

Hardly Any Germans Support Iraq War

by Rainer Apel

According to legend, the ancient Greek goddess Nemesis had a very sharp memory—she would never forget any evil deed, and would pursue the culprit relentlessly until he (or she) were caught to receive his sentence. The problems which U.S. chicken-hawks like Richard Perle and Donald Rumsfeld are running into, indicate that a “nemesis factor” is at work in the United States; and it is also causing its first casualties on the German side. Christian Democratic Union (CDU) Chairman Angela Merkel, the pro-war cheerleader, has experienced a rapid decline in popularity at home, ever since she met with leading chicken-hawk representatives in Washington in February. In its latest opinion poll, N-TV noted that her support is down from 66% at the end of last year, to 42% at the end of March. And a lot of those remaining 42% are Germans who oppose Chancellor Gerhard Schröder’s economic-social policy. Many voters still have the illusion that Merkel’s Christian Democrats would be an alternative, and only 33% of Germans support Social Democrat Schröder. But on the issue of war, 73% support Schröder’s anti-war position.

Prominent politicians who spoke out against the war during the first two weeks of combat in Iraq, include two former Presidents, one former Chancellor, and many other leading figures of both major parties. The two former Presidents are Walter Scheel (Free Democratic Party) and Richard von Weizsäcker (CDU), both criticizing the new U.S. strategic concept of preventive war as “going against international law.” Former Cabinet ministers Rita Süssmuth and Heiner Geissler (both CDU) made the same point.

The remarks of Karl Lamers, a longtime CDU member of Parliament, is worth special mention, as he has worked for the U.S.-German relationship and for Franco-German cooperation at the same time, over more than 40 years. In an interview with the *Rheinische Post* on March 31, Lamers said: “I don’t understand Angela Merkel, that she is clinging to the Americans so unconditionally. This turns us into a passive appendix, rather than into a subject of political action.” Lamers said that “the Americans wanted that war in any case,” irrespective of how Saddam Hussein behaved. “This is a war of prevention. Any reference to an Iraqi threat to the Americans is nonsense.” The real driving force behind the war is the new U.S. strategic doctrine, Lamers said, and its authors “want a unipolar hegemonic world.” He added that against

this strategic background, the intensification of Franco-German cooperation is crucial.

Schmidt Rejects ‘Clash of Civilizations’

Of special interest are also remarks by former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (Social Democrat), in a speech in Munich on March 29, addressed to the Hanns-Seidel Foundation. Schmidt’s speech was a *laudatio* for former President Roman Herzog (CDU), whom the foundation had just granted an award for outstanding statesmanship. The fact that Schmidt was chosen to speak at this Christian Democratic foundation, reflects how certain currents among the German political elite think about the present strategic situation, across party boundaries.

The Iraq War may provoke a “new, general enmity of the 1,200 million Muslims worldwide, against America, maybe against Western civilizations in general,” Schmidt warned. “It is possible that Samuel Huntington’s gloomy prognosis of a worldwide Clash of Civilizations will become real.” Schmidt quoted from a speech that then-President Herzog gave in Islamabad in 1995: “I do not share the view of Samuel Huntington that a clash of civilizations is unavoidable. . . . Nothing could be more disastrous. . . . Even the propagation of such ideas, I deem entirely inappropriate.”

Schmidt furthermore warned that another casualty of the Iraq War and the new U.S. drive for world hegemony may be the ongoing project of European integration, which is being disrupted by the Bush Administration attempt to recruit allies for its war drive, behind the backs of the French and the Germans. Schmidt said that one should be prepared for a situation getting so bad, in economic as well as in military-strategic terms, that the European Union could not be maintained any longer, because new challenges would require new and unprecedented responses. In order to secure genuine European interests, as distinct from the Anglo-American designs for global hegemony, the strengthening of the Franco-German entente, as crucial for the national interest of Germany, must become an absolute priority, Schmidt said. For Germany, a meaningful policy under the foreseeable turbulent conditions of the 21st Century can be pursued only in close cooperation with France, Schmidt added.

There are two policy designs competing with each other, now, Schmidt said: the principle of dialogue and cooperation, as referenced in Herzog’s 1995 Islamabad speech; as opposed to the “friend-enemy principle” which “the Nazi ideologue Carl Schmitt defined as the essence of politics.” Identifying Schmitt as a spiritual source of ideologies such as those formulated by Samuel Huntington and his chicken-hawk followers, is all the more important, coming from a former Chancellor of Germany. And whether Helmut Schmidt intended that or not, his attack on Carl Schmitt will remind many people that there is one political organization that has run that attack on Schmitt for years: the LaRouche movement in Germany and internationally.