

# German Politics Is Ignoring Reality

by Rainer Apel

As in any other country that still adheres to the bankrupt global system of monetarism, the elites of Germany are also confronted more and more with difficulties in maintaining the nation's political stability. The protests against speculative fuel price increases, which haunted most of Europe during September, were a warning sign: They slipped beyond the control of the labor unions, whose reins over unrest among the rank and file proved to be not so tight as believed. The protests were calmed down by government concessions in late September, which were made easier because oil prices dropped a bit at the time. Now, as oil prices enter another round of speculative increases, the signs of renewed protest are already visible. They may break out in Britain, where the 60-day deadline set by protesting farmers and truckers expires on Nov. 13, and the government has not made any real concessions to the protesting groups.

Protests may also break out elsewhere in Europe, possibly even in Germany, where public dissatisfaction with government policy on numerous issues, ranging from the ecology tax on fuel to the pension fund privatization program, have made news during the second half of October. An indication that new social conflicts are emerging rapidly, is the strike by medical doctors in the state of Thuringia, one-third of whom closed their offices during the last week of October, to protest the government's budget cuts in health care programs.

## Trying to Divert Attention

The government and the German elites are aware of these developments, but have so far chosen not to address them openly, but rather to preoccupy themselves with other "issues" that draw attention away from the economic and social realities. Notably, the plan by the government to ban the right-wing radical National Democratic Party (NPD), as an "action against neo-Nazism," dominated news headlines during late October, because the majority of the media are going along with the government propaganda. Instead of reporting about global strategic issues, about the constructive proposals for a new economic-monetary system, a New Bretton Woods, made by Lyndon LaRouche—as numerous Ibero-American, Arab, and a few Italian newspapers have begun to do—the majority of the German media are painting a picture of a world that does not exist. There is no threat to the German political system posed by the NPD, but there is a real threat from the elites' failure to keep the country's economic and banking

system alive, as the global crisis deepens.

The disproportionate emphasis given to the NPD by the government and the media implies a danger that an artificial dynamic will be created, fuelled by unexpected, uncalculated events. For example, the ambush and shooting of a leading NPD party official in Geislingen, a city in southwestern Germany, on Oct. 25, are such a dangerous development: The victim was severely wounded in the head; and if he dies, the NPD will have its martyr, and members of the party and the right-wing/radical movements around it will seek revenge, striking back against members of the radical left. With that scenario unfolding, Germany could be drawn into a cycle of violence and counter-violence, which would remind one of the situation in the Balkans, where fanatics of each side invest all their energies in killing fanatics of the other.

## No Longer a Beacon of Stability

Germany is no longer a beacon of stability in Europe, as indicated by the state of the political party system. For example, the decomposition of the Green Party is undermining the ruling "red-green" coalition government with Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's Social Democratic Party (SPD). The decision at the end of October of two members of the European Parliament to quit the Green Party and join the SPD, with a third member expected to quit the Greens but not join the SPD, highlights that process of erosion. Many more are expected to quit, over the next days and weeks, because ecologism is out: Voters and citizens are more concerned with the grim economic perspectives and with the threat of unemployment. The Greens have lost about one-third of their vote overall in elections since they joined the government coalition with the SPD in October 1998. The red-green government has just muddled through the first half of its four-year term, and the minor coalition partner is now falling apart. Were elections for national parliament held right now, the Greens would be voted out.

The cohesion of the government is also undermined by the response of Chancellor Schröder and the SPD leadership to the Green decomposition: The SPD has begun talks with two opposition parties in the national parliament, the neo-liberal Free Democrats (FDP) and the post-communist Democratic Socialists (PDS). This is an attempt to broaden government support in the parliament, to construct majorities for a policy that no longer has the backing of the electorate.

All the latest opinion polls show that the red-green alliance as such would not make it back into the parliament, because the Greens would not receive the mandatory minimum 5% of the vote, and because the two main parties, the SPD and the opposition Christian Democrats (CDU-CSU), are behind by a small margin of only 2-3%. The FDP or the PDS, which can be expected to get votes in the 5-7% range, could decide to join a coalition with either the SPD or the CDU-CSU (in the latter case, that can be ruled out for the PDS, for ideological differences). There is a slight chance of

a Grand Coalition between CDU-CSU and SPD, which the population would prefer, but neither the SPD nor the CDU wants that.

### Coalition Scenarios

All these coalition scenarios that are being sparked by the Greens' crisis, might not work, because the PDS, the FDP, the CDU-CSU, and even the SPD are being shaken by internal brawls and succession fights of their own. In the case of the CDU and FDP, the fights revolve around the political repercussions of the global monetary-economic crises of 1997 and 1998, which led to their dramatic election defeats, and their loss of control of the government, in the national elections of September 1998. The CDU and FDP have been in unabated internal succession fights ever since, and they are far from having regained stability. The resignation of CDU general party manager Roprecht Polenz, after only six months in office, on Oct. 23, is an example. His successor, Laurenz Meyer, is considered a transition figure as well, and he is already the CDU's third general party manager in the last two years. The CDU is not in shape to govern, or co-govern, the nation.

The SPD is losing members and voters to the PDS, but what is most amazing, is that the SPD leadership is even promoting the process. Harald Ringstorff, SPD Governor of the State of Mecklenburg, who presides over the first "red-red" government — of the SPD and the PDS — said, in an interview on Oct. 22, that it would be wrong if the SPD tried to regain the lost votes on the left spectrum of the electorate. These votes should be left to the PDS, whereas the SPD should continue conquering former "territory" from the CDU and FDP. This means that Schröder, who is also national SPD chairman, should stay on his neo-liberalist policy course. But this is exactly what has cost the SPD a net loss of 22% in popularity since late August. The SPD will go under, if it follows the advice of people like Ringstorff. And the PDS would benefit — were the party itself not paralyzed by internal faction fights. The recent top-level talks between the PDS and the SPD are opposed by many leftists in the PDS, who consider contact with a "neo-liberalist party like the SPD" an act of "treason" against the principles of "socialism." The PDS might split over that issue during coming weeks.

Therefore, because there are no convincing options for coalitions other than the present government, which is falling apart, and with political parties controlled by an "establishment" that is running away from economic reality, Germany is headed toward ungovernability.

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## State Dept. Intends To Fund Colombian Narco-Terrorists

by Valerie Rush

A high-level State Department official declared in mid-October that Washington would be willing to consider paying Colombia's murderous narco-terrorists to cease their kidnapping and extortion practices, "under certain obligatory conditions." Those "obligatory conditions" apparently do not include ending their bloody insurgency against the Colombian nation-state, or abandoning their billion-dollar cocaine- and heroin-trafficking racket.

In Washington on Oct. 19, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere Bill Brownfield told media that the United States would not oppose the creation of such a financing mechanism for the narco-guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN), but only if the FARC murderers of three U.S. citizens in Colombia last year were surrendered to U.S. authorities, and no more American citizens or interests were targeted. "Not a penny of U.S. resources will be offered to the guerrillas" until they meet these criteria, insisted Brownfield. "There are scenarios under which we could play a role, but these do not exist today. If the circumstances change, we'll see."

Brownfield's comments echoed those of State's Office of Andean Affairs director Phillip Chicola, who said on Oct. 18, during a visit to Bogotá, that U.S. support for international financing of the guerrillas would become feasible "when there is a clear agreement as to where the peace process is going." Chicola was the first State Department official to open direct negotiations with the FARC, holding a secret two-day confab with the FARC's notorious chief of finances, Raúl Reyes, in Costa Rica on Dec. 14-15, 1998, despite the fact that the FARC was — and remains — on the U.S. government's list of international terrorists, with whom dialogue is prohibited. Making public that the State Department is opening negotiations again, Chicola used his trip to give his first public report on those "relatively positive" 1998 talks. What is important to the United States, he said, is that the FARC implement Reyes's assurances that the FARC "will make it a policy" not to kill Americans.

While Chicola was in Colombia, Colombian government representatives, scores of international "human rights" and "peace" non-governmental organizations, Colombian narco-