

German elections: a vote for economic progress

by Rainer Apel and Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was visibly in a very good mood when he appeared before television cameras in Bonn on the evening of Dec. 2, the day of elections for national German Parliament. Having defeated his challenger, Social Democrat Oskar Lafontaine, by a margin of more than 10%, he had every reason to be delighted. Among labor constituencies in the five new eastern states that have been united with West Germany since October—Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, Thuringia, Saxe-Anhalt, and Saxony—51% had voted for Kohl and his Christian Democrats (CDU), against a meager 25% that had voted for Lafontaine and his Social Democrats (SPD). For the SPD, the traditional labor party in Germany, this election result was a smashing defeat.

December 2 was a historic day, because for the first time since 1932, the entire German population above age 18—about 60 million voters—was called to the polls for free, direct, and secret elections. About 77.8% of the voters went to the polls to vote, giving Kohl's ruling CDU-CSU and its coalition partner, the liberal Free Democrats (FDP), a healthy majority of nearly 55%. The CDU's vote of 43.8% was the highest any party in Germany ever won in free elections, and the 11% the FDP gained was one of the highest results that party has ever had. Kohl and his FDP foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, were backed because a majority of the population identified them with the peaceful unification of the country.

Long faces among opposition leaders

The opposition leaders who were interviewed after the polls closed faced the television cameras with long faces. The Social Democrats, who had run the unpopular Oskar

Lafontaine as their chancellor candidate, were polling only 33.5%, down 4% from the last election, which was the party's worst showing since 1957.

The SPD's disaster was a mild one, however, compared to the catastrophe that hit the environmental-extremist Green Party, the West German wing of which failed to surpass the 5% required for entering Parliament, by polling only 4.7%. The Greens in the West were thus thrown out of Parliament after seven years. The Greens of the East, however, polled 5.9% and got eight of their candidates into the new Parliament.

Due to a special law introduced for these first all-German elections, the vote took place separately in the West and the East. Parties in eastern Germany were given parliamentary seats if they polled 5% in what had been East Germany before unification on Oct. 3. Thus, the East German Green Party and the PDS (the successor to the SED communists)—still polling 9.9% in the East—made it, though their showing nationally was low.

A further blow to the SPD and Greens came in Berlin, which, in addition to seats in the national Parliament, was also voting, for the first time in 58 years and after 45 years of partition, on a government for the whole city. The "red-green" coalition of the SPD and the Greens which had thrown West Berlin into chaos, was thrown out by the voters, and the CDU, which had campaigned aggressively there "against violence, drugs, criminality, [and] chaos," won by a margin of 10%.

What made the CDU victory possible, was a collapse of the SPD in the traditional labor districts of western Berlin, like Neukoelln, Tempelhof, and Wedding, which once had

close to 55% SPD voters, and have now close to the same percentage of CDU voters.

To make the disaster for the western SPD complete, the results the eastern Social Democrats polled were stable, compared to the three elections in eastern Germany before this year. Of 37 seats the SPD was able to conquer directly in all of Berlin, 36 went to the eastern SPD! The secret behind this discrepancy is that the voters in eastern Berlin honored the "Grand Coalition" of SPD and CDU which had governed there from May to December; the western voters dumped the "red-green" coalition of SPD and Greens that had governed from January 1989 to December 1990. Consequently, the CDU of Berlin is opting for a Grand Coalition with the SPD now. The western Social Democrats are still hesitant, but the ones in the eastern part of the city have already signaled their commitment to join.

Two days after the debacle in Berlin, another "red-green" coalition broke, in the city of Hanover, the capital of the state of Lower Saxony. In Hanover as in Berlin, a Grand Coalition is shaping up now; this may set a trend for a future national coalition arrangement between the CDU and the SPD.

On Dec. 3, defeated chancellor candidate Oskar Lafontaine announced that he would neither become party chairman nor leader of the parliamentary opposition, which came as a surprise even to his staunchest followers. Also the party chairman, Hans-Jochen Vogel, and the deputy chairman of the SPD parliamentary group, Horst Ehmke, resigned from their posts.

The picture is even worse in the Green party: The defeat of the western section of the party and the fact that the more moderate—one may say less crazy—eastern Greens made it into the new Parliament, will most likely not only lead to a total reshuffle of leadership posts, but also to a split of the party organization into the different wings. If it does not lead to an expulsion of the extremist-ecologist wing from the party organization, it may end up in a walkout of the extremists, many of whom are expected to join the communist PDS sooner or later.

The end of the Age of Ecologism

The vote on Dec. 2, especially in Berlin, showed clearly that the tide has turned. Almost 20 years of environmentalist hysteria against industry and advanced technologies, of attempts to impose an ecologist police state that would look into every aspect even of household life, from your handkerchief to your toilet and your garbage can, searching for some polluting substance that could be fined, was relegated to the history books.

Ecologism is still there, because it has penetrated all the largest political parties, but it runs against the urgent need to launch rapid industrial recovery in the eastern states of Germany, which the communist regime left destroyed after 45 years of primitive exploitation. Faced with the threat of economic collapse in eastern Germany, the loss of about one-

third of the 9 million jobs there in the next 18 months which are considered critical, the German government cannot afford the "luxury" of losing time with radical ecologist debates about the usefulness of investments. If the government wants to prevent eastern Germany from turning into a poverty belt, it has to launch crash programs for building new factories, homes, energy plants, railroads and highways, water reservoirs, bridges, and the like. The government has to create 3 million new jobs in the next 18 months, to hire those currently being laid off in the East.

That is the mandate given to Chancellor Kohl in the elections—a mandate for rapid economic progress.

Will Chancellor Kohl select ministers for the economy, finances, and transport with a vision to set this rapid economic progress into motion? Will he be able to drive back the influence of Thatcherite policies of free-market liberalism which are prevailing in the party of his coalition partner, the Free Democrats?

Although plans for infrastructure development are on the drawing boards, there is no overall concept on the government level of how the nation as a whole must be rebuilt. Nor is there any concept of the role that the export-oriented German economy could play in reconstructing the neighboring nations of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the westernmost republics of the Soviet Union—Ukraine, Belorussia, and the three Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Chancellor Kohl has repeatedly addressed this challenge, pointing out that economic recovery of eastern Germany would mean nothing, if the recovery of the eastern nations bordering on Germany failed. But the question of how a collapse in the East could be averted was never really answered by Kohl or any other senior German politician in the election campaign. The campaign was predominantly a personality contest among Kohl, Lafontaine, and Genscher, rather than a programmatic debate on what should be done after the elections.

The LaRouche factor

This is not to say that the election campaign was devoid of programmatic debate. On the contrary, the Patriots for Germany party, headed by lead candidate Helga Zepp-LaRouche, ran an energetic campaign on issues in six of the 15 states: Berlin, Thuringia, Saxony, North-Rhine Westphalia, and Bavaria. The message spread through the lead candidate's two nationally televised campaign broadcasts and 300,000 pieces of campaign literature was unequivocal: Nothing short of American economist Lyndon LaRouche's "Productive Triangle" concept can rebuild Eastern Europe.

Voters' response was especially positive in eastern Germany. Workers, many of them having lost their jobs in the past few weeks, gathered around Patriots' literature tables to discuss the Triangle concept, asking about the program's political feasibility and its immediate economic effects. Vic-

tims of 45 years of communist looting, which they didn't want to see replaced by whatever brand of Western looting or economic mismanagement, they asked for information on how "LaRouche's third way" would work.

Numerous plant managers of the major factories in Berlin, Saxony, and Thuringia invited Patriots candidates to address large groups of management and workers on the Triangle program. The rigorous opposition of the Patriots to the anti-nuclear ecologists was appreciated especially by the 35,000 workers of the uranium mines in southern Thuringia and southern Saxony. The endorsement of nuclear power, considered unpopular by politicians after 20 years of ecologist campaigns in western Germany, meets no opposition worth noting in the eastern part of the country. Even many of the eastern Greens are for, or at least not vehemently against, nuclear power—to the chagrin of their western co-thinkers.

The other flank of the Patriots' campaign was the party's mobilization to stop a war in the Persian Gulf. Here too, Helga Zepp-LaRouche's television broadcast denouncing Bush's war machinations, which was seen by millions on prime time, broke the conspiracy of silence among other parties on the issue.

Another aspect that was entirely missing in the other parties' electioneering but which met a lot of interest, was the issue of civil rights, which is still a much-discussed topic among the 16 million Germans in the east who just liberated themselves from the worst aspects of a communist police-state regime, but are faced with many "moles" of that past regime who are trying every trick to sabotage economic, social, and political progress, to intimidate and discourage the new political leaders of eastern Germany. Forums held on university campuses that were addressed by American civil rights leader Amelia Boynton Robinson, encouraged many students to become more political and to work with the Patriots after the election. Any positive momentum created on campuses will also affect the youth associated with the other political parties, and it is necessary to have a broad citizens movement across party boundaries to create pressure for rapid progress.

Pressure is needed, indeed, to translate the election results of Dec. 2 into a change of political practice, to make an irreversible transition from the era of ecologism and industrial zero-growth to the new era of rapid technological and social-economic progress.

It has been said repeatedly during the past weeks that Chancellor Kohl and his closest advisers "would not have ears to hear" any discussion of the LaRouche "Productive Triangle" until after Dec. 2. Now, with the electioneering over, Kohl and his colleagues will have to listen. The mandate of the voters was for action and for a good program; had it been a mandate for inaction and no program, but a continuation of the current policy of muddling through, the voters would have given preference to Chancellor Kohl's challenger Oskar Lafontaine and his red-green entourage.

Army and KGB dictate Soviet reorganization

by Konstantin George

The Soviet military command and the KGB secret police are getting ready for an internal crackdown on the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union, and are jousting for more control over foreign policy in the face of the war threat in the Middle East.

The warning signs are there to be read, in the way the military and KGB are dictating President Mikhail Gorbachov's reorganization of the ruling state executive apparatus, which pivots on two changes: the replacement of the disbanded Presidential Council by a Presidential Security Council, and the placing of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers, or cabinet, under the President.

On Dec. 2, a major shakeup turned the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with its nationwide militarized police force, into a joint holding of the KGB and the Army. The military-linked political lobby, the Soyuz ("Union") group, which openly agitated for the change in that ministry, is pressing for the replacement of Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze as well, in an apparent effort to get control of the new Presidential Security Council.

Gorbachov made no bones about upgrading the machinery of repression, when he announced in a Dec. 4 address to the Supreme Soviet: "Measures will be worked out and put into practice to stabilize the situation in the Armed Forces and the law and order authorities, and to strengthen their role and responsibility." The body rubberstamped the plan.

On Dec. 2, it was announced that U.S.S.R. Internal Affairs Minister Vadim Bakatin, a party careerist, had been dumped. Bakatin's replacement is KGB career man Boris Pugo, who served as KGB boss in Latvia until 1984, and later was party first secretary in that Soviet-occupied republic. Nominally a Latvian, Pugo grew up in Russia and can barely speak Latvian. His father served in the forerunners of the KGB, the Cheka and NKVD. Pugo has a career specialty in running KGB operations against freedom fighters in the non-Russian republics, with special expertise concerning the Baltic states.

The new first deputy minister of internal affairs is an Army man: Gen. Col. Boris Gromov, a bitter foe of nationalist independence. Gromov was the last commander of Soviet forces in Afghanistan. He then served as the commander of the Kiev Military District in Ukraine from February 1989 through November 1990, where he spoke out repeatedly against any form of Ukrainian independence.