Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, head of the illegal arms and dope trading apparatus (linked into the Iran-Contra network as well) sought asylum with the CIA in Langley, Virginia. Most of the numerous leading officials of the past regime are still free, and, like the former SED central committee member Guenter Schabowski, are enjoying their undeserved freedom by taking long walks on the Kurfürstendamm Avenue in West Berlin. Some say Markus Wolf may even have been directing the phony scandal against Schnur from Moscow, as a symbolic punitive action to “burn” a leading politician of the new, post-communist movement in East Germany.

Economy has utmost priority

Looking into the structure of the past regime is necessary, and will require a lot of effort, but it is not the only thing to do. It should not absorb energies that have to be spent on the giant job of rebuilding this country, which was ruined in 44 years of Soviet military and political occupation, of communist mismanagement and suppression.

The country is in bad shape—worse, many say, than

neighboring Czechoslovakia, but better than most of Poland or the Soviet Union. There are estimates now that in order to provide decent housing—having a bathroom inside one's own apartment, for example, and central heating instead of a stove powered by brown coal—for the 16 million East Germans, will require up to 1.2 billion deutschemarks of investment over the next 10-year period. To put the ailing road and railroad system into shape, will require some DM200-300 billion; to rebuild the public health sector, the hospitals and ambulances, will require another DM80-100 billion. East Germany's industry, partially operating with machines dating from the 1920s and 1930s, has to be modernized—a giant job costing up to DM500 billion. Canals have to be widened, water management and the urban sewage systems modernized, which requires another DM200-300 billion over the next 10 years. Many older residents who still remember how the cities looked like after the Allied bombing raids in 1945, tell you that parts of the country, or the industry today, look just the same. It will take years to rebuild it, and many East Germans don't want to wait that long: There are still about 10,000 moving across the inner-German border into West Germany every week.

This is the reason that the Bonn government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, backed by most of the industry of both Germanys, wants to move ahead with the German-German monetary union, to create one single zone of investment and economic management, to link East Germany up with the relatively stable and generally successful West German economy.

A grand design of what to do exactly—where to invest from the state side and from the private sector side first, where to lift taxes, where to block speculation with goods and real estate and the like—has not yet been worked out by Chancellor Kohl. There is intense, behind-the-scenes discussion about U.S. economist Lyndon LaRouche's proposal for a "productive triangle" of sound investment in the capital goods sector, in basic infrastructure and so on, extending from Paris to Berlin to Vienna; but a grand design, or even an approximation of that, has not been adopted yet in Bonn or in East Berlin. The two German governments have to get together after March 18, discuss a joint approach, also in view of the need to negotiate on the reunification issue with the Four Powers of 1945 (the United States, Soviet Union, France, and the United Kingdom), which still claim a decisive say on the German question. A lot of delay, diplomatic sabotage, and wasting of time has to be expected in these "2-plus-4" talks (the two Germanys and the Four Powers) that began in Bonn March 14. There is no time, however, to be wasted on the economic issues; East Germany has to be rebuilt, immediately after the elections, starting on March 19.

There is a peculiar situation in the two Germanys now: full sovereignty, full reunification have still not been achieved, although the vast majority of the Germans in both

parts of the divided country feel like one nation. There is a productive industrial potential in East Germany, but it is chained by the remains of state-planning socialist legislation. In order to have real recovery begin on March 19, it would be necessary to have legislation at least reminiscent of West German laws, which in spite of all the recent ecologist clauses still generally encourage industrious labor and productive manufacturing of goods.

This legislation, and an appropriate system of taxation, aren't there. Some of what is needed will come together with the German-German monetary union which makes the West German deutschemark the currency of East Germany as well. Most of the legislation will still have to be worked out, and the situation in East Germany will have to be adjusted to the new requirements.

An economic policy 'as if'

There can be no International Monetary Fund-style approach in this adjustment process, or the effort of reconstruction is lost from the start. So what will the productive enterprises of the *Mittelstand*, the medium-sized sector of industry in West Germany which will play a crucial role in the reconstruction of East Germany, do in the first days and weeks after the March 18 elections? Ironically, as a manager of one medium-sized firm told this news service, they "have to act as if"—i.e., do what they have to do, as if the entire environment they are used to in West Germany, were already there. There is no doubt that homes, and entire sections of East Germany's cities, have to be rebuilt and restored. The West German home-building sector can start work anywhere in East Germany, because such work is needed everywhere. East and West German road-builders and railway workers have already begun work on some cross-border routes, and one of the last decisions the past regime made before March 18, was to give the official go-ahead for the long-delayed project of a high-speed rail route from Hanover across East German territory to Berlin. The Modrow government decided that work on this big project, costing about DM5 billion, should begin in the spring of 1992. The newly elected government in East Germany can speed it up and begin work this year, maybe even this summer.

It is fascinating to see how this "as-if" spirit is intersecting with LaRouche's widely circulated infrastructure proposals. The week before the elections, no fewer than 12,000 craftsmen gathered for an international crafts exhibition in Munich, many of them traveling from East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. Anton Hinterdohler, chairman of the Lower Bavaria Chamber of Commerce, told an audience there, that in order to improve transportation from northern Bavaria to East Germany, a high-speed railway connection should be constructed from Munich northward to Regensburg and Hof, and then to Berlin, while another high-speed line should be built from Furth im Wald, Bavaria, through Pilsen to Prague, Czechoslovakia.