

## What Koschnick Said

Hans Koschnick's lengthy interview with in the leading German daily *Die Welt* appeared on June 23. Koschnick, 75, is a former deputy chairman of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), a former mayor of the city of Bremen, and one of the "grand old men" of the SPD. During the 1990s, Koschnick was European Union Administrator for the city of Mostar, in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Koschnick told *Die Welt* that the SPD under Gerhard Schröder had adopted a paradigm of economic-social policies which has now come to a complete dead-end. One can already rule out that the SPD will be re-elected to government, in the next national elections in 2006, and the party will be relegated to the opposition for some time after that, Koschnick said.

The party elder statesman said that a fundamental policy shift is required for the SPD, terminating the current

"hand-to-mouth" policies, "day-to-day" politics, or appeals to short-term populism. Running after "the hedonistic new middle class, as Schröder did in 1998, has been a failure." Schröder ignored the SPD's party base and the broader population, which may accept temporary sacrifice, but only if they know why, and for what. The population, said Koschnick, needs a perspective, and the party needs to show "the intention to change something about this society."

What is required, he insisted, is no mere reform of the party's structures, but a fundamental new idea, "a new vision of society"; but the latest European Parliament elections have shown that the Social Democrats had "no concept whatsoever, not the faintest approximation of an idea." Such an idea will, however, not come from the cabinet table of Chancellor Schröder or "expert commissions," Koschnick said. "Only such parties have a future, that have clear-cut values, a clear-cut message of how society has to be shaped in the future."