

ULRICH BUSCH

Agenda 2010 – the German program for social reorganisation

Germany is in the throes of an economic and structural crisis, leaving little hope for a speedy improvement of the situation without strong public intervention in the economic and social spheres. The crisis appears more than likely to worsen further: the nightmares of recession, deflation, mass unemployment and impoverishment dominate the current discussion and pave the way for far-reaching reforms in the economy and the society. The Agenda 2010 is the government's response to that development. But the measures planned in these reforms are socially unbalanced and economically counter-productive in certain aspects. They aggravate social polarisation without enhancing either economic growth or raising employment rates.

THOMAS FALKNER

Politics as an Opportunity

After the recent breakdown of the party's federal presidium, elected in fall 2002, the crisis has taken on proportions that are an existential threat to the party. But the author still sees a chance for the party to re-emerge as a political force in the Federal Republic. The party must take substantial steps to reorganise itself into a truly political party including political integration inside the party itself and inner-party pluralism. In view of the deficits in the social reform discourse in Germany and the creative contributions the socialists can offer to this debate, the author favours a PDS. This would provide the party with a chance to become the most innovative party in the country in the sphere of social affairs.

MICHAEL CHRAPA

Is Party Reform a New Departure?

The Party of Democratic Socialism is facing the beginnings of a severe crisis which it may not survive. The solution of the problem is seen in a party reform that re-establishes the links between the party and the rest of society. Michael Chrapa, a party researcher and sociologist, discusses various possible reform options. He favours a reform from both »the grass roots level« up and »from the upper echelon« down. He also supports the overture toward new strategies, new personnel, the creation of problem awareness and the promotion of enjoyment as well as involvement. He also points to resistance from within the PDS against a reform.

STEFFEN KACHEL

Strained Relations: the PDS and Parlamentarianism

The current conflicts in the PSD are not only about political positioning within the party. They are also about the fundamental political course of the PDS, differences that have been smouldering for quite some time. This is one point on which the author fully agrees with Horst Dietzel (UTOPIE kreativ 149). But he differs with Dietzel on another fundamental issue: he does not consider it an alternative to participate in political disputes within the party, on the one hand, and at the same time reach out to social movements outside the party. When the PDS participates government coalitions the party must virtually square a circle: adapt itself to some degree to the prevailing trends of neoliberal politics and at the same time retain its credibility, creativity and political magnetism. The voters of every party have definite expectations. Leftist

parties, especially, cannot afford to disappoint their voters on many issues or for very long. They have to use what room for manoeuvre they have to institute really conspicuous changes.

HEIKO HILKER:

Political communication in the PDS

It was not necessary to await the electoral debacle of 2002 for it to become clear that the PDS evidently has problems with political communication. The author seeks solutions and takes a critical look at the role of political communication in contemporary society, these deficits in the PDS and basic approaches leading to a strategy for better political communication. He connects his own experiences as a long-standing parliamentarian in the Saxonian State Parliament with analyses from other authors. Hilker writes: »Political communication is a means to an end.« And observes: »If that end is the transformation of society, political communication must be adjusted to being able to reach this goal.«

ERHARD CROME

The PDS – Views on the crisis

The PDS as a political formation is in the midst of a fundamental crisis. After its disastrous performance in the federal elections in 2002, the subsequent party congress in Gera was unable to usher in a new beginning. One factional conflict followed another. Political parties need to nurture their relationships with political elites, party members and the electorate. A party should periodically reaffirm its fundamental position to its core milieu in an unambiguous fashion. This has not been attended to in the past two years. That is the main problem. At the same time, the current situation of globalisation and reduction in public social spending calls for a left oppositional force that is politically and conceptually capable of rising to the levels that the anti-globalisation movements have already achieved. If the PDS does not rise to this challenge, then the left forces in Germany will have to reconstitute themselves on a totally different basis.

REINART BELLMANN, HUBERT LAITKO, KLAUS MEIER:
Justice between generations: linking ecological and social objectives within the realm of sustainability

The concept of »Sustainability« has been disseminated in scientific, political, and public discourse so fast that a theoretical elaboration of its content can hardly keep pace. It attempts to bridge the gap between scientific analysis (of interrelations between human society and natural environment) and ethical imperatives controlling human conduct. The old ethical principle, (social) justice, is deliberately extended to the temporal sequence of succeeding generations. To establish a sound idea of sustainability, it may be crucial to integrate descriptive and normative aspects to form a synthesis. Under capitalist conditions, it would be nearly impossible to define a common normative basis, accepted by all members of society; but by scientifically defining necessary ecological, economical, and social requirements for long-term survival of humanity, a consensus around the compulsory limits on and permissible scope of human activity should be attainable. The paper discusses the interdependency of justice for members of the same generation and justice between succeeding generations.

JOACHIM H. SPANGENBERG

Social sustainability. A integral perspective for Germany

Social sustainability is an integral part and indispensable component of sustainable development as suggested by the Brundtland Commission. European countries have long ignored this fact, and is currently only hesitantly beginning to be applied. Social sustainability has four core themes: education, social security, industrial relations and labour rights. All of these themes face a dual challenge, (with Germany being no exception): through the ongoing globalisation, as well as through the neo-liberal ideological crusade. As a result, social sustainability has been on the decline in most countries, even though this was hardly seen as a hindrance to sustainable development. One need not take a TINA («There is no alternative») attitude. A major research project, funded by the Hans Böckler Foundation, demonstrates that social, economic and environmental alternatives are indeed possible. But this would require a reversal in current policy, halting reliance upon neoliberal policy concepts, which in the last 25 years of conservative government in Germany, have not solved any of the social problems.

GERHARD BANSE

Strategies of sustainable development in the view of the technology risk

To develop strategies for sustainable development, an integrative concept is the point of departure. This concept binds the ecological, economical, social and the institutional-political dimensions together on an equal basis with one another. Sustainability requires also the equality of importance granted to the respect of intergenerative and intragenerative justice. The author includes statements endorsing the concept of justice found in the »Brundtland report«. The author also points to the connection between sustainability and technological development. Crucial is in which social context technology is embedded and what purpose it is to serve. The question to be posed is, how can technology be employed to guarantee more sustainable development. Problems of information, evaluation and utility have to be solved for this to be effective. Technology assessment can be helpful in helping solve these problems.

VOLKER CAYSA

Bloch – not a »rotten dog«

Academic circles often treat Ernst Bloch as a »rotten dog« – characterising his thoughts as old-fashioned and antiquated. In sharp contrast, this author views Bloch as a guiding intellectual force of reflexive modernisation, not only that of »real-socialism«, but of »real-capitalism« as well. Bloch is an element of the modern age, undesirable to those, who concentrate their efforts on maintaining of their proprieted standards. In Bloch's thinking, modernisation has to be integral – including Marxism and Christianity, left and right. Bloch's philosophy is in movement in the tension rich sphere, ranging from Marxist influence to that of Nietzsche.

ROGER BEHRENS

Updating the Non-Simultaneous – Remarks to the logic of complex dialectics

Ernst Bloch, a philosopher of hope, without decreasing his criticism of contemporary conditions, stresses aspects of the subjective factor: the unsettled, manifesting itself as utopian in pre-consciousness, just as the regressive, the reactionary, in the unconscious and in the wrong consciousness. For delving deeper into this approach, Bloch developed, in »Heritage of this time« (1935), his concept of the Non-Simultaneous. This book must also be seen as a complex contribution to the analysis of German fascism.

MICHAEL BRIE

Ernst Bloch's view of the socialism

The decline of Soviet state socialism appeared to signal the end of visions of an anti-capitalist future. Only a few years later, a new movement of global proportions emerged, around the slogan »Another world is possible!« The success of this movement depends, at least partially, on its ability to draw on the lessons of history and to study the socialist legacy. The work of Ernst Bloch is part of that legacy. His theory of a concrete, utopian vision, his reconstruction of emancipation movements and theories from antiquity to the present, his views on history and society from »below« have created one of the 20th century's most valuable contributions to socialism and communism. Knowledge of his complicated affiliation with Marxism-Leninism is a condition for avoiding new traps of anti-emancipatory structures.

JÜRGEN JAHN

Stolen Years. The Life of Bernhard Steinberger.

Bernhard Steinberger (1917-1990) is mainly known to the public in the context of the Wolfgang Harich trials in 1957. But Steinberger's fate stretches far beyond. This essay furnishes an insight into Steinberger's life, as well as into his suffering from his conviction in 1956 to his rehabilitation in 1990. Decades of humiliation, repression and political exclusion are mingled with years of academic achievement. For the first time, an attempt is made to analyse all available documents concerning his life and work for a contribution to the research of contemporary history.

WOLFRAM ADOLPHI

Thinking in Denial

In January 1991, Hans Voelkner received an »Open Letter« written by the Kurt-Schumacher-Kreis warning him not to publish a volume of memoirs. These were memoirs of victims of Stalinism in post-war Germany, both in the Soviet Occupied Zone and the GDR. The reason for the warning is Voelkner's having been a communist and a Stasi-agent. What the »Open Letter« did not mention is that Voelkner was, himself, also one of the victims of Stalinism, having been imprisoned in Bautzen from 1949-1955. The author illustrates Voelkner's route through life as the son of communists who sacrificed their lives for the work of the famous »Red Orchestra« antifascist intelligence organization. Hans Voelkner was first imprisoned in fascist Germany, then in post-war France, later in East Germany and finally again in France – as a spy for the GDR. Since 1989 he had waged an intense campaign for the rehabilitation of the victims of Stalinism.