

One Thing Clear in Germany: Less Merkel, More FDR Needed

by Rainer Apel

The Oct. 2 vote in the Dresden-I district completed the national election in which the other 248 districts had voted on Sept. 18, but the election result is still as inconclusive as it was before the Dresden vote. Although the candidate of the Christian Democrats (CDU) won the direct mandate in Dresden district 160, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder won the vote for party slates. This party vote is the so-called “second vote” that every German voter has, in addition to the district vote.

The two Christian Democratic parties, the CDU and its Bavarian partner, the Christian Social Union, CSU (which form a group in the parliament) together have 226 seats in the Bundestag, against 222 of the SPD. However, the SPD remains the strongest single party in parliament. As for the Chancellorship: Schröder’s challenger, neo-con CDU party chairwoman Angela Merkel, cannot become Chancellor with her own 226 votes, plus the 61 votes of the parliamentary group of the Free Democrats (FDP), because for that, she needs the absolute majority of parliamentary votes, namely, 308 out of 614 votes. So, she falls short by 21 votes. But neither does the incumbent Schröder have a majority: His SPD alliance with the Greens has only 273 seats in the parliament. So, unless the parliament elects another Chancellor, Schröder will remain Chancellor, and there is no time limit for him to step down (unlike the limit set by the constitution for the newly elected parliament, which has to convene four weeks after the election, at the latest).

Therefore, at least for the period of coalition talks among the various parties, Germany’s Chancellor will be Schröder, and he will still be in office for the next few weeks—which are crucial weeks in terms of the international crisis hot spots like Iran and Iraq, and the increasing volatility of the

global financial system.

Thus, Germany lives, for the time being, with a paradox: For domestic policies, where the role of the parliament is crucial, there will be several weeks of indecision, until a new government is formed. But for diplomatic and international relations, including international economic and financial relations, Chancellor Schröder will continue to run the government. To a certain extent, his maneuvering room will, however, depend on his ability and willingness to link up with the LaRouche factor in U.S. politics.

Linking With LaRouche in the U.S.

The preliminary assessment made by U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche, shortly after the Dresden vote results were in, the night of Oct. 2, addresses that point. LaRouche said that with the German vote being inconclusive, the issue now on the table for Germany is establishing a viable government, likely a Grand Coalition government among the SPD, CDU, and CSU. What is clear, LaRouche said, is that any such Grand Coalition under the control of Angela Merkel would be a disaster, as there would be no confidence in any Merkel-led coalition. It would rapidly disintegrate. The outcome of the current U.S. political crisis is going to determine the context in which the German situation is resolved. The Bush-Cheney Administration is about to disintegrate, LaRouche added, and that is the framework for judging what will happen in Germany.

The Dresden vote consolidated the status of the LaRouche movement’s party, the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity (BüSo), as a factor to be reckoned with in German politics, from now on. The BüSo still is a small party, but it has, as the citizens of Dresden, among others, came to recognize,

“seismic qualities,” which means that it can stage political earthquakes of a scope far above its actual size. It can do so, because it is the only party in Germany that is directly connected to the LaRouche factor in the United States, and because it is not working on the basis of pragmatism, but on the principle of changing the situation with revolutionary new concepts whose time has come. It is exactly because of this revolutionary character, that the LaRouche movement in Germany is increasingly attracting youth to become active in politics and to engage in the political campaign work of the BüSo.

In Dresden, the LaRouche Youth Movement carried out an excellent special campaign during the two weeks before the Oct. 2 vote, in the face of a strict media blackout. This blackout was apparently decreed by establishment editors as a shock reaction to the fact that BüSo candidates received between 1% and 2% of the vote in numerous districts in the election on Sept. 18—twice as many as in the last election, three years ago. The 0.6% of the vote which BüSo candidate Kasia Kruczkowski received in the Dresden-I district on Oct. 2, is a respectable achievement, especially in view of the fact that the recognition of the party is much higher—the “seismic” phenomenon. For whatever direction the situation in German politics takes now after the election, the BüSo will be there, and it will intervene on the most critical issues—such as the ailing state of the global financial system, which other political parties are still afraid to address in public.

Merkel: The Big Loser

The big loser of this early election in Germany is Angela Merkel, whom the BüSo attacked frontally for her neo-con positions, long before the Social Democrats did so. The intense BüSo campaign against Merkel posed the alternative to the voter that either the principle of the common good, or the principle of the inhuman radical free market, would prevail, and this thrust succeeded. Merkel came out of the election with a crucial 7% less than she expected. Also, the mere four-seat margin that her Christian Democrats have over the Social Democrats, is evidence of a big failure, and many in her own party also see it that way.

The main blame for the CDU election defeat lies with Merkel, for her radical neo-con positions that scared millions of potential CDU voters away. Merkel is trying to squeeze a “psychological advantage” out of the fact that the Dresden-I district was won by her CDU, but this will not shield her from the heavy attacks from inside the Christian Democrats. Several prominent Christian Democrats have attacked her: former CDU Defense Minister Volker Ruehe; CDU vice party chairman Jürgen Rüttgers, who is also the state governor of North Rhine-Westphalia, the largest state of Germany; former CSU Health Minister Horst Seehofer; and others, notably in the CSU, the autonomous Bavarian state section of the Christian Democrats.

Criticism of Merkel was voiced also by Karl-Josef Laumann, chairman of the the CDU’s influential labor commission and the Social Affairs Minister in North Rhine-Westphalia, who said that Merkel’s campaign strategy failed, because the voters disliked the emphasis on neo-liberalism at the expense of the social aspect. “Those who hailed the de-social-democratization of the [CDU] party, have awakened now in a Grand Coalition,” Laumann said. Günther Beckstein of the CSU, who was in charge of domestic security policy in Merkel’s election campaign team, also spoke out. He urged that the CDU-CSU should discuss where the line should be drawn regarding privatization, deregulation, and competition. Why, for example, said Beckstein, “should public utility companies and water supply companies be open to multinational companies? Why do we only judge treatment for a patient according to cost-benefit criteria, rather than seeing what we have to do to help the patient? People with a Christian social conscience, said Beckstein, should ask themselves some time, ‘What would Jesus have to say?’ and not always, ‘What would [radical free-market ideologue] Friedrich Hayek think?’ The Union parties should distance themselves from the thinking which says that the common good is bad, egoism is good, or that the state is bad. This is the effect of an Anglo-American ideology which is liked by neo-liberals, but not by us.” Another prominent member of the CSU, social security expert Matthaeus Strebl, put it even more bluntly: “The main problem with this campaign was that we had a top candidate whom we did not want.”

Furthermore, Christian Wulff and Roland Koch, the CDU state governors of Lower Saxony and of Hesse, Merkel’s two main rivals inside the party, have distanced themselves from her (although Koch, a hardline neo-con himself, for tactical reasons only). If the criticism cannot be contained by Merkel in the near future, it cannot be ruled out that the party may sacrifice her, in order to get an agreement with the SPD for a Grand Coalition.

Because of the strong transatlantic relations that are a tradition among German Christian Democrats, one can assume that the most recent changes among the U.S. Republicans, with many of them seeking a clear distance from the Bush-Cheney team, are beginning to have an impact on German politics. After all, the Merkel group in the CDU is the one with the closest relations to Bush and Cheney, and the falling stars on one side of this transatlantic neo-con alliance, are also the falling stars on the other side.

Especially in view of the fact that a Grand Coalition government is most likely in Germany now, it would make sense for the Christian Democrats to establish direct contact with the LaRouche “New Deal” factor in the United States, because it is from there that the aforesaid changes among the Republicans have originated. “Less Merkel, more FDR,” is a reasonable slogan for programmatic discussions among the German Christian Democrats in the coming crucial weeks.