

'Danish Bridge' to Germany To Be Built

by Tom Gillesberg and Michelle Rasmussen

On June 29, Danish Transportation Minister Flemming Hansen and his German colleague Wolfgang Tiefensee finally signed an agreement in Berlin to build a 19-kilometer bridge between the two countries across the Fehmarn Belt in the Baltic Sea, a project which the LaRouche movement has been campaigning for since 1980. Hansen called it "an historic day."

However, Tiefensee called the project "a totally Danish bridge," to be financed, built, and run by the Danish government, which will also collect the tolls. The German government, which prolonged the negotiations over the question of financing, will only build the German road to the bridge, having decided against participating in the Danish financing model.

The Danish state will use the same financing model as it has for the completed Great Belt and Øresund bridges: A state company will borrow money at low interest rates, backed up by state guarantees covering about \$6 billion, to be repaid by bridge tolls. The German government will only be responsible for about \$1 billion for the road and railroad works. Danish Transportation Minister Hansen said that this was the best agreement he could get, given the political conditions.

According to the Danish daily *Berlingske Tidende* on June 30, "At the last moment, it was a direct intervention by German Chancellor Angela Merkel that pressured . . . Tiefensee to agree to a conditional 'yes' to the connection," though Tiefensee said he doesn't consider it the "final agreement." On the other hand, the Christian Democrats in the state parliament of Schleswig-Holstein, the German terminus of the bridge, called the bridge "the most important infrastructure link between the continent and Scandinavia in the past 50 years." The Swedes were also happy, since the bridge shortens the travel time from Sweden to the continent. Construction of the bridge will begin in 2011, and it should be completed in 2018.

The Danish LaRouche movement's campaign for a Fehmarn Belt bridge began 1980, when it was presented in its magazine *Strategic Studies*. The Schiller Institute escalated its campaign after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, when the bridge project became part of Lyndon LaRouche's infrastructure proposal called "The Productive Triangle." The final push came with the distribution of three 50,000-run Danish cam-



The three huge projects at the heart of the Danish model.

paign newspapers since July 2006, which highlighted the Schiller Institute plan for a national and European maglev network, to be linked up to the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Several Schiller Institute/LaRouche Youth Movement rallies in favor of the bridge have been held in recent weeks at the German embassies in Copenhagen and Stockholm, and in front of the Transportation Ministry in Berlin.

Now that the agreement to build the Fehmarn Belt bridge has been achieved, the next goal is a 46-km mega-bridge project to link the Danish island Zealand, where the capital Copenhagen is located, with the Jutland peninsula near Århus, thereby greatly shortening the distance between the two largest Danish cities.

This project, known as the Kattegat Link, was considered by many to be utopian only a year ago, when the Danish Schiller Institute launched its campaign for the first Danish maglev line. In the last month, the discussion has intensified to a degree that all Danish political parties have now called for a study of a Kattegat Link-project. The government coalition wants a dual car- and railroad-bridge, while the left wing is pleading for a railroad-only bridge. None dare oppose it. There is already 50% support in the population to include a high-speed rail link.

The Schiller Institute is campaigning to ensure that the next transformation takes place by making the Danish high-speed train network a maglev system. Once the Copenhagen-Århus line via the Kattegat Link is built, a national Danish maglev net would follow, which would be extended north to Norway and Sweden, and south to Germany. That network would cross the Eurasian continent, and via a Bering Strait tunnel, connect to North and South America. Sound like a utopian dream? Maybe, but this is the time when such dreams can come true.