

THE WEST GERMAN GREENS ARE STILL LOOKING for themselves on the uncharted frontiers of the post-industrial world. In 18 months of factional strife between "Realos" (self-proclaimed realists) and "Fundis" (as the Realos call the party's left wing), the *Grünen* have got further and further away from political activity, whether in the movements cherished by the Fundis or in parliament as recommended by the Realos. Instead, they have concentrated on churning out mountains of position papers. Some of them are of high intellectual quality. But what gets through to the public is mainly the monotonous echo of relentless ideological squabbling. It is destroying the Greens' image as a fresh, idealistic force for political renewal.

The Greens met in June for a "perspectives conference" in Bad Godesberg, next to Bonn, to exchange ideas and search for their identity. The anthology of position papers was enriched. The familiar pictures of Green women knitting were captioned with allusions to Green unravelling.

The scorecard: The impression of unravelling came from the fact that there were more factions visible at the end of the conference than at the beginning. From right to left, the most clearly defined were the following:

- The Ecolibertarians, keen on free enterprise and willing to demonstrate that "left-right" distinctions are obsolete by joining in coalition with the Christian Democrats.

- The *realpolitik* clan leaders, or "Super-realos." Their main chieftain is Joschka Fischer, former minister of the environment in the one and only "red-green" coalition government between Social Democrats and Greens, in the state of Hesse in 1986. Fischer hopes to return to office at the municipal level in Frankfurt next year. To this end, he is out to transform the entire party at the national level into his idea of a suitable government partner for the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Fischer leads the Frankfurt Realos into factional battle with the same fighting spirit he displayed as a radical street fighter in the early '70s.

- The "Critical Realos": a rebellion in Realo ranks against high-handed Realo chieftains. This current emerged at the conference when Christa Vennegerts spoke out publicly against the "confrontation course" steered by Fischer and his friends.

- The so-called "Centralos" or "Neutrals," united around a position paper *Aufbruch 88* ("Fresh Start 88"). They emerged late last year in an attempt to assert the predominance of the middle against the extreme poles of the Fundi-Realo feud. Often marked by a spirit of Christian reconciliation, the "fresh starters" are faithful to the Green founders' original attempt to synthesize different political and movement tendencies. Their paper diagnosed factional polarization as a split truth: "The bitter truth that basic changes are urgently necessary, but not possible at this time, splits in two, forming factions."

- The "Undogmatic Left," proclaimed at the conference by a number of "Alternatives" and "Ecosocialists," who reject the "Fundis" label foisted on them by the Super-realos. The "Undogmatics" blamed both Realos and Fundis for "overestimating the Greens' possibilities," the Realos by imagining that only Fundis stood in the way of getting into government, the Fundis by demanding "all or nothing," when the relationship of forces was

The Green dilemma: to be or not to be a Realo

such that the answer could only be nothing. The Undogmatics called for compromise short of sellout.

- Revolutionary Ecosocialists, "hibernating" in the reformist Green party, where they can raise consciousness and resistance to the capitalist system while waiting for a new revolutionary spring. Their most brilliant spokesman is Thomas Ebermann of Hamburg.

- Authentic Fundamentalists, on the watch for "betrayal" by elected Green parliamentarians of maximalist positions espoused by the various movements at the base of the Green party. Jutta Dittfurth's verbal radicalism has made her the movement watchdog on the party's board and won her the role of star "Fundis."

Safety in numbers: The proliferation of factions actually was a sign that the major division between Realos and Fundis was unable to split the party in two. The main new currents, the critical Realos and undogmatic left, both represent an effort toward reconciliation in order to save the party from self-destruction.

Yet another example of how Fundi-Realo feuding paralyzes the party arose a couple of weeks before the conference when the Fundi-dominated national board put an ad in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* announcing that: "The Green Bundestag fraction no longer represents the base of their party!" The pretext for this unusual rebuke: the draft amendment to the rape law prepared by the Bundestag Greens set the minimum sentence for convicted rapists at one year instead of two. The Realo-dominated Bundestag fraction had drafted the bill to incorporate feminist principles, reducing "force" to "against the woman's will," and making rape punishable inside marriage, to combat the patriarchal assumption that husbands have sexual rights over their wives. Nevertheless, some feminists objected that setting the punishment at 1-15 years instead of 2-15 years minimized crimes against women.

In the months before the conference, leading Realos made headlines with statements provoking suspicion that they were selling out Green ideals. Hubert Kleinert came out for "ecological capitalism." Joschka Fischer suggested that the Greens should be a better liberal party than the very bourgeois Free Democratic Party (FDP). They drafted and redrafted a "Realo Manifesto" called "To Be or Not To Be," which could be translated as "To Be Realo or Not To Be Anything At All"—the choice they see facing the Green party.

Realo theorizing tends to retreat from advanced Green perceptions to banalities. But Realos are correct in seeing that the radical left has talked and analyzed itself into a corner of inaction. The main problem of the radical left today (as recently noted by 80-year-old French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre) is to find ways to convert negative criticism into constructive proposals. The Realos are at least trying, in an effort all too rare in radical politics, to develop a comprehensive constructive approach to political action.

The trouble is that in the heat of polemics, they are more and more inclined to dismiss the negative criticism of reality that is the wellspring of both revolutionary and reform-

mist motivation.

Unrealistic Realos: The Green Party was founded eight years ago as a new sort of party that was to be "ecological, 'base'-democratic, social and non-violent." As the "Fresh Start 88" paper pointed out, it was the tension among these "four pillars" that was the source of the Greens' originality and creativity. Ecological reform had to keep the social dimension in mind, the socialist component had to accept non-violence, and so on. Without this tension, the "Fresh Start 88" paper suggested, the Green movement can break down into diminished and antagonistic special interests. The world ecological crisis raises the possibility of an ecological authoritarianism, antagonistic to democracy and social welfare. This is the sort of pessimistic reflection Realos tend to distort and brush aside in their hurry to be part of the system.

The Realo Manifesto stresses acceptance of the existing political, economic and military alliance system as the necessary framework for an ecological-reform policy. A test issue on which Realos have sought to establish doctrine, the better to expel Fundis for heresy, is devotion to the state as it exists in the Federal Republic. The Manifesto praised the constitution for "opening a new chapter of German democratic culture," even if it was imposed by the Allies. By insisting on establishing an ideological orthodoxy on such matters, the Realos show they are no more purely pragmatic than their adversaries.

In contrast to Realo optimism about established democracy, *Aufbruch 88* sees the danger to democracy coming not from deliberate totalitarian opposition to democratic institutions, but simply from the way objective reality, in the high-tech age, is escaping the subjective control of people and their democratic political process. The dilemma is how to extend democratic control to decisions in matters like nuclear power and gene technology whose effects can be grave and irreparable for generations to come.

As for the economic system, the Realos like *Doonesbury* proclaim that the Cold War is over, and the West has won. In an interview in the Vienna magazine *Wiener*, Fischer said that at a time when the very bastions of the state economy—China and the Soviet Union—are abandoning their mistaken

course, the "entire debate is basically outdated and settled."

In contrast, the *Aufbruch 88* paper states that "the alternative is no longer between 'capitalism or socialism,' market or planned economy," especially since market economies are more and more planned, while state monopoly economies are turning toward market mechanisms. Rather, the tasks of a democratic ecological movement are to democratize economic power, whatever the system, and work for fundamental changes in production and consumption.

Yuppie power: Industrial society is historically coming to an end, the Realo Manifesto proclaimed flatly. The political implication is loss of interest in the working class. Top Realos combat Ecosocialist efforts to find common ground with labor, for instance by supporting the 35-hour work week without loss of wages. The Fischer group has concluded that the SPD needs a coalition partner that is not "to its left" in the sense of competing for the working class, but "to its right" in the sense of appealing to the new middle classes. In the *Wiener* interview,

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Fischer suggested that in courting "the bourgeoisie and modern management," the Greens "have advantages over the SPD, because we can be more mobile and undogmatic."

Anybody who "turns up his nose at Yuppies" because they like to earn money and enjoy a certain luxury, said Fischer, must realize that they are the decisive class. "The Yuppies will decide how ecological and social, or how brutal, this country will look in the future."

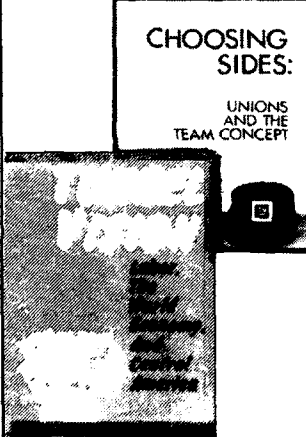
In his contribution to the Realo Manifesto, Udo Knapp, a former leader of the German Socialist Students (SDS), defined the new Green social subject as the "urban, liberal consumerist citizen"—in German, the "*konsumfreundiger citizen*," an expression that provided a choice target for jokes and parody at the Godesberg conference. Use of the French word *citoyen* (citizen) was no doubt meant to emphasize devotion to human rights and the notion of citizenship inherited from the French revolutionary tradition, and thus loyalty to the Western enlightenment, as opposed to obscurantist Fundis. Knapp's consumption-happy citizen is individualistic, concerned primarily with his or her personal life projects, but "nevertheless not only protests against nuclear power and ecological madness but also feels an obligation of solidarity with minorities

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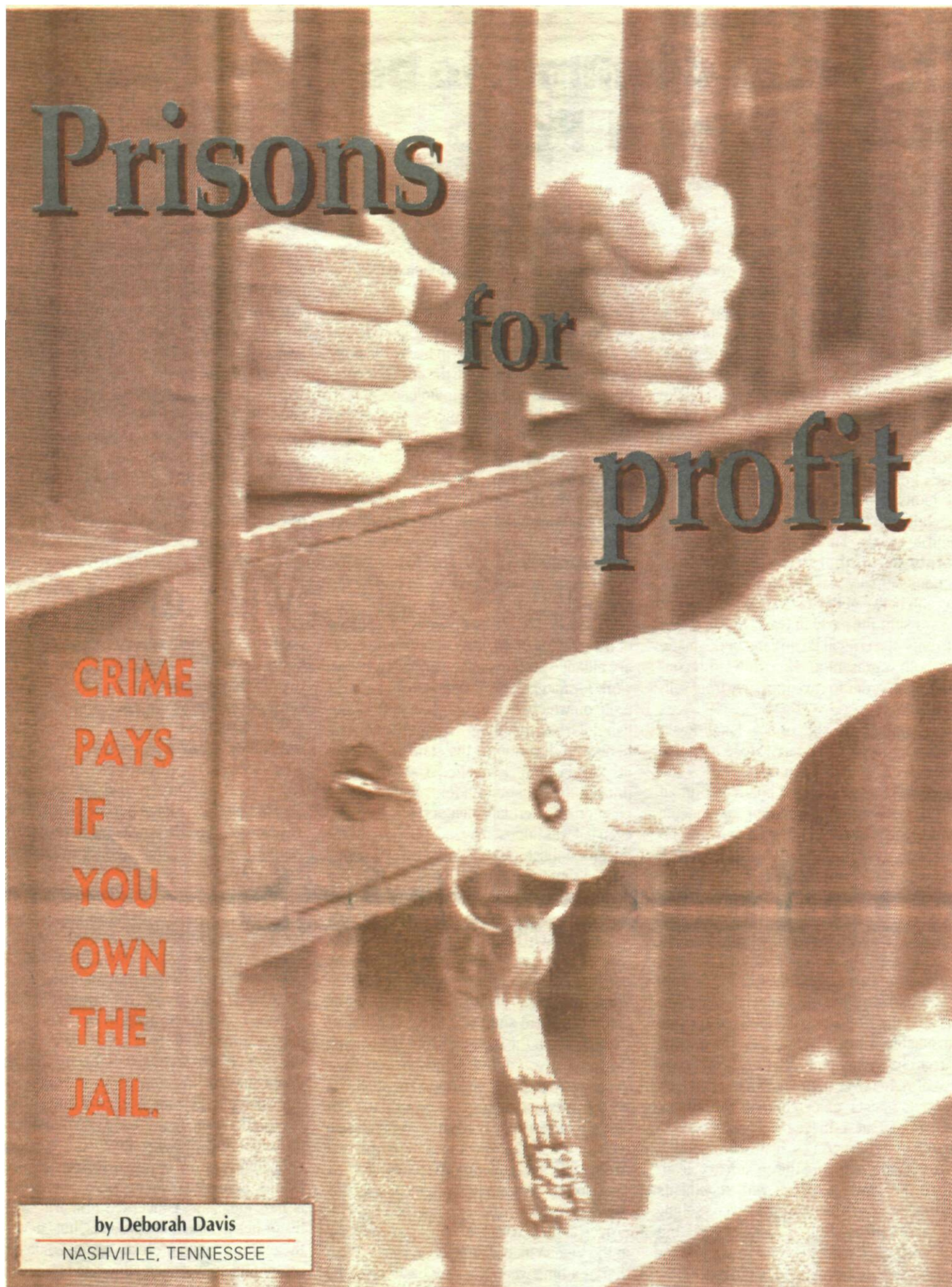
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by Deborah Davis

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

THOMAS BEASLEY SOUNDS LIKE MANY OTHER cocky entrepreneurs when he talks about his field of business. "[It's] not complicated—a bobby pin in its simplicity," he says. "This kind of thing is duck soup for us."

Beasley may use business-as-usual talk, but his business is entirely unusual. He is chairman of the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), a firm that runs private, for-profit prisons. CCA is the largest and most successful of the private prison companies, running eight prisons and jails in four states—one third of the private prisons in this country.

But what Beasley sees as "duck soup," critics of a burgeoning private-prison movement see as a costly, dangerous and unconstitutional enterprise. They say CCA exemplifies the problems of taking the corrections system out of government hands.

Cheaper by the dungeon: The sorry condition of American prisons has created an oppor-

tunity for entrepreneurs like Beasley, who claim they can run American penal systems better and more cheaply than the government.

A holdover from medieval England, privately operated prisons were litigated out of existence in the U.S. 25 years ago because of "dark and evil" practices, as one trial judge put it, of physically abusing inmates and profiting from their labor. But these prisons have been revived by President Reagan's affection for "privatizing" government services and by former Chief Justice Warren Burger's campaign to make prisons into "factories with fences," where inmates would work to offset the costs of their incarceration. Burger is the most prominent advocate of a movement to "transform the terms of the debate" about the purpose of imprisonment, as Craig Becker and Amy Dru Stanley wrote in the June 15, 1985, issue of *The Nation*, "from deterrence and rehabilitation to productiv-

ity and profit."

Private prisons are now run by well-funded corporations. They are being promoted as the answer to lack of money for building new facilities and the consequent inhumane conditions; to overcrowding, inefficiency and waste; to political obstacles to prison reform; and to the growing number of inmate lawsuits. The one problem that private prison managers do not claim to solve is how to rehabilitate criminals instead of simply confining them. In fact, they regard this agonizing question as the basis of a promising growth industry. They are betting on a rising criminal population and high recidivism. So are their stockholders.

Private prisons like the ones CCA operates no longer hire out convict labor. Instead they charge government a daily fee to house and feed inmates. The American Civil Liberties Union has challenged this practice in federal court, arguing that under

the Constitution, only government has the right to deprive people of their liberty. The future of the private prison industry hinges on whether this function may be delegated. Current legal thinking is that government may contract for this service, and government retains ultimate responsibility. So far, no lawsuit has blocked any state or local government from entering into a private prison contract.

"Civil libertarians just don't want any more prison beds," CCA chairman Beasley responds. "And anyone who argues for status quo in corrections is a fool."

No watchdog: But critics say the most serious of their concerns has not been the need for more facilities. It has been "the intolerable combination of unaccountability and financial self-interest" in how those facilities are managed, as David N. Wecht wrote in the March 1987 issue of *The Yale Law Journal*. Although public prisons may be poorly run, Wecht says, they still are subject to public scrutiny, political reform and judicial directive, and their directors are not motivated by profit to cut back food, health care or educational programs.

Private prisons, by contrast, are unregulated, since few state and local governments have established strict standards for fear of creating a set of entitlements that would encourage inmate lawsuits. And even if strict standards are enacted, says Wecht, this "does not ensure...implementation," especially "several years after the life of the contract, when...corporate control of the state's penal system may have reached the point that the government no longer has the expertise, personnel, facilities or fiscal resources to run the prisons." More than one local government, after contracting out its prison or jail, has later asked about how it is being run only to be told that such information is "proprietary."

In spite of these drawbacks, many officials see private prisons as a solution to their problems. Caught between court orders to improve their prisons and the unwillingness of taxpayers to pay for such improvements, they welcome the chance to put a corporation between themselves and the prison system. The private-prison option is also enhanced by recent court decisions that hold government officials personally liable for injuries or rights violations of inmates in custody.

CCA has played skillfully on the fears of government officials. The company promises them three things: its prisons will save the taxpayers money; each one will be certified by the American Correctional Association (ACA) and so be at a "constitutional" standard (this is how the company attempts to bypass the issue of whether private prisons are constitutional); and every politician with statutory responsibility will be protected by a multi-million dollar insurance policy that will finance all litigation, pay all claims and judgments and generally insulate them from inmate lawsuits. These three compelling promises are at the core of CCA's appeal and have become the principles of the entire private prison industry. The question is whether these promises, written into every CCA contract, are too good to be true.

Bribing the "rednecks": Beasley, a former chairman of the Tennessee Republican Party, started up the Correction Corporation of America by obtaining seed money from the venture capital firm of Massey Burch, which controls a Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) development fund set up to stimulate employment in TVA's service area. Ac-