Schiller Institute Holds Forum on the Economic Breakdown in Germany, and How to Stop It

by Wolfgang Lillge

The Schiller Institute–Germany held an online seminar on Sept. 1, 2026. The dialogue detailed the extent of the German economic breakdown and how to reverse it. A recording of the seminar, conducted in German, can be found here.

Sept. 4—"The Free Fall of the German Economy Must Be Stopped! Germany Must Be Saved from Being Sold Off!" This title for the Sept. 1 seminar underlined the urgency of the task. The founder of the Schiller Institute, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, delivered the opening address and also served as moderator. The aim of the seminar, she explained at the outset, was to launch a discussion on solutions to Germany's deep crisis in every institution and every layer of society. What developed was an extraordinarily lively event. Time for discussion was scheduled after each speaker, and numerous participants took the floor with questions or comments.

Schiller Institute

Graphic announcing the Schiller Institute online seminar on the German economic breakdown, and how to reverse it.

In her opening address, Zepp-LaRouche outlined the global political and strategic situation, and in doing so also took up the alarming economic and social conditions inside Germany. Particularly threatening, she said, are the state of the federal budget and the accumulated debt. German indebtedness has not yet reached the level of the United States, she noted, but the trend is moving in the same direction—a point she illustrated with several charts. On top of this have come huge price increases resulting from the war against Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, driving the German economy into free fall.

There are ways out of the crisis, she stressed, but they require a public debate. Germany has been an export nation since Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (in office 1871-1890); it has always had few raw materials of its own, but a high quality in education and science, together with a high level of exports, made the country successful. To achieve that again, Germany would have to work with China and the entire Global South along the lines of the Belt and Road Initiative. In that context she especially emphasized the Schiller Institute's Extended Oasis Plan.

The next speaker, Rainer Apel, addressed infrastructure and stated unmistakably that no one in the political elite understands what infrastructure actually is. According to the 2022 infrastructure report, published by the German Federal Ministry of Transportation (Bundesministerium für Verkehr), 7,000 kilometers of highways, 8,000 bridges, and 10,000 kilometers of federal and state roads need repairs, in

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addition to 60,000 bridges inside the cities. The funding required for these repairs is twice as large as the entire budget earmarked for infrastructure.

As an example of important large-scale infrastructure projects, Apel cited the straightening of the Rhine River carried out in the 19th Century by engineer Johann Gottfried Tulla from the Baden region, whose river improvements opened up the possibility of draining land in the north, of developing coal mining in the Ruhr region, and of building up the chemical industry south of Bingen.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche then added that the issuance of credit for infrastructure projects and industrial buildup is not inflationary—as was already set out in the Lautenbach Plan, presented by Dr. Wilhelm Lautenbach to a secret conference of the Friedrich List Society in 1931—in contrast to today's massive military spending.

Claudio Celani then spoke on the crisis of the automobile industry in Germany, long the backbone of the German economy and closely linked to the machine-tool sector. Every company, including the Volkswagen board, knows that the exit from nuclear energy, then the exit from coal, and finally the renunciation of Russian gas, have left Germany in the condition of a "third-world country." Through the Green Deal, green policy, and exploding energy prices, everything that had been affordable until now has become unaffordable for many. Car sales in the country have declined significantly, and people are increasingly driving old vehicles.

Christoph Mohs spoke next—drawing on a study by Dean Andromidas—on the past and future of European and German spaceflight, posing the deliberately exaggerated question of whether investment in space travel is wasted money. That is unfortunately a widespread view, and Mohs countered it by arguing that spaceflight and the space sector make it possible for society to look beyond the narrow earthly horizon. Citing "space pioneers" such as Johannes Kepler, Hermann Oberth, Wernher von Braun, and also Krafft Ehricke, who developed the concept of the "extraterrestrial imperative," Mohs underscored that the space sector has always served as a driver of science, technology, education, and infrastructure development.

The final speaker, Stephan Ossenkopp, who had recently returned from a trip to China, emphasized the necessity of German cooperation with the BRICS nations. Long-term cooperation with the BRICS could secure Germany's survival as an industrial nation and drive industrial development forward, since Germany, an export nation, depends on long-term contracts and agreements. It is obvious that the BRICS nations themselves want to work with the Western nations—they are not our enemies, Ossenkopp said. What they want are equal relations, on an equal footing. Germany could cooperate with Russia in the field of nuclear energy, for example, while decoupling from China would be economic hara-kiri. He stressed that all the BRICS states are also active in space research and are advancing their space sectors.

The nearly three-hour seminar ended with the intention, voiced by many participants, to organize similar events before long.