

MARK SOLOMON

The »Barack Obama Phenomenon« and the US Left

Even though, at the beginning, the US Left had serious concerns about an unconditional support of Barack Obama's candidacy, this changed after it became clear that Obama had tapped into a fierce yearning for thoroughgoing change after eight years of the most destructive and reactionary administration in the US history. The Obama campaign took on the character of a mass social movement driven largely by young people. Thus Obama was increasingly perceived by left forces as a crucial element in an emerging »progressive majority« potentially capable of ending right-wing dominance and decisively shifting US politics to the center-left. But soon after becoming the Democratic nominee, Obama appeared to move to the political center. In particular he appeared to back away from an unqualified commitment to end US military involvement in Iraq. This caused disillusionment and feelings of betrayal among some supporters, especially those on the left. However, representing the »realist« wing of the ruling class, Obama's presidency would offer an opening to progressive forces to press for a far reaching transformation of US global policies. He will likely opt for substantive change if afforded the political space by a mass movement demanding it. Given the stakes in the coming presidential election, for the sake of the country and the world it is a challenge that must be met.

MARIAN KRÜGER

A Project to Remove State Control

Remarks Concerning the Federalism Reform II Debate

The Federalism Reform II is focused on state debt. The Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democrats (SPD) are seeking a profound transformation of the financial system. They want to turn back the results of the major financial reform in 1969. The CDU and the Free Democrats (FDP) want more competitive federalism. In this article the Federalism Reform II is assessed as a policy to dismantle the federal social welfare state. The possible effects of the Federalism Reform II on budgetary policy are discussed from the perspective of the possible consequences of the introduction of so-called »brakes on debts« in budgets at the federal and regional levels. The author also pleads that the need to become active to limit state debts should be taken seriously. But he says that the approach chosen by the coalition is not the one that can provide and broaden the margin of maneuver for the regional authorities, particularly for the states, in their budgetary and financial policies.

CHRISTOPH JÜNKE

Six Theses on the Long Shadow Cast by Stalinism

Democratic achievements and traditions are being called into question and scaled back by those who govern and rule. Principal fundamental values of the Enlightenment have been drastically shaken and undermined. This could mean a new day for socialism, were it not for the experiences with historical Stalinism and the »long shadow« it casts. During the 20th Century, the synthesis of freedom and socialism had been unsuccessful. More recently, left voices denigrating democracy are again being heard. These show indications of philo- or neo-Stalinism. Only when people in their daily lives become aware that socialism means more democracy than capitalism, a breakthrough to socialism will become possible.

MARTIN BRAND
**The European Good Neighbor Policy –
 A Neo-Liberal Project?**

Now that the European Union has expanded eastward, the former Soviet republics of Belarus, the Ukraine and Moldavia share common borders with the European Union. The EU has reacted to this new geographical constellation with its European Good Neighbor Policy, which ranks among various projects of a neo-liberal remodeling of Europe. Market and competitive oriented reforms are being exported eastward through a mixture of stipulations, incentives, sanctions and socialization, accompanied ideologically by demands for »good governance.« This is how the EU's neoliberal hegemony is being extended beyond its borders.

ASTRID BÖTTICHER
**Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism, a Comparison
 of Basic Concepts**

Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are both characterized by extremist positions. Even though based on varying concepts of the enemy, they function along similar patterns and represent a threat to the basic liberal national order. They oppose the ubi bene ibi patria concept and reject an open society. »The Muslim« and »the Jew« are respectively considered to be the absolute enemy. But through the concept of a »domestic enemy« it cannot be expected that the perspective of Islamophobes and anti-Semites will change.

HORST BETHGE
Green Script – Black Text

The Black – Green (Conservative – Greens) Coalition in Hamburg – the first such coalition at the federal state level in Germany – has just marked its first 100 days as a coalition government. On this occasion the author presents an analysis of the coalition contract and a preliminary assessment. It is evident that the image of the Green Party, being an ecological, socially progressive party, has long since lost its foundation in reality. The CDU and GAL (Green – Alternative List) sought particularly to form this coalition, because they share essential – conservative – positions in federal state policy. Therefore the most important lesson to be learned from this first 100 days of a conservative coalition is that extra-parliamentary left-wing pressure must be developed and reinforced.

MARIO KESSLER
**»Therefore Let's Start at the beginning«. Three New
 Books and a Film By and About Theodor Bergmann**

Theodor Bergmann (born 1916) was a member of the youth league of the anti-Stalinist Communist Party of Germany – Opposition (KPDO). The KPDO, under the leadership of August Thalheimer and Heinrich Brandler, saw itself as the ideological heir of Rosa Luxemburg. The KPDO had been much more precise in its analysis of Fascism than the official KPD (Communist Party of Germany). When the Comintern imposed a sectarian course on the KPD, Brandler, Thalheimer, and their comrades went public with their opposition, which led to their expulsion from the KPD. Bergmann, one of the youngest members of the KPDO, had spent many years of exile in Palestine, Czechoslovakia, and Sweden, before he was able to teach at the University of Stuttgart-Hohenheim. A professor for international comparative agrarian politics, he also became an expert in the field of labor history and contemporary problems of socialism. All of his activities are documented in three recently published books and a film available on DVD.