

JOHAN GALTUNG

Rudolf Bahro and New Approaches to the Globalization Crisis

In his lecture to the Conference on Rudolf Bahro in Berlin (June 21-23, 2002); Johan Galtung concentrated mainly on world economic structures, the mechanism of financial economy and presents traits of »Americanism«. His deliberations on fundamental needs, the state of our civilisation, over-production, and peace are in certain aspects very close to those the late Rudolf Bahro elaborated in his Book »Spiritually Brothers«, published in the 1980s. This is an abridged version of this talk.

DIETMAR WITTICH

Key Problem: Political Culture – Deliberations on the Election Results of the PDS

The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) remained far below the five-percent-barrier in German federal elections of autumn 2002 and are therefore represented in the new parliament by only two parliamentarians, who won majorities in their constituencies. Less than 50% of those who voted for the PDS in 1998 gave the PDS their vote in 2002. This tremendous loss of ballots occurred mainly among the PDS' »regular voters« and among sympathisers of leftist politics. To reverse this dangerous trend – Wittich maintains that – the PDS must tackle current socio-economic problems with consistency and offer alternative solutions that can be translated into public policy. Moreover the party must become accessible to all other critical forces and tendencies in the society.

HANS THIE

Projects for the future borrowed from the past

Why does the German Left play such a marginal role in the Federal Republic? What has to be done to re-enter the political arena? In his essay, Hans Thie argues that the German Left is currently incapable of presenting a coherent project with perspective, because its political recipes are largely borrowed from the »golden age« of state-regulated capitalism. To counter neoliberal domination one should not only look to state initiatives but rather seek new forms of freedom, self-determination, co-operation and regionalisation as means of strengthening social justice and ecological sustainability.

PAUL SCHÄFER

The General Elections in 2002 and the PDS-Crisis

From the perspective of the author the defeat of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) in the 2002 German general elections is essentially »home-made«. To a certain extent – Schäfer argues – this result may also be caused by the global crisis of left-wing forces and movements. He discovers yet another reason – an important difference in this election campaign to previous ones is that the PDS was largely ignored rather than attacked by other

political parties. This meant that the PDS was challenged to convince the voters through setting its own agenda. And surprisingly enough, it turns out that there was an amazing deficiency. The proposed political alternatives were either not convincing or insufficiently transmitted. According to Schäfer, the PDS needs above all, to develop an alternative economic concept, that can be within the framework of an alliance become an effective applicable reform alternative.

MARLENE KÜCK Banking Crisis and Market Exit

German banking is facing a grave crisis. Earnings potential is extremely limited because of a decline in securities and a collapse in the business of issuing and consultancy. In addition to limited earnings, banks are confronted with high expenditure and individual value adjustments for loans. Small banks are considered to be particularly at risk. They are being forced from the market by a network (banking and auditing associations, major banks, and financial services regulators). Market exit invariably follows the same pattern, with the auditors of the associations playing a key role. To induce a market exit, they present illogical and arbitrary audit conclusions. Mergers by leading German banks are intended to streamline the market. It is anticipated that remarkable mergers will take place in the foreseeable future.

JOACHIM BISCHOFF The Memoranda – alternatives to the neoliberal economic conceptions

A group of progressive scientists criticize the main issues of neoliberal economic policy since 1975. The objective of this ›Memorandum-Group‹ is, to strengthen the interests of working people in the public discussion on economic problems and to provide proof of means of returning to full employment. The crucial point in the economic debate is the widening gap in the distribution of wealth between the owners of capital and the wage-earning population, which is creating instability in the accumulation process, in the welfare state and in social life as a whole. If we want to achieve a new quality of economic development and social life, we have to develop a political concept for the redistribution of wealth, for the renewal of the welfare state, for an expansion of public services and for the democratisation of the economy.