

HANS-JÜRGEN URBAN

Time for a Political Reorientation.

Trade Unions and Hopes of a Social Europe

Prompted by structural shifts in the European integration process, the previously Europe-friendly attitude of the German trade unions is beginning to waver. If one seeks the causes of the debate which has been set in motion on the future of trade union policy on Europe, recent judgments by the European Court of Justice and the EU's evident shortcomings with regard to coping with the financial and economic crisis readily present themselves.

On closer examination, it becomes clear that the trade unions are facing a far-reaching strategic reorientation with regard to their Europe policy. A naïve pro-Europeanism needs to be superseded by a pro-European critique and a new, reflective realism on Europe. This will have to acknowledge that the advancing undermining of social standards, as well as the erosion of trade union organizational and bargaining power, are not merely ephemeral, but structurally embedded in the political economy of the current integration phase, as well as the institutional design of the EU. Furthermore, any prospect of revitalising European trade unions depends on a fundamental, socio-economic reprogramming of the integration process. Research findings from the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne could be of considerable help in this reorientation. This applies, in particular, to analyses of the causes of the asymmetry between positive and negative integration, the institutional joint decision-making trap, and the thesis of the radicalisation of Single Market integration.

Within the framework of their debate the trade unions should hone in on the lack of progress with regard to social policy regulation and the flagrant democratic deficits in the system of European institutions as the focus of their change of strategy. Appropriate reform strategies can be inferred from the critical, academic, and political debates on integration. These include: institutional reform to ensure fundamental welfare state institutions in the member states and the expansion of democratic channels of influence for European citizens with regard to the basic direction of the integration process; strategies for the discursive democratisation of the EU through the active promotion of a critical European public opin-

ion, as well as measures towards economic consolidation and boosting growth, employment, and environmental modernisation in Europe. For the trade unions, it is important for their survival in this context that they do not fall prey to any illusions concerning specific interests and the balance of power, not to mention the general direction of development of the current integration process. They must also be willing to acknowledge that, if there is to be any realistic chance of ending their loss of power and of political revitalization, the integration process must be realigned.

ROBERT CHR. VAN OUYEN:

Continuing Hostility to Europe? The Political Stance Underlying the German Constitutional Court's Lisbon Decision

The German Constitutional Court's Maastricht decision was »hostile to Europe« because of the reservation of sovereignty and understanding of democracy which it formulated. A completely new generation of judges has now taken over and, after the decision on the European arrest warrant, this was a landmark ruling on Lisbon. The general perception that the judgment is »Euro-friendly,« however, is wide off the mark. The fact is that, here too, the Constitutional Court remains in thrall to its political stance of »liberal-conservative statism«: nation state, sovereignty, and democracy are regarded, in this respect, as virtually a mutually reinforcing »trinity« and, by means of the traditional distinction between a confederation of states based on international law and the constitutional federal state, are imposed as a kind of permanent framework on the integration process. With this theory of the state the Constitutional Court, posing as »guardian of the nation state [*Staatsvolk*],« has turned its back on a more differentiated and more »Euro-pean« view.

GÖTZ NEUNECK:

Globalizing Nuclear Zero:

Is a World without Nuclear Weapons Really Attainable?

The establishment of a nuclear weapons-free world returned to the political agenda as a realistic option with US President Obama's speech in Prague on April 5, 2009. The resuscitation of arms control and disarmament seems feasible. Articles by high-ranking politicians from the USA, Great Britain, Italy, and Norway have kick-started a debate which not only must lead to a revision of the doctrines, arsenals, and weapons of the Cold War, but should also work out the conditions, instruments, and conflict-resolution mechanisms of a world without nuclear weapons. The twenty-first century will confront humanity with chal-

lenges of its own and the danger of annihilation by nuclear weapons must be excised. Nuclear weapons cannot be deployed under any circumstances and against states which have their own nuclear capability they have, at best, a deterrent function. Worldwide abolition of nuclear arsenals would strengthen global security

JÜRGEN BÄTZ

Progress in the Nuclear Crisis?

Iran's Domestic Instability as an Opportunity for the West

Both economy and society in Iran are, at present, severely weakened, for a number of reasons. This represents an opportunity with regard to the international negotiations on Iran's controversial atomic program.

The Shi'ite theocracy can by no means be described as an historically stable regime. The first three decades of the Islamic Republic have been characterized by war, unrest, shifting loyalties, and abrupt changeovers in the presidency. In this way, a regime has emerged whose power elite fears change of any kind and whose first instinct is to deploy the security forces and the judiciary to tackle opponents, both supposed and real.

However, the country's economic base appears increasingly under threat of erosion. The depressed oil price has made a big hole in the budget and mismanagement, corruption, and sanctions are doing the rest. Although it has the second largest oil and gas reserves in the world, extraction of these valuable raw materials is continuing to decline in Iran due to lack of investment. Deficient refinery capacities mean that the country is forced to import 40 percent of its gasoline at world market prices. Domestic sale of this gasoline at highly subsidized prices costs the state billions of dollars a year. These subsidies, instigated primarily by President Mahmud Ahmadinejad and amounting to about one-third of GDP, are also stoking inflation.

The Islamic Republic's real Achilles heel, however, is the young. Around two-thirds of Iran's population of 72 million are under the age of 30. They are demanding more of a say and more freedom. The struggles about make-up, headscarves, smoking water pipes, the omnipresent satellite dishes, the creeping removal of taboos about sexuality, or the fact that Iran has the highest internet density in the Middle East are only the outward signs of this rebelliousness. The desire for freedom of millions of Iranians, which came out into the open with mass protests nationwide after the controversial presidential election in June, has plunged the regime into its severest crisis since the 1979 Revolution.

Hundreds of thousands of policemen, soldiers, militiamen, and Revolutionary Guards have imposed calm on the streets since the election. Among those who hold the power, however, batons are no longer of much use. The opposition

is not backing down and the ruling elite, both the political and the religious is clearly split. The tide of criticism which, since the election, simply will not recede, even in the conservative camp – and not excluding high-ranking Ayatollahs – threatens both Ahmadinejad and spiritual leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

The regime is therefore under enormous pressure. The security forces can enforce peace on the streets, but the unrest continues to bubble beneath the surface. In these circumstances, Teheran could use the negotiations on the atomic program as an opportunity to re-establish itself. For the international community a domestically weakened Ahmadinejad is the ideal negotiating partner. The so-called Group of Six must make Iran an offer than it cannot easily refuse. This must include economic incentives, a comprehensive security guarantee, and the civil use of nuclear energy under strict international monitoring. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany must put up a united front and, if need be, threaten further sanctions, including import restrictions on gasoline, which would hit Iran hard. An Iran with nuclear arms would not be an absolute catastrophe, but it would not make the world a safer place, especially given Iran's inherent political instability.

FRIEDRICH BUTTLER:

Globalization of the Community of Solidarity – The Feasibility of Basic Social Security in Poor and Emerging Countries

Expressed in terms of five steps, the concept of basic social security for all must, first, be viewed in the context of the target of halving absolute poverty worldwide. The context is self-evident. Social security can make a sustainable contribution to reducing both relative and absolute poverty.

The same – secondly – does not apply to economic growth and the alleviation of poverty, however. The notion that »the rising tide lifts all boats« is just not supported by the facts. In order to make the potentially positive development effects of globalization sustainable it must, by all means, be complemented by a social dimension.

The »three worlds of welfare capitalism,« thirdly, had paradigmatic significance for various transformation processes after the break-up of the Soviet Union. From a global standpoint, they turn out to have a strong European/North Atlantic orientation and therefore, in comparison to the global population, constitute small worlds. A switch to a global perspective is therefore necessary.

Fourthly, the concept of basic social security (»social floor«) in poor and emerging countries has therefore been introduced. Model costings of their financial feasibility have been carried out by the ILO.

Finally, if the millennium goal of halving poverty worldwide is to have any realistic chance, if not by 2015, at least shortly thereafter, then a global solidaristic

effort will be required. It would only be fitting if, in the context of globalization, the scope of the community of solidarity needed for basic social security was also globalized and, at the same time, the capacities of families, groups, communities, and national economies were increased, in order to enable them to contribute to the highest extent possible. Social and economic development are inseparable.