

ROLAND CLAUS

### The Left's Handling of Power

This article corresponds to a lecture held by the author, who is chairman of the PDS Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag, at a conference organised among others by the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in Magdeburg on February 23rd, 2002. Reflecting back on the beginnings of PDS activities in 1990, Claus discusses the demise of the SED (former East German ruling Communist Party) as the point of departure for the new policy of the PDS and proceeds – drawing on his personal experience as »father« of the so called »Magdeburger Model« consisting of the possibility of an minority SPD government being able to govern due to its being tolerated by the PDS (1994 – 2002) – to give his views on the continuing debates around how democratic socialists should handle their role as opposition, on the one hand, and their participation in the governments in Berlin and Mecklenburg – West Pommern, on the other.

WOLF-DIETER NARR

### World Market and Human Rights

In light of the ongoing and, in fact, growing protest campaigns against a neo-liberal and profit driven kind of »globalisation«, Wolf-Dieter Narr – a university political science professor and well-known activist in the movement for democracy and human rights – explores the question of »why today it is the most rational to be a radical critic of the contemporary globalisation model«. In an impressive tour d'horizon, Narr draws on a wide range of arguments supporting his views. Starting with that of the unfulfilled promise of »Liberty, equality and fraternity« that stood at the beginning of the capitalist era, he criticises the splendid reduction of human rights to free market relations, »fair« competition, and the rights (interests) of nations, i.e. governments. These tendencies must be countered – according to Narr – by a return to the concept of human rights based on an understanding of these rights as an indivisible set of fundamental norms that directly and essentially are the property of every individual. Thus all the attempts to create and justify a difference between human rights and democracy must be strictly rejected. Insuring the ability of everyone to make use of these essential rights means at the same time that all must share an adequate proportion of the common wealth, i.e. the precondition for democratic participation is, after all, a just distribution of property and income among all members of the world society.

SHARIT K. BHOWMIK

### Worker Co-operatives and Empowerment of the Marginalized

In his paper the Indian sociologist Sharit Bhowmik attempts to evaluate the role of worker co-operatives in safeguarding employment and production in industrial units that are failing or already shut down. Most of these co-operatives have come into being after the industries were shut down and their workers were left to fend for themselves. The first part of the paper deals with co-operatives as a means for empowering the marginalized sections of the population through their collective efforts. The second part deals with examples of functioning worker co-operatives in tea plantations and iron mines. Even though this paper highlights the positive role of worker co-operatives, it does not attempt to suggest that these organisations are the only solutions for protecting employment and production.

ACHIM TRUBE

### Change of Paradigm in the Welfare State? Critical Annotations to the socio-political Conception of »Activation«

Activating strategies in the social policy are characterized by the principle »Help and Hassle«. This New Labour concept postulates a revised balance of rights and responsibilities; also including negative sanctions aimed at an »effective modification of behaviour« of the recipients of the benefit. This author examines the Activating-

Conception in a sociological and socio-political perspective; in addition, he reflects in this context also on the problems of balanced budgets and benefit fraud. The conclusion of this essay is, that the Activating-Conception tends – in the worst case – to side-step the in social policy general consensus that has been in effect since the founding of the Federal German Republic after World War II. This could entail a high risk, particularly if the state – in view of a six-million-job shortage – pursues the strategy »workfare instead of welfare«, and if the basic welfare payments can only be drawn under the condition, the recipient shows good behaviour, in the manner the governmental demands as if it is »a social offer that you cannot refuse«.

FRIEDHELM WOLSKI- PRENGER:

### Unemployed Projects in the Civil Society

In light of the fact that Germany is short of 6,5 million jobs Friedhelm Wolski-Prenger discusses who is responsible for mass unemployment. He argues that ›blaming the victim‹ is not an adequate approach to resolving unemployment. It is the society – primarily the economy – that is responsible for job-creation. Civil society organizations have struggled, for two decades, with so-called ›Projects for the Unemployed‹ (Arbeitslosenprojekte), against the financial, social and, psychological consequences of unemployment. Initiated by churches, the unemployed themselves, trade unions and – in the former GDR (East Germany) – the Association of Unemployed (Arbeitslosenverband), more than one thousand projects have counseled the unemployed. The author describes civil society projects and pleads for more government support of these projects. The federal government has to assure jobs in the projects and the federal states (Bundesländer) are expected to support the networks of the projects.

THIEB PETERSEN:

### From Labour to Activity

Due to technical progress and lack of demand, developed industrial nations are faced with a growing decline in gainful employment. For society, as a whole, this constitutes an increase in time for productive and self-determined activities, which in the end leads to a transition of the working society into an activity society. Basic requirements for such a new social system are, among other things: a radical redistribution of wage labour among all members of society, a distribution of socially produced wealth which is independent of the amount of individually performed working hours, beginning forms of collective ownership in productive property, and an education system, which supports self-determined action and self-realisation.

ERNST WURL

### On the Power and the Burden of Tradition

In the process of elaborating a new party program the question of how the history and tradition of the party is understood and interpreted is decisive. What needs to be considered is that every tradition has a dual nature: on the one hand, tradition creates identity and sustains a certain understanding of the party's role in society, and on the other, by nature, tradition itself, bears a conservative element. The ›old‹, to a certain extent, wants to continue to survive within the ›new‹. This is why it is of essential importance for the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) to resolutely break with all enduring aspects of Stalinism – i.e. in the perception and consciousness of history; breaking with simplistic interpretations of historical materialism.

HELMUT BOCK

### Inheritance and Tradition: On Historical Thought in the PDS

This text is a critical analysis of a thesis alleging that the PDS is ›for the time being‹ dominated by KPD/SED traditions. The methodical argumentation shows that the PDS, which sees itself as being a ›modern left-socialist party‹, still has to ›overcome‹ traditions of former parties in its history. The text offers a range of important elements of the historical heritage supporting this view, such as Anti-Stalinism, Anti-Fascism and Anti-Imperialism, but also cites more controversial elements like Anti-Capitalism, and criticism of capitalism. Finally an attempt is made to locate the role of the PDS in a capitalist society not having evolved from the October Revolution (as the KPD and SED) but rather from the tremendous changes that have taken place since the 18th and 19th century. Those who have lived and struggled through this history for ›freedom‹ and ›equality‹ – not just as formal rights but as social and real ones –, and also for ›fraternity‹ – understood as solidarity and peace among individuals and peoples –, should be rescued from oblivion, spared the condemnation of the bourgeoisie, and be remembered and live on as part of the tradition of the PDS.

STEFAN BOLLINGER

### The PDS-Program and the crucial experiences of 1989

In his article Stefan Bollinger argues that within the discussion about the new party program of the German Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) at least four events have to be critically but affirmatively addressed from a historical perspective: First: the founding in 1949 of the German Democratic Republic (GDR – East Germany) as a somewhat incomplete and alienated but nevertheless legitimate attempt to establish a non-capitalist and anti-fascist state; second: generally all forms of anti-Stalinism and dissidence; third: the year 1968 as the break-through of a new way of social development caused by the emergence of new productive forces demanding simultaneously an enhancement of democratic participation and fourth: the historical events of 1989, where the majority of the activists involved originally envisaged a reformed socialist and democratic society that would have probably transformed also the Federal Republic (West) Germany.

KAROL KOSTRZĘBSKI

### Right Wing Extremism in Poland

Although right wing extremism is not a new phenomenon in Poland, the re-formation of extremist groups since 1989 has somewhat split and marginalized the ultra-extremist camp. But they are by no means harmless. In the course of his article, the author presents the most important right wing movements in his home country. Of special interest is his description of *Radio Maria* as an ideological and medial centre of highly different but still ultra-conservative (modern) right wing currents. Analysing also the ›traditional‹ right-wingers, it becomes apparent that in Poland extreme political conservatism is less xenophobic and less violent but strongly linked to fundamentalist (catholic) religious beliefs – probably much more than in other European nations. Different from the ›religious‹ right wing fanatics, movements of the ›civilised‹ right try to hide their extremist convictions in order to gain political influence in the parliament as well as in government coalitions. Finally, the author contends that a more general view shows that the political role of the extreme right is fairly modest in Poland.

ANDRZEJ KALUZA

### Polish Immigrants in Germany

Polish speaking people account today for about 2,5 Percent (2 million people) of the population living in Germany. They or their ancestors immigrated into Germany mainly during the period of industrialisation in the 19th century or as a consequence of ›ethnic cleansing‹ following the Second World War, i.e. Polish and German speaking German subjects, who had to leave the Eastern territories that came under Polish

or Soviet control after the war. Today, the Polish minority is spread over the whole of Germany, its membership is highly assimilated and their political activity is rather low. Although there exists an Association of Polish speaking people in Germany, named »Polish Council«, according to the author Andrzej Kaluza Polish immigrants do not constitute a national minority.

LIDIA OWCZAREK

### National Minorities in Poland during the Process of System Transformation

Beginning with a comprehensive overview of the political and cultural situation of national minorities in 20th century Poland, the author proceeds to handle in greater detail the changes that took place in the course of the »revolutionary« events in 1989 and since. She points to the remarkable upswing in political and cultural activities which she considers to be one of the most important of these changes. This could also be illustrated by an »explosion« of the number of newly founded associations of minor ethnic groups – numbering 74 in 1991. This coincides with the creation by the Polish government of a special office for co-operation with national Minorities, which among other activities, provides financial aid to these organisations. National minority associations now have access to print media as well as to radio and television where they go on air with programmes in their native languages. Whereas relations with the German minority are currently developing smoothly – in spite of the 30 percent of the Polish population that views this minority with apprehension – »old« tensions in the Polish population have survived and even have been partially reinforced after 1989 particularly concerning the Ukrainian and Belorussian minorities.

CHRISTIAN FUCHS

### The Meaning of »Progress« in the Writings of Marcuse and Bloch and Information-Capitalism

Progress has traditionally been associated with an increase of productivity and the development of human history. Herbert Marcuse and Ernst Bloch have shown how such linear conceptions of progress fail to explain that in capitalism the ideology of quantitative progress has not brought qualitative human progress, but has resulted in global problems and destructive forces. Marcuse and Bloch do not consider history as automatically progressive. Progress is a possibility, but one that has yet to be established. This view has been strengthened by the emergence of recent theories of chaos and self-organisation. With the rise of modern technologies, the material conditions for social progress – a widening of the realm of freedom – has been reached, but society remains hampered by the permanent capitalist catastrophe and the restrictions on social change.

GOTTFRIED STIEHLER

### Progress and Reaction under State-Socialism

In the vision of Karl Marx, socialism was rooted in the idea that the »means of production must be appropriated by the society«. He was certainly mistaken with his view that this simultaneously means the abolition of commodities and money. In the realities of state-socialism Marx' ideas never experienced a proper practical implementation. Instead of an »appropriation of the means of production« by a self-governing association of individuals, private property has been simply replaced by state property – with crucial damaging consequences. Especially the socio-political superstructure became not only authoritarian but oppressive. A limited and over-regulated sphere of commodities-money-relations hindered in fact economic development. Nevertheless – Stiehlner argues – even this incomplete and in certain regards misguided social system was able to produce a range of social services and security that fundamentally ameliorated the life of ordinary people.