

HELMUT THIELEN: Human Dignity, Poverty and Liberation

The interrelation between human dignity and poverty is made tangible through the presence or development of objective social conditions setting the framework in which dignity exists. It is primarily the lack of favorable socio-economic and political conditions that is an affront to human dignity – poverty violates human dignity, misery destroys it. The Western concept of capital and state violates human dignity comprehensively, systematically and permanently. It degrades people to the rank of objects of overwhelming structures and processes. Consequently, it limits, and blocks freedom and justice. However, human dignity, freedom and justice can only be achieved and protected with one another. The popularly alleged antagonism between freedom and justice is in fact a misconception because it incorrectly defines »freedom« as egocentric maximization of economic and political utility whereas »justice« is defined as state allocation of survival chances. In order to achieve freedom and justice, new and authentic utopian patterns need to be developed.

SAMIR AMIN: The Political Economy of the XXth Century

In his impressive tour d'horizon Samir Amin – professor of economics and director of the »Forum du Tiers Monde« in Dakar (Senegal) – especially emphasizes that the 20th century came to a close in an atmosphere astonishingly reminiscent of that which had presided over its birth »la belle époque« or the triumph of a globalized capitalism. But the previous »belle époque« paved the way for a »Thirty Years War« (1914-1945) between imperialist powers that resulted in millions of victims and the ruins of World War II. The succeeding post war period of high growth – the so-called »golden age of capitalism« – was in fact the result of the growing influence of popular classes which were able to impose new forms of capital regulation. However, the three great social projects of that time: the welfare state in the West, the planning state in the East and the development state in the South failed all together when the new wave of globalization gained momentum during the 1980s. Instead of a new world order, as is too often claimed, we now live in a period of an extending chaos. And precisely because the contradictions of capitalism are sharper at the end of the century than they were at its beginning, the alternative confronting the 21st century is – more than ever before – »socialism or barbarism«.

THOMAS KOCH: What does social justice mean?

Social justice was a hotly debated issue during the 1998 German parliamentary election campaign. But the then elected »red-green« government devoted itself to the neo-liberal strategy of »globalization« and »saint competitiveness«. Thus it did not meet the expectations of its voters and the issue of social justice remains on the agenda, giving the left-socialist movement more space to maneuver. In his article Thomas Koch discusses both the theoretical essentials as well as the cornerstones of a modern political strategy for social justice. Special attention is given to the remarkable differences in understanding and the expectations connected with the concept of social justice when viewed from Western and from Eastern Germany.

Dietrich Wahl: The Phaeas-syndrom

Ancient Greek and Chinese scholars have been aware politics, morality and social necessities are interdependent within the economic order. Living together in peace and justice requires equality of private property or common ownership of the means of production. This article gives a brief outline of the evolution of this vital problem in human history: The first part concerns pre-modern societies, while the second part is dealing with the modern ›capitalist‹ and ›socialist‹ societies. The problem itself has been varied and deepened in accordance with changing social structures. Alongside this evolution the justifications used by the respective ruling classes have also changed. Egalitarian and socialist concepts have been repeatedly implemented in pre-modern (part 1) as well as in modern societies (part 2). The failures of such communities is no proof that they are unrealistic but rather that this question should be viewed as a challenge and that the question of transformation must be elaborated. Part 2 will be published in October 2000.

WOLFGANG TRIEBEL: »Modern Governance in the 21st Century« with new NATO Strategy and »Bundeswehr« (Armed Forces) Reform?

In June 2000 14 heads of state and government leaders from Europe, North and South America, Africa and Oceania convened in Berlin and declared their will to make the world more peaceful, more socially just and more tolerant through »modern governance in the 21st century«. However, this objective will remain incompatible with practical policies without disavowal of the new NATO strategy and US claims to world domination. The author critically examines the politically determined content of the Bundeswehr employment strategy on the basis of reform concepts proposed by the Weizäcker Commission, the Defense Minister, Scharping, the CDU and General von Kirchbach. Triebel concludes that a real civic society would, above all, require a rejection of warfare, as a political tool, weapons production, as a means to maximize profits, and the promotion non-military means of containment and eventually elimination of the causes of crises and conflicts. Finally, the author states that, in the current situation, the Bundeswehr reform concept submitted by the PDS for public debate is the only realistic program for »modern governance in the 21st century«.

ULLA PLENER: German Workers jailed as »Brandlerists« in Moscow. From the Files of the NKWD

In the 1920s and early 1930s thousands of German specialists and skilled workers immigrated to the Soviet Union and contributed to the ongoing industrialization process. During the »Great Terror« many of them were jailed, put into the GULAG or murdered. Among them were German communists who had been expelled from the German Communist Party (KPD) because they were supporters of the former KPD Chairman Heinrich Brandler. They eventually had re-organized themselves in the KPD (Opposition). The KPD-O members jailed in and after 1936 were glass workers from Thuringia. In their interrogations by GPU officers, they showed self-confidence and remained true to their convictions. Some of them were murdered, others were extradited to Germany where most of them were immediately put into Concentration Camps. Only very few of them survived the Stalinist-Fascist terror.

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