

CHRISTINA THÜRMER-ROHR
On the Silence of Violence / The Destruction of Dialogue

The commitment to reduce tensions between individuals and social groups through dialogue is as fragile as a commitment to insuring human rights. Neither are a universally accepted matter of course accompanying humanity throughout its evolution. They are cultural achievements of social life developing towards pluralism and differentiation. Whereas dialogue and human rights are not ›natural‹ elements of human socialization, violence or force are. The comparative ›advantage‹, the inherent ›power‹ of violence is that it is capable of producing the ›desired‹ results silently and rapidly – its simple and means oppression of the weaker. Dialogue is loud, time consuming, and even requires acceptance of different positions and interests – dialogue aims at mutual understanding. She explains how the policy of violence destroys all attempts by means of dialogue to solve the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In Germany this destruction of dialogue takes the form of every critic of the Israeli war-policy being denounced as an anti-Semite.

GÜNTER KRAUSE
The History of Economic Thought between Mainstream and Alternative

In his article Günter Krause handles the search for alternatives to neoclassical economics. This school of economic thinking represents, beyond a doubt, the so-called mainstream of contemporary economics and contributes enormously to the ideological justification of the global project of neo-liberal capitalism. Reflecting upon the history of economic thought, the author discusses two main topics: Does the history of economic thought offer any valuable and useful intellectual resources for today's process of developing theoretical and practical alternatives? And second: if so, which kind of economic schools or theories could serve as alternative research programs to the neoclassical mainstream? Throughout the history of economic thought many economic ideas and concepts have been developed, that could inspire left-wing economic thinking in helping to create a broad-based economic alternative research program. According Krause there are several signs in contemporary economic theory, indicating a growing call for rejection of the hard core theoretical and methodological assumptions of the neoclassical mainstream and for opening up economics.

JOCHEN WEICHOLD
Golden Remuneration. Allowances and Benefits of Parliamentarians

Parliamentary allowance is no doubt, a democratic achievement. It enables everyone to stand as candidates for elections. In Germany, the remuneration of Parliamentarians at both the federal and regional (Länder) level is based on four pillars: parliamentary allowance, expense allowance, retirement benefits and pension benefits. But this system of allowances and benefits, is often criticized, and for good reason. The inflation of office holder allowances is a breach of the principle of equality of Parliamentarians. The expense allowance is, partly, a term to cover a tax-free additional income. The retirement pension is often not paid in the sense it was intended, and the pension benefits are – compared to what working people get – far out of proportion.

JÜRGEN MEIER
On Bureaucracy and Democracy

It has become very chic for politicians of our prestigious democracy to criticize the bureaucracy. They complain of »crusty regulations« or the »bureaucratizing« of the state. But most of the time, they have only particular interests in mind.

The bureaucracy, the »power of civil service«, came into existence in Europe, with the French Revolution. To create a global market of the bourgeoisie within one nation, it was necessary to introduce national regulations guaranteeing protection from aristocratic tyranny. The principle of equality adhered to by the bureaucracy, derived from the Roman law based on the rights of the individual, against the representatives of the »blue blood«, who considered their superiority to be a divine right by birth. People posing as anti-bureaucrats, are often dreaming of a corporate society.

MATHIAS IVEN

Hermann Hesse in his Correspondence

Hermann Hesse, who unceasingly followed the meaning of self as »poet, seeker, and confessor«, was someone who cultivated individuality like no other. He obviously even saw in it the essential condition for human social existence. July 2, 2002 marked the 125 anniversary of his birth. On this occasion several events and expositions took and are still taking place around the world.

KAY MÜLLER

Farewell to Historical Materialism

In his article Kay Müller replies to an essay by Erhard Crome. In contrast to Crome, Müller regards the so-called economic foundation to essentially be determinant factor of the social superstructure. From his perspective »Stalinism« no longer appears as a general outcome of a socialist society's development but rather was due to special conditions – the backwardness – in Russia. Müller's main argument is that the level of labor productivity remains the most important feature favoring a possible success of socialism. He therefore rejects all attempts to replace this category by »surrogates« such as »self-realization« or »humanness«. Müller, in fact, sees these attempts at replacement as a rejection of historical materialism.

JÜRGEN JOHN

Historical Science in the GDR as Prominent Subject of Research

Research of the GDR in general, and especially of historical science in the GDR are today en vogue. To facilitate this research, all sorts of archives are being opened. In his article John examines mainly two recent works of Martin Sabrow, one of the most prominent experts in the field of historical science in the GDR. Remarkably, contrary to other mostly ideologically biased writings, these two studies by Sabrow – one on the Institute of Historical Science of the East German Academy of Science and a second on the development of historical science in the GDR between 1949 and 1969 – are not only treated fairly but they provide also a wide range of interesting new insights.

Hubert Laitko

Education between Demand and Commerce

Following the publication of the PISA results, education became a very hot political issue in Germany. Nearly every politician in every political party is demanding rapid and effective changes in order to cope with the so-called knowledge-society challenges. In his review Laitko argues that the results of this study could be interpreted in various ways. It could, first of all, be used to demand »more efficient market oriented« educational structures, which would pave the way towards commercialization and increased social differentiation. But the success of the PISA-Leaders demonstrate that a modern and well performing educational system could also be based on less hierarchical and less discriminating structures, enhancing the chances of the socially disadvantaged.