

Schmidt's Victory Is A Lesson For U.S. Republicans

In Hamburg development was the winning ticket

Republican Party leaders in the United States should take a close look at how West Germany's Social Democratic Party won an absolute majority in the June 4 election in Hamburg — and at how the Free Democratic Party went down to defeat. Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, formerly Hamburg's Interior Senator, campaigned not on a grabbag of local gripe and tax issues, but on the importance of expanding international trade, in both East and West, for detente and stability. As he told a cheering rally May 18, "We have got to have peace with the Soviet Union. . . . We have to see that the economic deals signed in Bonn with the Soviet Union are an all-party compromise, since I want to have the entire domestic population carry out this policy."

Schmidt's SPD also won because of their hard-line stand against the environmentalist "greenies." By contrast, the Free Democratic Party lost not only the elections but its parliamentary status because it explicitly pandered to such antigrowth elements.

In the following exclusive interview, the cochairman of the European Labor Party, Uwe Friesecke, lays out the ingredients of Schmidt's victory.

Q: What is the significance of the Social Democratic Party victory in the Hamburg state elections June 4, and the defeat of both the environmentalists and the liberal Free Democrats in both Hamburg and the state of Lower Saxony?

A: The worldwide significance of these two elections is that they are the first elections of national importance in years to be run on the intentional issues of economic growth, detente, and support for nuclear energy.

West Germany Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, the real head of the SPD, and the SPD mayor of Hamburg, Klose, deliberately ran their campaign in Hamburg — Schmidt's home town — on a profile of world strategic problems. They concentrated all their party's energy on those three issues, and engaged in viciously sharp polemics against the environmentalists.

At one point in the campaign Schmidt told people at a huge SPD rally that voting for the environmentalist "green" election slate was just like voting for the Nazis in 1933. That firm intervention gave them the victory. The SPD in Hamburg gained 7 percent more of the vote than they previously had, winning an absolute majority in Hamburg of 51.9 percent. This enabled them to cut their dependence on the liberal FDP and end their coalition with the FDP in Hamburg. The only reason why the SPD lost Lower Saxony was that under Willy

Brandt's direction, the SPD stupidly ran and supported environmentalist candidates.

This is how Schmidt and Klose mobilized the majority of the population around an unbelievably sharp attack on zero-growth and environmentalism. The SPD victory of 51.9 percent is damned significant — it shows you can win by hitting the environmentalists hard.

Q: Then Schmidt has not only the hard core of the SPD behind him, the party's traditional working-class base, but a majority of the rest of the population too?

A: Sure. Look at Hamburg, Germany's largest port, a manufacturing and banking center in its own right. It is clear that Schmidt and Klose represent the SPD's hard core, because it is their faction that has continually built up the port of Hamburg, since World War II. Furthermore, the SPD did this against the opposition of the (opposition) Christian Democrats (CDU) and the FDP.

One of Klose's first announcements right after he learned he won was that he was now ready to create absolute and drastic economic expansion. This will be his main aim. He knows he depended on the European Labor Party (the EAP) for much of organizing around him in the elections. The EAP slogans were "German Technology for the Development of the Third World" and "Yes for Nuclear Energy and Progress." We had hundreds of huge posters with these slogans and pictures of nuclear power plants all over Hamburg. We attended almost all of the SPD, FDP and CDU election rallies, and made our interventions the decisive issue.

While we were organizing with these slogans, the Schmidt-Klose group was organizing under their slogan of several decades: "Hamburg, the Gateway to the World." Time after time in our interventions, we set the tone of the meeting for Klose or Hamburg Finance Senator Seeler. We introduced questions on a new monetary system and set the guidelines for discussion.

The SPD's base hard core responded well and fought. But the CDU was totally provincial. The best example of this is that one of our organizers, who is not a German citizen and who does not speak German, intervened into a CDU rally. The CDU members became hysterically enraged and went into an antiforeign rant. They wanted to throw the organizer out. But later, at an SPD rally led by Mayor Klose, the same organizer asked the same question in English, and Klose translated it into German, so that his audience could understand it, before he answered it.

You know what they call the CDU chairman in Hamburg — "Sir Eric Blumenfeld." When he was asked

during the campaign why a German citizen would be called that, he answered that once when he was at a London club, he was called that for some reason and the nickname has stuck ever since. These were the types that the EAP and SPD were running against.

Q: Willy Brandt, the SPD chairman, is saying that since the "greenies" recorded 3.7 percent of the vote in Hamburg, the SPD will have to become more "green" in the future.

A: Total nonsense. In reality, the FDP was destroyed not by the greenies, but because they tried to outdo the greenies. For a party to be allowed to sit in a state parliament, it must get at least 5 percent of the vote. Well, the FDP vote sunk from 11 percent in Hamburg to about 4.6 percent, and from over 5 percent in Lower Saxony to about 4.3 percent. This means the FDP is kicked out of the statehouse.

They are no longer a parliamentary party and cannot become one against until they get at least 5 percent of the vote. This is what they got for suggesting proposals that were far more "zero growth" than what the greenies would dare say. They even opposed a new superport for Hamburg! Our view is that the SPD can't tolerate such a party, and such a party has no right to sit in the parliament.

It is a fact that most FDP voters felt the same way, and voted for the SPD instead. FDP votes did not go to the greenies, as most of their votes came from the very young, from those who were voting the first time.

Let's consider Brandt's statement again. It is known that Klose only gained 7 percent of the vote in Hamburg because he fought the greenies as fascists.

But in Lower Saxony, the state to the south of Hamburg, Brandt forced the SPD to run candidates that were no different from greenies. They came from the group around Count Peter Von Oertzen, and voters could not distinguish between them and the hard core environmentalists. So the SPD actually lost a couple of percentage points of the vote. The clear lesson of this is that by aggressively fighting for export expansion and detente, you can win.

The EAP's Role

Q: How many votes did the EAP get?

A: We got 314 votes in Hamburg, and 180 in Lower Saxony. There are two significant aspects of this turnout. First of all, it is twice as large as what we were credited with in the 1976 elections in the same areas. Second, these small margins actually decided various elections. Despite its apparently small size, this vote indicates that our role as the catalyst in support of nuclear energy, the only party consistently backing nuclear energy, has been understood by a significant number of people.

The best example is our three rallies in the Gorleben district in Lower Saxony, the site for a future nuclear waste depository, a very backward, peasant area where the environmentalists have been living in the countryside organizing peasants against the depository. We got 26 votes in Gorleben, the greenies got 17.6 percent, and the SPD candidate lost by a small margin to the CDU candidate.

Our 26 votes were crucial — these people saw us after three brief rallies, and organized enough votes against both the greenies and the "green" SPD candidate to defeat both of them. This signals trade unionists and politicians how real political organizing works.

Q: Can we assume that the Schmidt group in the SPD will continue to follow through on their victory in Hamburg?

A: I think so; it depends on the EAP. Look, we are going to rub this victory against the greenies, and against the opponents of the Schmidt-Brezhnev agreement (the historic trade pact concluded between the USSR and the West German heads of state — ed.) into the face of every politician and trade union. We are going to tell them this campaign needs to be supported by everyone, and we will let this be a lesson — being soft against the environmentalists only makes the problem worse. We are really

Elections in Lower Saxony

	State Elections 1978	State Elections 1974	National Elections 1976
Registered voters	5,230,293	5,129,254	5,205,680
Participation (%)	78.7	84.4	91.4
Social Democratic Party	42.2	43.1	45.7
Christian Democratic Party	48.7	48.8	45.7
Free Democratic Party	4.2	7.0	7.9
DKP (Communist)	0.3	0.4	0.2
NPD (Neo-Nazi)	0.4	0.6	0.3
GLU (Environmentalist)	3.9	—	—

Elections in Hamburg

	State Elections 1978	State Elections 1974	National Elections 1976
Registered voters	1,264,489	1,313,889	1,287,473
Participation (%)	76.6	80.4	91.1
Social Democratic Party	51.5	44.9	52.6
Christian Democratic Party	37.6	40.6	35.9
Free Democratic Party	4.8	10.9	10.2
DKP (Communist)	1.0	2.2	0.8
NPD (Neo-Nazi)	0.3	0.8	—
GLU (Environmentalist)	1.0	—	—
Buute Liste-Wehrt Euch (Environmentalist)	3.5	—	0.2

going to use this as a "shocker" in the fall state elections in Hessen and Bavaria.

Q: A month before the elections, we were told that the trade-union officials who organized the 70,000-person demonstration for nuclear energy in Dortmund last November were under attack from the Brandt group in the SPD. Some of these officials were even harassed out of their posts. Can we expect to see a counterattack around the Hamburg victory?

A: The Hamburg results are producing a process of clarification within the SPD. We already have some indication that the situation is beginning to be reversed with these union officials. Moreover, we are certainly going to discuss with everyone, from unions to political parties, how we need a strong counterpunch against the soft line.

Toward the July Summit

Q: Will this victory strengthen Schmidt's hand at the July economic summit in Bonn?

A: It will, although it must be determined if Helmut Schmidt knows how to best use his victory in the federal parliament.

Schmidt does have problems regarding the national FDP-SPD coalition that forms his government. He has this stinking FDP Economics Minister, Count Otto von Lambsdorff and the group around him, he has an entire zero-growth clique around Research Minister Volker Hauff, and Schmidt must contend with the CDU.

Take the CDU. Although the CDU is trying to make the Lower Saxony election, where they kept control of the state parliament and the governor's post, as their big victory, they lost 3 percent of their previous vote in Hamburg, and lost .03 percent in Lower Saxony. What Schmidt is going to have to do is tell the CDU members who stand for detente, economic expansion, and nuclear energy they have to make an alliance.

Do you know what the trouble with the CDU is? Certain CDU liberals are trying to turn the party away from the

principles of the late CDU Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, and turn it into a British-style Liberal party. One of the CDU slogans in the Hamburg campaign was "We are more liberal than the FDP." Take this Walther Leisler Kiep, who is a personal friend of U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy — he brags that when ever he goes to Washington, Kennedy's door is open to him.

The EAP destroyed Kiep in Lower Saxony, because the vote was so close that he lost his directly elected seat in the state legislature, and had to be appointed to his old seat.

In West Germany, there is a two ballot system where you vote for individual candidates on one ballot, and for parties on the other. If a politician can't make it as an individual candidate, he can usually get a seat, a second-best position, by being appointed from the second ballot.

Kiep lost his directly elected seat by 50 votes, and in that district we got 30 votes, so we actually affected the outcome against him. We covered all of his election rallies, and, generally even the CDU members received us very openly. By the time we intervened at Kiep's fifth rally, he took one look at our organizers, and at the rather receptive CDU audience that was watching us, and said, "This looks like an EAP convention."

Q: The FDP and the greenies have both been irreversibly defeated. Will the riots at nuclear power plants of last year continue?

A: There might be more violence. Right now the greenies are trying to organize for a referendum against nuclear energy in Lower Saxony. But as we have learned that these people, even with 3 percent of the vote, are so disorganized and ineffective that the only way they could create a disturbance would be with massive outside financing and intelligence agency control. They are just not capable of organizing any large movement on their own. Maybe the dregs of the FDP and the greenies will regroup to form a new fascist movement — but this can be stopped if we organize the trade unions.