

# Tindemans Gov't Gives Belgian Socialists Green Light For Austerity

---

## BELGIUM

---

Four months after the collapse of Belgium Prime Minister Leo Tindemans' shaky right-wing coalition, King Baudouin swore in a new government June 3, based on an alliance of Tindemans' Social Christian Party (PSC), the Belgian Socialist Party (PSB), and a gaggle of regionalist groupings. The distribution of portfolios in the new coalition points to the fact that this is a coalition which will try to impose a harsh local-control austerity program and the destruction of Belgium's advanced energy and related industries. It is also clear that the PSB will do most of the dirty work.

The contractual basis of the new coalition is the so-called community pact which provides the institutional framework for splitting the country into three autonomous regions; Dutch-speaking Flanders, French-speaking Wallonia, and Brussels proper. This division will be confirmed through the constitution of regional parliaments and parallel Community Councils to legislate on all issues of health, education, and social welfare. One enraged Flemish journalist pinpointed the character of this setup; "(the government) wants an Ireland, and by God, they'll have it!"

The heaviest responsibility for the success or failure of the government's local control scheme rests with the Belgian Socialists, who swept 12 out of 30 of the top-government positions, including the key Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs Ministers. The PSB's public proposal for financing the autonomous regions is a looting policy euphemistically called "self-financing schemes with small consumer savings." Also, under the terms of the new coalition, the Socialists have made substantial headway in increasing state control over the private banking sector, in particular through the establishment of a government overseer to the activities of the country's four largest private banks, Kredietbank, Banque de

Bruxelles-Lambert, Société Générale de Banque and Paribas. These anti-banking maneuvers become more obvious in light of the fact that the Boards of Directors of all four banks are currently discussing U.S. Labor Party Chairman Lyndon LaRouche's proposal for a hard-commodity private bank.

In addition, the new Tindemans government has fully embraced the energy policy of the U.S.A.'s Carter Administration. No doubt taking some pointers from former EEC Energy Commissioner and leading PSB member Henri Simonet — the new Foreign Affairs Minister — the government will establish a National Committee for Energy, to elaborate a comprehensive energy savings program by the end of this year. A parallel government agency will also be created to act as watchdog over the nation's nuclear energy industry by controlling the distribution of uranium to individual companies.

Belgian industrialists are not taking the new government's programs lightly. The largest Flemish employers association, the VEV, issued a call at its latest congress for a new labor-industrial alliance for economic expansion. The VEV stressed that rates of economic growth in excess of the current 4.5 percent to 5.5 per annum are essential to eliminate unemployment to provide the surplus necessary for investment in research and technology. The Walloon employers, the FEB, similarly adopted an explicitly pro-growth orientation at their own gathering.

There is no guarantee that the new Tindemans-Socialist coalition will succeed in its austerity drive. The inherent weakness of the government, based as it is on the tolerance of the PSB's working class base and the heteronomic interests of numerous perpetually squabbling linguistic parties, was already demonstrated *before* the coalition was sworn in! Four ministerial appointees from the French-speaking wing of Tindemans' own Social Christian refused to appear for the swearing-in ceremonies on June 2 over petty grievances. Tindemans immediately tendered his resignation to the King, who salvaged the entire government at the last minute but could give no guarantee of its long-term viability.