

European Parliament elections: big defeat for Blair's 'Third Way'

by Hartmut Cramer

The most remarkable results of the recent European elections on June 13 were scored by the millions of Europeans who didn't go to the polls at all. Average voter participation was only 45%—an all-time low. In Germany, which usually has a voter participation of between 80 and 90% in nationwide elections, the 45.2% participation amounts to a real catastrophe, dropping to levels only seen in the United States. But that was not the worst: In Great Britain, only 23% of the voters went to the polls this time!

The low turnout not only reflects Europeans' frustration over the corrupt European Commission and their all-too-understandable rage against the supranational bureaucracy in Brussels. Even more, it expresses deep disappointment and fear about the failure of practically all Europe's national governments to deal with the global economic crisis, and with the imminence of complete financial collapse and the outbreak of war. Those developments ended up pushing the election results a bit into the background; but the election results nevertheless do show a clear trend—though not in the sense which is being trumpeted by most mass media and party propaganda.

The standard media line about election results, is: "The bottom line is that, European-wide, the conservatives won, and the socialists lost." But that says nothing of substance. On the one hand, Europe's conservative and socialist parties agree, almost without exception, at least in principle, in their support of the disastrous policies of globalization, the Maastricht Treaty, and the bankrupt International Monetary Fund system; in their advocacy of various stripes of draconian austerity policy; and in their complete lack of a positive conceptual approach to solve the crisis. And on the other hand, the actual vote tallies speak a completely different language.

In Germany, for example, even the big winner (in relative terms), former Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU), lost massively, garnering about 700,000 fewer votes than in the last European elections in 1994. Incumbent Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's ruling Social Democrats (SPD) lost more than 3 million votes compared to 1994, while its coalition partner, the Green party of Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, lost about 1.8 million votes, which in abso-

lute numbers is half of what it received five years ago. The liberal Free Democratic Party likewise lost almost half of the 1.4 million voters they had in 1994. And even though the Democratic Socialist Party—what remains of the ruling East German communist party—for the first time cleared the 5% threshold for parliamentary representation in a nationwide election, ending up with 5.8%, it still lost over 100,000 votes compared to 1994.

The only exception in Germany was the Christian Social Union (CSU) of the late political heavyweight Franz Josef Strauss. The CSU posted gains not only in relative terms (nationwide +2.6%, and +15 in their home-base state of Bavaria, where they and rule with an absolute majority), but also in absolute terms, receiving about 145,000 more votes than in 1994. This is primarily thanks to the efforts of CDU party boss Dr. Edmund Stoiber, the present Governor of Bavaria. With his visit to Moscow at the beginning of the Balkans war in late March, Stoiber won Europeanwide recognition for his effort to clear the way for ending the bombing, by including Russia in a political solution. Moreover, behind the scenes, Stoiber is being mooted as the future CDU/CSU candidate for the German Chancellor.

Government collapse brewing in Bonn?

But the real seismic nature of the protest that erupted on June 13—a protest that quite naturally was also against the British-driven NATO bombing of Yugoslavia—only becomes evident by comparing the results to those in Germany's federal elections last September. At that time, the ruling SPD won slightly more than 20 million votes nationwide; but now, a scant nine months later, it lost about 12 million of those votes. And, as if that were not enough, SPD boss Chancellor Schröder shot himself in the foot by travelling to London to sign a joint SPD-Labour Party paper on the necessity for following British Prime Minister Tony Blair's "Third Way" as Europe's future. This "Blair-Schröder paper" immediately sparked a huge fight within the SPD, with the traditional wing and the trade unionists up in arms against this policy—a policy which is the European equivalent of Dick Morris and Al Gore's welfare-bashing and Gore's pro-NAFTA union-busting policies. In Bonn, there are now even



An organizer from the BüSo party campaigns in Wiesbaden, Germany against NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia. Widespread opposition to the bombing led to tectonic shifts in voting patterns in the European Parliament elections.

rumors about a possible split within the SPD, which, if it occurs, would take the SPD down to the level of the other big loser in these elections, its coalition partner, the Green party. Even before this, there certainly was no lack of political explosives under the “red-green” ruling coalition in Bonn, and these catastrophic election results have now made the fuse even shorter.

Disaster in France, Italy, and Britain

The picture is much the same in the rest of Europe:

- In France, whose government turned out to be doubly weakened by these elections, President Jacques Chirac may be on his way to the political junk-heap, now that his RPR party has officially split down the middle. The nominally Gaullist RPR, which for many years was the majority in French politics, lost about half of its vote, and Chirac's reputation was only saved by the immediate resignation of interim party president Nicolas Sarkozy, whom Chirac had installed during this election campaign after having sacked Philippe Séguin.

But Chirac's political days are numbered, since his dream of making the RPR into the centerpiece of a new neo-Gaullist alliance, which could get him re-elected in 2002, has vanished. The dissidents' slate of his former political partner Charles Pasqua gained more than 13%, overshadowing even the RPR. Pasqua has announced the formation of his own “neo-Gaullist” party, which will borrow its name (Rassemblement du Peuple Français, RPF) from the famous move-

ment of General de Gaulle—though the resemblance will stop there.

Prime Minister Lionel Jospin is being hailed by the media as the winner in the elections, despite the fact that his electoral alliance, dominated by his Socialist Party, actually lost about 7% compared to 1994. But he, too, could soon face big troubles, because one of his coalition partners, the Green party, led by former Franco-German anarchist (Joschka Fischer's close friend) Daniel Cohn-Bendit, has jumped from 2.9% to 9.7%, thereby increasing its potential for political sabotage and blackmail in the French government.

- In Italy, where the Left Democrats of Prime Minister Massimo d'Alema had to take moderate losses, the government is also heading for trouble. Especially because of the success of a growing protest movement, the Democrats of Italy's former Prime Minister Romano Prodi, who is now president of the EU Commission (and thus as head of the unelected “European Government” in Brussels), the potential for political destabilization operations has greatly increased. Prodi, an ally of the City of London, and his newly formed “anti-party party” gained 7.7% of the vote, and will surely use this remarkable political clout not only in Brussels and Strasbourg (where the European Parliament sits), but also in Rome; and, in keeping with his notorious international connections, this will surely not work in favor of Italian nation.

- Even in the United Kingdom, the government was routed. Admittedly, Labour had not been expected to repeat

its overwhelming 1994 success, when it gained 62 out of Britain's 83 European Parliament seats, since the election rules have been changed. Nevertheless, the fact that Labour lost 15% of the vote, winning only 29 seats, is a catastrophe for Tony Blair. After being highly celebrated by the British media as the "real victor of the Balkans war," virtually overnight Blair was instead being pilloried for having been responsible for this "disaster" (London *Financial Times*), this "fiasco" (*Sun*), this "humiliating defeat" (*Daily Telegraph*).

The Labour defeat is a clear signal that Blair now faces yet another political storm: If he doesn't manage to decisively hook U.S. President Bill Clinton more firmly into the City of London's geostrategic policies, then the British elite will most likely dump him even more quickly than they dumped his Tory predecessor John Major.

Arrogance breeds contempt

The European election results highlight a dangerous political development, that has been brewing for some time now. Not even half of the fewer than 50% of citizens who actually went to the polls, express any interest in European-wide politics as it is currently practiced. Distrust of the established parties, and of the scandalous policies in Brussels and in Strasbourg, runs deeper than ever. With their arrogance of power, these institutions have not only not solved citizens' pressing political problems, but have in fact aggravated them. The established parties have clearly failed to deal with any of the vitally important political questions, such as maintaining and securing productive jobs, securing pensions, maintaining an adequate health care system, maintaining the value of national currencies, and securing peace in Europe and in the world.

This is especially true of the currently governing parties, in particular for those in Germany, since they were elected into office only a few months ago with much hope and trust, but all they have caused is complete political chaos. And for this, they paid a hefty price on June 13. That day might as well be described as a Europe-wide "punitive action," one which gives a foretaste of things to come, unless the underlying evil—the global financial crisis and an unjust world economic order, which favors speculation and punishes the producers—is banished for good. Without that change, a hopelessly bankrupt International Monetary Fund financial system could hardly be expected to accomplish the main task now in confronting all Europeans, namely, reconstructing the infrastructure and economy of the entire Balkans region.

LaRouche's influence

Although most of the parties underplayed these crucial political topics, they were taken up with great fervor in Germany by the Bürgerrechtsbewegung Solidarität (BüSo), Lyndon LaRouche's co-thinker party in Germany, led by his wife

Helga Zepp-LaRouche. During the campaign's final weeks, the BüSo held numerous public town-hall meetings, addressed not only by Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche, but also by guests from other European countries, such as former French Presidential candidate Jacques Cheminade, and from the developing sector, such as Marivilia Carrasco, leader of the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA) in Mexico, and Grégoire Mukengechay, formerly from Congo, who is now an attorney in Germany, and who ran as a candidate on the BüSo slate.

The BüSo could be seen in cities throughout the country, with BüSo candidates manning book-tables, distributing hundreds of thousands of leaflets—including 10,000 election brochures containing Lyndon LaRouche's now-famous Eight-Point Program for solving the global financial crisis—and pasting up thousands of election posters. These activities have played an important role in promoting broad political discussion of "Peace through Development," through the immediate establishment of a New Bretton Woods world financial system, and the implementation of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, as well as a thoroughgoing reconstruction program for the entire Balkans region, to be started at once.

The BüSo's efforts were buttressed by other campaign and campaign-related events in France, Sweden, Denmark, and Italy.

And yet, the BüSo received a mere 9,449 votes throughout Germany—much fewer than it did in the 1994 elections. That result was in large part due to the ironical fact, that the more influence LaRouche's ideas have come to wield, the greater have become the efforts by his opponents in established parties and elsewhere, to silence his voice, and that of his wife and her party. This has been an important consideration in the maintenance of Germany's harsh barriers against "small parties," at a time when all the established institutions have failed so miserably. And it is precisely that fear of "new political blood," that has led to the disgust and demoralization shown clearly in the overall election results.

Nevertheless, as Mr. LaRouche has emphasized recently, we are in a revolutionary period, and the entire political map can change rapidly—even overnight, since the process of disintegration of the global financial system is gaining momentum right now, and is bringing to a head the paradox that no solution is possible—not even a band-aid one—unless the bankrupt, IMF-dominated financial system is replaced. During the campaign, the BüSo succeeded in building a solid base of activists and citizen-candidates. Therefore, in as little as a few months from now, the BüSo's election campaign may well come to be regarded as an outstanding example of how political ideas and concepts can take hold like wildfire in times of deep crisis. And in times like those, Europe may very well be seeing citizens voting with something other than their feet—namely, with their heads!