

Michael Brie (ed.)

The Left party in Germany Origins, Aims, Expectations



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Preface: The German federal elections of September 18 2005 – Toward a new party system

In 1990, it had been invoked, in the 90th, on the open lists of the PDS it was anticipated, with the foundation of the Electoral Alternative Work and Social Justice and the electoral successes of the PDS in the year 2004, it seemed to get closer, with the elections to the federal parliament in September 2005, it has taken concrete shape: the project of a strong Left party in Germany. Since the foundation of the USPD, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany, in April 1917, as the counter-force to a majority-SPD that said yes to the war, nothing like that has existed in this country: a strong left beyond Communists and Social Democrats.

On September 18, 2005, at the elections to the German Federal parliament, the Left Party.PDS received 8.7% of the votes and entered the new parliament with 54 deputies. In this way, it has shaken up the political relationship of forces in the Federal Republic in a lasting way. In 2002, it was precisely the failing of the PDS to take the five-percent hurdle that permitted chancellor Schröder the continuation of the Red-Green coalition. On September 18, 2005, however, the parliamentary relationships have changed. The Left Party is, with a gain in votes of 4.7% (!), the real winner of the election.

The Left Party disputes the SPD the pre-eminence among the Left, becomes the pioneer for social justice in Germany, stands for a change of direction away from neoliberalism and away from a steady militarisation of foreign policy. It was chosen disproportionately by unemployed and by workers. It incorporates the hope for a new economic and social policy, which enjoys great backing in the population, but which is completely alien to the political, economic, and intellectual “élites” of the country. The Left Party, already since the moment of its appearance, still as a “spectre”, has begun to change the political landscape of the Federal Republic.

The journey that the so colourfully mixed Left begins with this Party project will hopefully resemble the journey, of which Ernst Bloch wrote with great anticipation in

his young years that it should be a journey of departure, aimed at a point of upheaval: “Pain, darkness, crackling ice, calm of the seas and happy journey lie around that spot. Where it is, there rises, when breakthrough succeeds, the country, where nobody has been yet, yes, that has not even been yet itself. And that needs man, wanderer, compass, depth in the land at the same time.”

The present book analyses this project of a new Left Party in the following steps:

First: The book starts with the analysis of the electoral results of the Left Party only a few days back at the date of publication. The structural composition and the motives of the votresses and voters are presented. The strategic goals that follow from this important Left victory are analysed, because the actual tasks of the Left Party will still lie ahead, if it really wants to change the Federal Republic in a more social, democratic and peace-oriented direction.

Second: The project of a new Left Party has three origins – (1) broad circles of the population, who were looking for an alternative to neoliberalism, social movements and trade unions orienting themselves towards something new; (2) the Left Party.PDS, as well as the (3) Electoral Alternative and Social Justice (WASG). From these forces, there can emerge the substance of a “counter-force” – a power that can challenge the predominance of the neoliberal power block. A brief chronology of the project is included.

Third: In what follows, three goals of a Left Party project are spelled out – (1) an economic and social policy of social justice and sustained development instead of all-out capitalisation and privatisation, (2) the transition to participative democracy instead of authoritarian elite dominance, and (3) the shaping of the European Union as realm of peace, democracy, freedom and equality instead of new wars, build-down of democracy and social cleavages and exclusion.

Fourth: The project of the new Left Party enjoys a support that is nourished by many hopes. How can these hopes not be disappointed? What strategic challenges must be mastered? This book tries to answer this, first, by six pointed theses, aimed at trying to disabuse the actors of the new Left party and the movements of all traditional complacency, and then by a historical analysis of the project of the Left Party in the light of the great historical tendencies, the current main conflict of Germans society and strategic conclusions for the Left party.

Fifth: The project of a Left Party assumes firm contours at precisely the moment, where the (West) German class compromise of the post-war period has ultimately been rescinded and this to the benefit of strengthening the power of capital and the imposition of a “neoliberal counter-reform”. This great social break, which announced itself in the way and form of the unification of the two German states, is the point of departure for the understanding of the project of the Left Party.

Sixth, the editor has taken the liberty to collect and present excerpts from speeches and articles, which are supposed to allow the reader to more easily form his or her own picture of the extended media discussion on the left party project. In this way, the exciting normality of such changes in the party system is supposed to become clearer.

Seventh, a few selected texts that can help to better understand the background or environment, are rendered in full or excerpts.

Eight, a few historical and/or complementary texts already exist in English or will be available soon to enable further reading. The German-reading public is also referred to the magazine *Sozialismus*, which continues to provide broad coverage of the issue, and of course to the publications of the *Rosa-Luxemburg-Foundation*.

At the end the reader will find some explanations of events, organisations, persons and abbreviations helpful to understand better the papers given here and brief information about the authors of them.

Last but not least, the editor wants to thank Carla Krüger, who accepted the arduous and comprehensive work of translation and contributed by critical remarks to the improvement of the manuscript.

These are the points of emphasis of this small book, presented by authors, who – during a hectic time, often themselves committed directly in the project of the Left Party – declared themselves ready to submit contributions to this book. As the editor, I want to thank them. What Rosa Luxemburg said with view to social democracy, today holds just as much for the project of a new Left Party: “The lively substance of world history, in spite of a social democracy, remains the popular masses, and only when a lively process of exchange exists between the organisational kernel and the popular masses, when the same pulse beat animates the two, then also social democracy can reveal itself capable of great historical actions.”



The banner of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation at the opening of the Fifth World Social Forum in Porte Alegre, January 2005

Berlin, September 25 2005

Michael Brie

I. The Elections of September 18, 2005 and its Consequences (by Michael Brie)

On the day after the elections, the German company *Siemens* announced the dismissal of 10,000 of collaborators. The employees of *Volkswagen* and *Daimler-Chrysler* also have to count on mass firings. The economic misery of low growth, high unemployment and redistribution of wealth from below to the top continues. Germany's daily life has not changed as a result of the federal elections. Only the political consequences of this social and economic development have become apparent.

The Left Party – a lonely winner

The decision of the women and men citizens of September 18, 2005 is clear: None of the two camps, which fought each other so heavily during the campaign, neither CDU/CSU and FDP nor SPD and Greens have a majority. Neither of the two sides can supply chancellor and government in this constellation. There is mainly one obstacle to that: the entry of the Left Party.PDS with 8.7% and 54 deputies into the Bundestag. It is the party that has won the most – in votes and in seats in the parliament. As Attac Germany declares, "Both neoliberal camps have lost". The large parties, for the first time in the history of the Federal Republic, have landed at only around 35 percent and together have no more than 70% of the votes. At the same time, all three smaller parties have received over 8% federation-wide. Their role in the party system has been strengthened.

While the big parties continued to lose their capacity to simultaneously show profile *and* to integrate the large social interests as popular parties, the smaller parties each for itself have a clear message: the FDP stands for a radicalisation of the market-oriented reforms, the Greens for the continuation of ecological restructuring and the Left Party.PDS for social justice: "Here the ... interpersonal networks, consisting solely of men, of the Federal German top executive floors, who have helped the FDP, there the losers in the process of

neoliberal restructuring, who have chosen the Left Party as welfare state protective power of their fragile existences." (Franz Walter, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, September 20, 2005).

The arithmetic majority in the new Federal parliament is a left majority of SPD, Greens and Left Party.PDS. As Wolfgang Storz notes, also in *Frankfurter Rundschau* of September 20: The voters and voters have "elected by a majority of hardly over 50% a basic orientation, which demands of politics not to play out three central points against each other: a competitive economy united to a social and ecological policy and a well-performing state, setting the framework for that." It should be added: It is also a majority for an independent foreign policy, sceptical towards military interventions of the German armed forces abroad. This structural majority for the left, of which the chairman of the Metal trade union (IGM) also speaks, is not a political majority yet, however. This is because the "Left" is deeply split over the direction of future reforms.

The gap between SPD and Greens, on the one hand, and the Left Party on the other, lies precisely in the fact that the Left Party, as well as many trade unionists and activists of social movements and not so few women and men citizens are of the opinion that the economic policy pursued by Gerhard Schröder since 1999 is not only antisocial and unecological, but also wrong economically. While CDU/CSU and FDP criticise the SPD for its half-hearted reforms, the Left Party criticised that these reforms and even more so those that the CDU/CSU and FDP had announced in their electoral programmes go into the *wrong direction* entirely. While the two big camps fought a battle rather about the speed and radicalism of the neoliberal reforms already in full course, it was the Left Party, which challenged all other parties to a struggle over direction. That will make the Left Party lonely in the new Federal parliament, however. No party wants

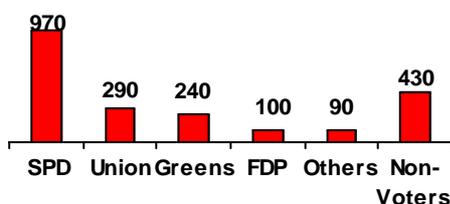
to form a coalition with it, and it cannot do it either, as long at least as there is the danger that the course of the Agenda 2010 is offensively pursued.

The relatively high result of the SPD as compared to the results of the last couple of months (up from 28%) – almost at par with the CDU/CSU – is owed to the circumstance that Schröder basically led a left electoral campaign, oriented towards social justice as compared to the policy of deregulation, privatisation and continued redistribution from below to the top that he had actively articulated up to then. He was in a position to achieve that this policy was associated above all with FDP and CDU/CSU. The CDU and CSU have failed in their function as popular parties and completely ignored the social question. It was not even conservatism by heart but only by calculator.

Who voted for the Left Party?

Two parties could clearly increase their share of votes – the FDP and the Left Party. The FDP gained 1.1 million votes, the Left Party roughly 2.2 million. The FDP gained almost exclusively from the CDU/CSU and thereby robbed it the possible clear advantage before the SPD. These were voters, who wanted clarity, a clear focus on a consequent neoliberal reform policy. The Left Party, by contrast, was the only one to gain voters from all the parties and was also the only one able to mobilise non-voters. (Graph 1)

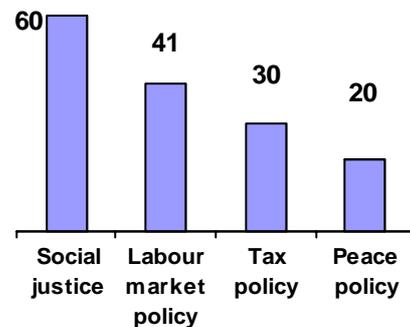
Graph 1: Voter shifts to the benefit of the Left Party (in thousands) (<http://stat.tagesschau.de>) from the following groups:



The reason for this turn of 4 million of women and men citizens, on the whole, to the Left Party was relatively simple – its position in favour of social justice. For sixty

percent of the voters and voters of the PDS this was the decisive reason for their votes (Graph 2), in the same way that it was the economy for 56 percent of the FDP voters and ecology for 52% of the Greens.

Graph 2: Decisive topics for voters of the Left Party in percent

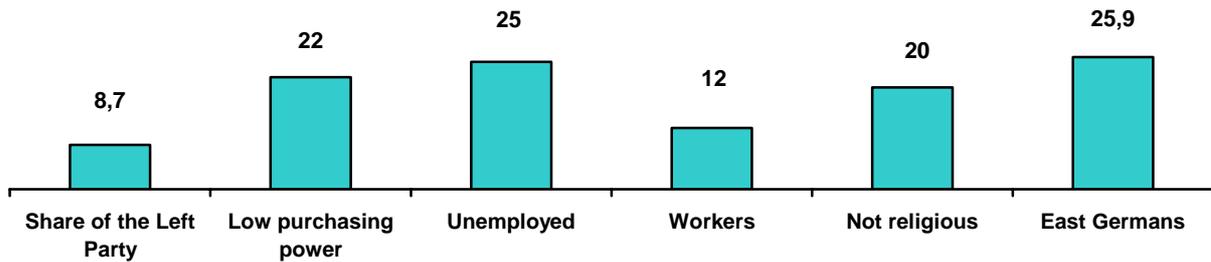


(<http://stat.tagesschau.de>)

The huge losses for the CDU/CSU (down by 10% in comparison with earlier opinion polls of July 2005) were due to the fact that while it was able to occupy the topic of general economic development and competence better than the SPD, it lost reputation by being identified as the “party of social cold” and was left in the pinch by the workers, who had in former years after 1998, when Schröder came to office, turned away from the SPD and towards the CDU. The Left Party, who had enjoyed an approval rating of up to 13% only in July, also lost voters back to the SPD. On Election Day, 42% saw the guarantor of social justice in the SPD, 28% in the CDU, and 10% in the Left Party. The two other parties were not associated with social justice at all.

What social interests now stand behind the vote for the Left Party? First of all, it turns out that it remains in almost every respect within the social average: somewhat fewer older people but somewhat more people between 45 and 59. They are represented in all educational groups, even if slightly above average in the upper ones. In the service sector, in industry and in agriculture, 8-9% respectively voted for the Left Party. Somewhat more men than women decided to vote left.

Graph 3: Share of the second vote of the Left Party in particular social groups
(<http://stat.tagesschau.de>)



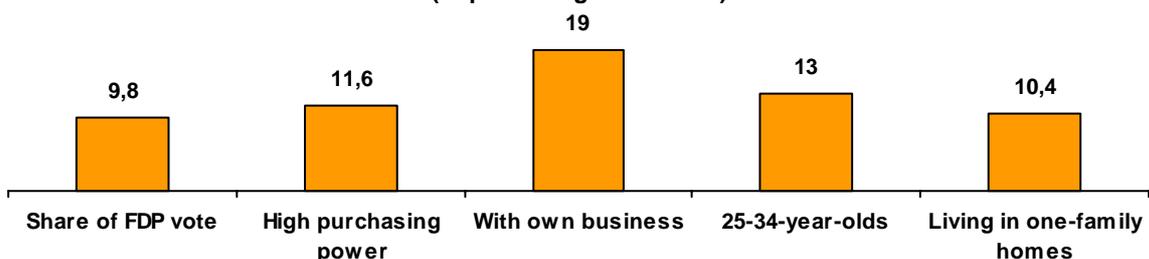
And nevertheless, there are a number of grave and significant deviations of the voters and voters of the Left Party from the average of the voting population (see Graph 3). The voters and voters of the PDS come clearly disproportionately from groups with low purchasing power, from unemployed and workers. Many of them are not religiously affiliated. And one should also not forget one additional detail: The PDS received 25.4 percent of the votes in the East and 4.9% in the West. The former border between GDR and FRG is still visible. A certain exception is made by the Saar, Lafontaine's home country, where the Left Party received 18.5% of the vote (see Graph 5). The share of those, who in the age from 35 to 49 are particularly hard-hit by social problems is also above average.

Left Party is the mirror image of the voters of the FDP, who rather have a high purchasing power, many of them being self-employed, with their own business, who are in the full swing of their social ascension and live in their own house (Graph 4).

Success creates an obligation

The Left Party is lonely in the parliament. It represents social groups nobody wants to hear about. It represents positions, which in the name of justice demand a policy that would place the economy under the primacy of a social policy, and of which these expect simultaneously increases in democracy, welfare and security for the large majority of the population. Yet, neither is its position in the German party system secured, nor has it fulfilled its real tasks up to now. Up to now, it has only created first preconditions for doing that. Let me men-

Graph 4: Share of the FDP of the second vote in particular social groups
(<http://stat.tagesschau.de>)



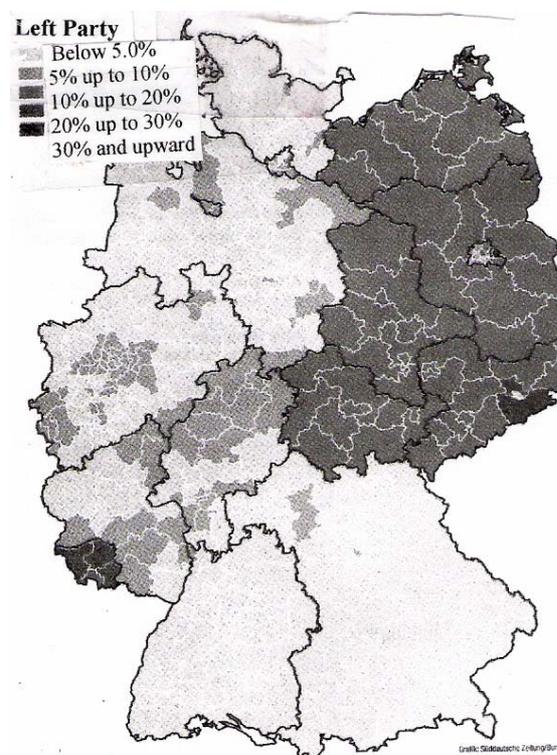
The voters and voters of the Left Party are thus, on the one hand, relatively equally represented in almost all population groups, above proportion even in those with high education. Yet, along the axis poor-rich, the "welfare and enjoyment gap" (Franz Walter), they represent in a special way the bottom of society. They are those, whom the SPD has left in the lurch in its search for the "new middle". This social structure of the voters of the

tion the three most important tasks: the unification of Left Party.PDS and WASG, the working out of a convincing alternative reform agenda, and the struggle for hegemony in society.

First: The most important task in the immediate future is a unification of Left Party.PDS and WASG under inclusion of many, who up to now are anchored in none of the two parties. While the leaderships of the two parties already sit in one

fraction in the Federal Parliament, the *Bundestag*, while its members and sympathisers already campaign together, while women and men citizens can hardly distinguish them any longer, they are after all organisationally independent and can even run against one another at regional elections. In a few months, hardly a year, there is a need for an unification, emerging from a broad discussion process of programme, strategy and statute and which is at the same time so attractive for many Left people that they will participate in it in one or the other way.

Graph 5: The voters of the Left Party according to regions



Second: The Left Party has obtained an electoral success, but it is a small party. It was elected mainly for its Being Against It, for its protest, for its rejection of the neoliberal reforms by SPD, CDU/CSU and FDP. Yet, with that, it is alone in the parliament. Of course, the fact that there is a formal majority for parties, who are linked with social justice more than CDU/CSU and FDP speaks in favour of the fact that the refusal of neoliberalism has a majority in society. However, this majority still does not get effective in the parliament. And it is neither stable, nor is it linked to concrete projects of social, ecological and democratic reconstruction - projects which would

mean a transition to another direction of development. Even among its adherents, the Left Party is only perceived on the field of social justice – and even there to only 19%! – as a party “able to solve the problems”.

Which is the central problem the Left Party should devote to? It is, in my opinion, the problem of social disintegration and the evolution of a new class society, where life chances (education, work, income, health etc.) are distributed according to social origin and position again. Already now, Germany is the country, where more than elsewhere in Europe, it is the social place of their parents, which decides on whether the children get a high school diploma and study at the university, or whether they break off school and do not get professional training. The vision of the Left should be a new social integration that guarantees to each and everyone the access to the goods of a free and self-determined life.

How can an alliance be forged between the performance-oriented modern groups of the informational age and those social groups that are reduced to low-qualified employment or are completely excluded? Where is the bridge between those, who are active members of a world society and global economy and those, who have become modern serfs and maids? Are there projects that promise the middle and the bottom of our society new and better life possibilities? Are reforms possible, which lead out of the economic stagnation, create social security, secure the future and offer the East of Germany a new chance.

Important corner stones of such a reform alternative are known (and in part spelled out in this brochure, see in particular the contribution by Dieter Klein): extension of public services especially in the area of education, health and infrastructure, a poverty-resistant basic security, the introduction of minimal wages and general increase of the wage level, measures of active social integration, a programme of comprehensive ecological restructuring. However, these individual projects have not yet elaborated into a socially persuasive and sufficiently fascinating proposal for a alternative reform project.

The *third task* of the Left Party in the process of founding is even more complicated. The actual force and the actual task of the project of an all-German Left Party do not lie in the parliament but outside. The engaged battle for high electoral results should not make us forget that the most important venue of struggle is society. And only if its protagonists have that constantly before their eyes, will there be a chance at all. Neither the number of members and activists, women and men, very small in a country of 80 million, nor the number of voters and also not the strength in the parliaments ever constituted the sole force of the Left. The urgently necessary and completely indispensable this is, the less it means in times of crisis. One only has to remind oneself, how terribly the strong Bebelian social democracy failed in 1914, how the SPD, which came to power again in 1998, after 16 years, instead of "innovation and justice" realised multiple social regress and even more injustice.

The power of neoliberalism resides in no way in the German Federal Parliament or other parliaments. It only utilises it for the optimisation of general political conditions. It relies on the strength of international financial capital, the real relationships of today's globalisation that make capital ever stronger and the people and the wage-dependent ever weaker. It is strong because the majority of the population, while it refuses the goals (privatisation, stronger social pressure, lowering of social standards etc.) and the results of current politics (growing unemployment, sinking wages and pensions, growing burdens for health, education etc.), sees no feasible alternatives. The worst regime, however, can exist as long as it seems without alternatives. The contemporary crisis of neoliberal policy is still a crisis *within* the hegemony of neoliberalism.

The force of the Left Party should be focused on becoming a part and driving force of a comprehensive formation of forces, which is in a position of changing

the relationship of forces in Germany and in the European Union. The first step to that is the development of the democratic and liberating capacity to a principal conflict with the ruling class and its neoliberal ideology. This, the trade unions, the social movements, the non-governmental organisations and mainly also the Left Party will have to let themselves be told.

Left politics has to become radical in the sense of a battle for the beginning of steps towards a transformation leading beyond neoliberalism and capitalism. And a first step towards a process of long-lasting radical reforms is the development of a common programme of actions, as was decided in initial inklings in the declaration of social movements at the First Social Movements in Germany in Erfurt at the end of July of this year (see part IV).

The construction of anti-neoliberal reform majorities is the most important task to which the Left must commit; everything else has to be subordinated to that task. That also means to withdraw to the adaptation to the current conditions and to the integrational force of political and parliamentary systems by way of developing original strategies and building up counter-power and by creating own public forums and by self-organisation. Without these preconditions, the Left will never seize power, but its representatives will at best participate in a government, whose hard-core programme is prescribed to them by others.

Only if a broad social reform majority outside of the parliaments unites with a stable reform majority in the parliaments, when the readiness to fight out the social and democratic conflict is so strong that a change of direction is also supported broadly and actively in society, when the Left has become hegemonic in civil society, the most important present task of the Left Party will be fulfilled. Only then the gates can be opened to move beyond capitalism.

II. The Origins

Citizens searching for alternatives (by Michael Brie)

In the “Golden 70s” of the 20th century, the world of the old Federal Republic still seemed to be intact. As a comprehensive study of the West German élites showed, these enjoyed the confidence of the majority of the population, which left them their power on a simple premise: that there existed a consensus on value and politics between citizens – women, men, and youth – and those who disposed over economics and politics, on the basis of a social and class compromise, in which (almost) all seemed to win. Until far into the 70s, the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) was able to integrate large parts of the protest of 1968 and to translate it into social and democratic reforms. Already 20 years later, however, according to the results of a more recent élite study, the confidence had vanished, the consensus had been abandoned, and the contract had unilaterally been rescinded from the side of the ruling classes. The breakdown of the Soviet Union finally settled the fate of “the model” West Germany.

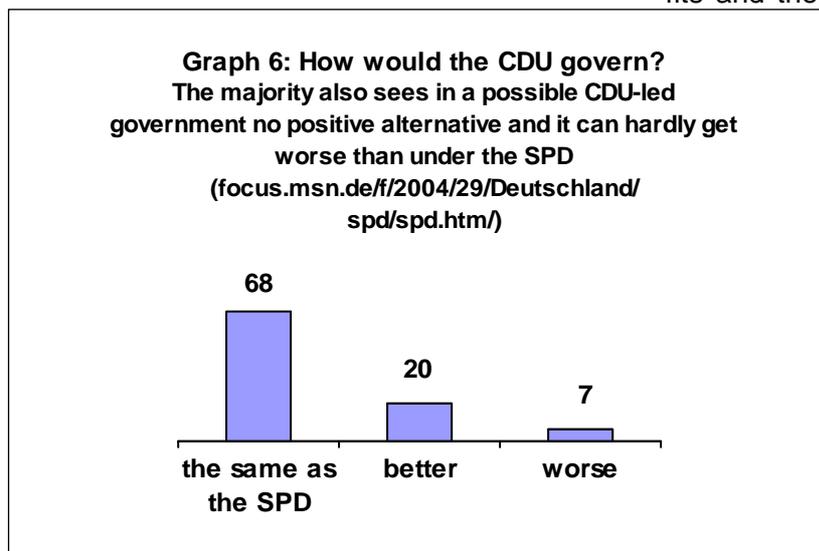
economic associations will be able to wing it, is gone today. People start to wonder, why they should delegate power to people, who seem completely incapable of solving the most obvious problems. Two thirds of the population depart from the premise that the CDU will not redeem its electoral promises; people are already used to it from the SPD (Graph 6)

The difference between population and elites, however, goes far beyond the question for capacities. A fundamental conflict has opened up between values and goals of the citizens, on the one hand, and the majority of the ruling elites on the other. From the standpoint of the elites, the new problems of the society, as they have surfaced with globalisation, individualisation, ageing of the population, exhaustion of natural resources and threat to internal and external security, can only be solved by a policy of comprehensive privatisation and market-form design of all social areas of life, the reduction of public social benefits and the redistribution from the bottom

to the top – short: by a neo-liberal policy. It includes mounting social pressure and a regime of insecurity and fear for job, pension and health care. And because it contradicts the interests of the majority of the population, it is being justified by material constraints impossible to be changed and is no longer generated by the democratic dialogue but in “expert commissions”. The political scientists Franz Walter, in this context, talks about a “strange Trotskyism

of the global classes” - neoliberal reforms as “changes in permanence, against the will of the majority of the population.

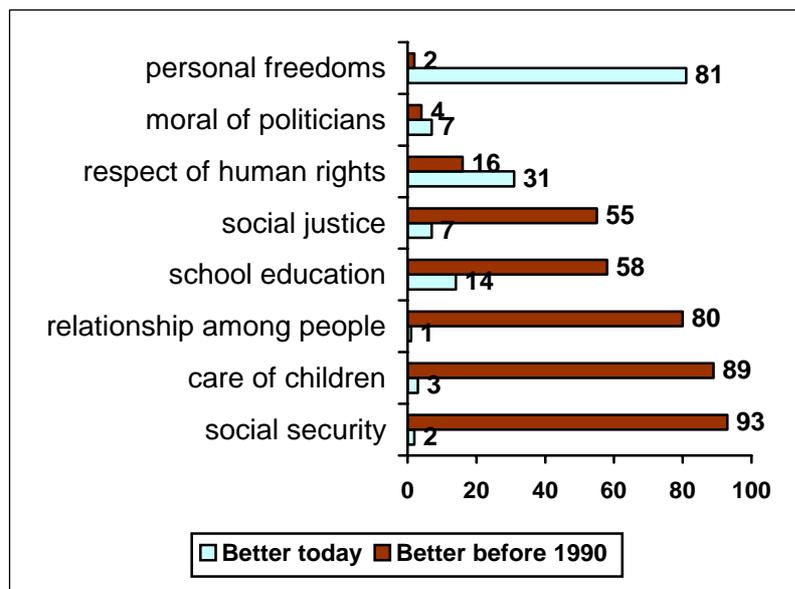
Already beginning in the 70s, growing shares of the citizenry see themselves confronted with the acting of an élite,



The results of politics – above all rising unemployment, growing insecurity and social exclusion, the crisis of the educational system and the rising costs of basic needs such as education and health – stood in contrast to the promises of the élites and the expectations of the citizens. The confidence that the parties and eco-

which in the framework of democratic rules, pursues aims and means, which increasingly contradict the interests of the majority and renounce to the integration of deviating goals. More and more, it seems, as if the representative democracy was not only an exercise of power by the few, but also in the interest of the few – an oligarchy with the traits of a *tyrannis* and who does not want to care about social protest. Young East Germans, who were able to make experiences with the GDR and with the FRG, therefore, reach a not very flattering comparison between the politicians of the one and the other society, and defend the ideal of an order, where individual liberty and respect of human dignity is joined to equality and solidarity (Graph 7).

Graph 7: The comparison between systems – “better before the Turn” and “better today” (East Germans today around 30 years old asked)



While the ruling élites in the parties and lobby associations they control, act in complete unanimity for more capitalism, less democratic participation and growing control and surveillance and at the same time accepted war again as a means of politics, large parts of the population have quite different ideas of a “good society” and a good life. They want freedom and social security to be united. They ask for a combination of liberal rights with social rights, representative democracy with direct citizen’s participation, state of law with high social equality, private property with

public property and for a strong social obligation for property. At levels of 80 to 90 percent, they ask of parties mainly that they should commit themselves to the improvement of children and adolescents, that the educational system should be modernised, that a policy of social justice should be pursued, that unemployment be pushed back and criminality be fought and that a true peace policy be realised.

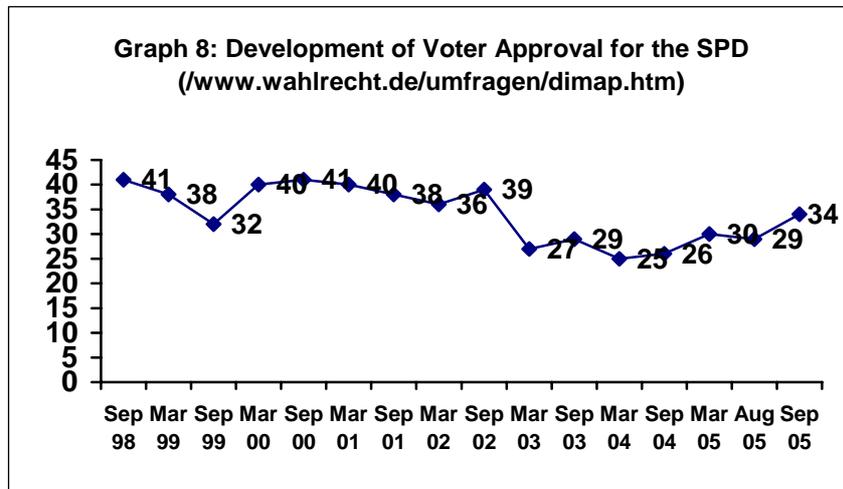
Among the majority of citizens, the united neoliberal front of the rulers is met with scepticism ranging to refusal and even strong protest. The so called Hartz IV reforms introducing enforced labour and decreasing the benefits for long term unemployed were understood as a declaration of war from the top. The lowering of business taxes, the renunciation to wealth taxes, the introduction of study tuition fees, longer work times, the dismantling of protection against dismissal, cuts into the

social security systems, lowering of the pension level, cuts at the employment agency are, as a matter of fact, supported by at most twenty to thirty percent of the population. The neoliberal agenda is no democratic majority project but a project of rule. And in this respect, there are hardly any differences between East and West. The general distrust in parties is coupled with growing political maturity - this is shown by results of a survey of the opinion research institute *Infratest dimap*.

This conflict between the top and the bottom is felt in East Germany to a particular extent. Here, the fear of poverty is greater than in the West, here the experiences of the crash into unemployment, social aid and Hartz IV are particularly widespread and present in almost every family, here the feeling of authoritarian domination rooted in the unification controlled by West Germany lives on and is transferred to the Agenda 2010. Since the middle of the 90s, the fear of worsening of one’s personal situation has more than doubled. About two-thirds of the Hartz IV recipients live in

East Germany that only has a fifth of the inhabitants of the whole of Germany.

threatened by unemployment and the dismantling of social security systems. For the Greens with their claim to defend, next



to the cultural and social middle strata also the winners of the new lifestyle industries, these groups abandoned by the SPD were never really a game. The classical proletariat, those really concerned by constant insecurity and marginalisation stayed without contact in established politics. Broad middle strata began to experience, how hard it is to life in a society in which

In this deep conflict between rulers and the ruled, the citizens started, first of all, to use democratic elections as a weapon. The so often castigated voter abstention was such an instrument of battle. The respective government parties lost mainly because those, who formerly had voted for them, simply no longer went to the ballot boxes. This phenomenon, in the 90s, seized the CDU governing back then, and in the last six years, with all its might, the ruling SPD (Graph 8). The approval rating for the SPD sank from a plateau set at 35 to 40 percent in the years 1998 to 2002 to a plateau set at 25 and 30 percent in the years after 2002. At the elections of 1998 the SPD got 40.9 percent, of 2002 38.5 percent and in 2005 34 percent of the votes.

a social abyss, has opened into which more and more people fall and at whose margins ever larger parts of the population balance along, without rope and without security net. Only the upper third of the society still experiences a little bit more hope than fear (Graph 9).

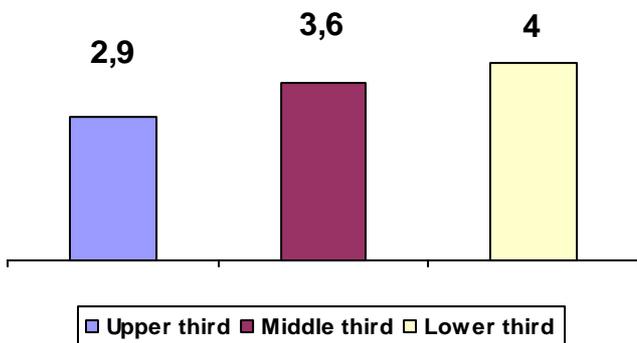
At the same time, more and more voters began to shift. Their goal was less the election of a policy that they could identify with – which was not at their disposal – but the throwing out of those currently governing in order to put them under pressure. Furthermore, the vote was used in protest. One elected those that did not belong to the establishment. Often this was the PDS, at times also right-wing nationalist and racist parties. Moreover, there eventually grew the pressure to finally close the gap in the representation of important social and democratic interests.

The dissatisfaction with the ruling policy led, secondly, to a new wave of mobilisation in social movements and groups such as Attac Germany or the *Initiative for a policy change*. Beyond the large associations and parties, space was occupied to formulate alternatives, organise campaigns and mainly to enlighten oneself and others over the consequences of neoliberalism. The holding of the First Social Forum in Germany in Erfurt in July 2005 prepared further actions such as a congress of the social movements in November and participation in German and international protests in 2005 and 2006. The declaration of the social movements, which was passed at the end of the Social Forum, represents a form of basic consensus of the Left in Germany.¹

The SPD has, in its urge for a “New Middle Class” of the social and cultural upstarts, literally left aside the social bottom of society and those who are directly or indirectly

¹ This declaration is printed in parts in the appendix.

Graph 9: Dependence of fear of the future on income: Fear of the future on the scale 1 (no) to 5 (very strong) (above 3.0, fear dominates over optimism)



Many citizens have used a third democratic means in order to bring to bear their basic dissent with the ruling elites. The years 2003 and 2004 were marked by many demonstrations and mass demonstrations. Millions of people took to the streets against the new wars, the Agenda 2010, and the demolition of democracy. The most important wave of demonstration, however, came unexpectedly and spontaneously. Neither parties nor unions, nor the well-known social movements were the organisers, but the concerned themselves – it was the Monday demonstrations of summer and fall 2004 against the so-called Hartz reforms.²



Strikes at the Opel factories in Bochum

These demonstrations brought many directly concerned and others, often between 45 and 65 years old, week for week, into the streets in order to protest. With the anger and the wit that linked up to 1989,

² Compare on that the remarkable documentary movie by Martin Kessler “New rage” (www.neueWUT.de).

they raised their claims, many of which rime in the original: “We’ll take things into our hands ourselves! Not only Hartz IV” – “Schröder and consorts on basic pension – because they humiliated us!”. – “A favour from the CDU:

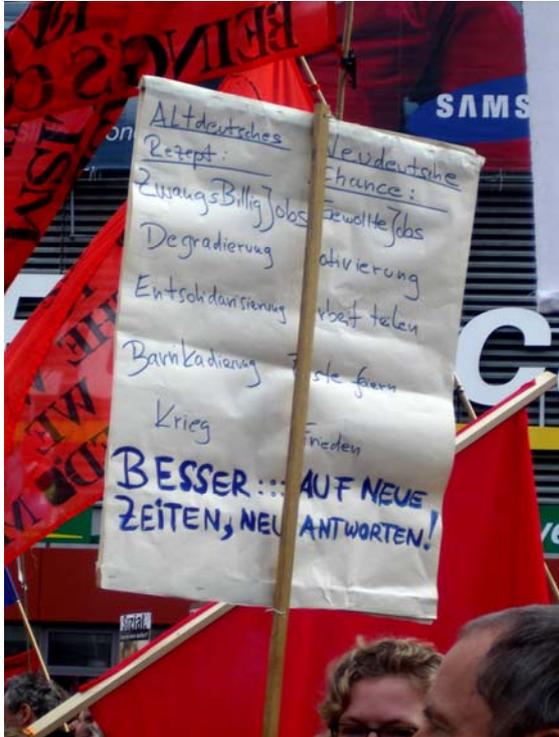
Please thank Schröder with honorary membership!” – “The Greens, after all, go along with every dirty trick!” – “From labour market to slave market!” – “Who betrayed us? The SPD. Who went along? The Green Party.” One demonstrator opposed the “old-German recipe” of present policy to a “new German chance”: forced low-wage jobs versus creative work, degradation vs. motivation, fighting with one another vs. sharing work, barricades vs. parties, war vs. peace.” He concluded with the words: “Better....: Let’s have new answers to new times!” Many local social protests such as those in Hamburg, Köln and Wiesbaden brought similar position to expression.



The Demonstrations in autumn 2004 in Berlin – voting against chancellor Schröder and for a new left party – “Schröder must leave office!”

A fourth means of democratic conflict were strikes. Out of a historical defensive, there are first signs that workers of large firms and trade unions are looking for ways to bring their interests to bear again by way of strikes. The great wage restraint of the last decade has brought nothing to the working people. The experiences of direct involvement of the rulers to the benefit of the employers, the blackmail by the companies threatening to relocate, the low-wage policy in the private sector and the fact of the destruction of good jobs by outsourcing, privatisation and creation of a

low-wage sector, the scandal over the Hartz IV jobs, also the painful defeats of the past couple of years have politicised many workers and employees in a new way. The battle over the Opel factories marked the year 2004 just as Hartz IV.³



Demonstrators demanding a alternative policy

Many citizens have begun to commit socially for a change in politics. Many more still are frustrated and in the waiting mode. Yet the conversations at home and at work, in the pub, and while in line at the employment office, with colleagues, parents and kin and with friends have changed. The “This can’t go on like this!” is supported by large parts of the population. Neither the Agenda 2010 by Red-Green nor the Electoral Programme of CDU, CSU and FDP have a majority. From out of society, there has emerged the need for a strong Left Party.

³ The executive of the American Opel company, in 2004, threatened to close a number of car factories in Germany. This led to a number of militant strikes, which prevented that to a large extent from happening. However, the workers had to accept wage losses.

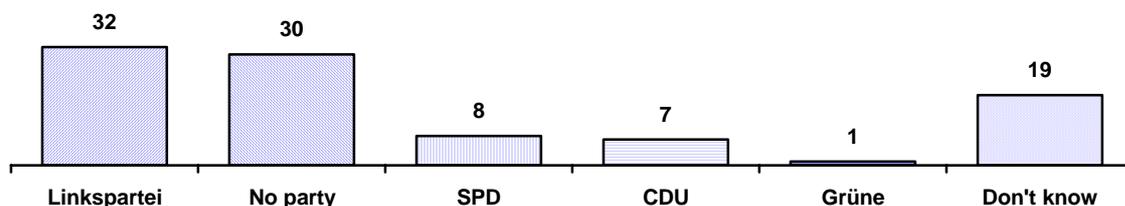
The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) (by Michael Brie)

It is, in the European context, not unusual that a Communist party or even a ruling socialist state party transforms to the extent of becoming an influential ruling force of the present.⁴ But it is unusual and particularly difficult in Germany. First of all, the ruling Communist party of the GDR, the SED, turned into PDS is a force, which is anchored only in this much smaller part of the country, the new federal regions. Second, it was also held liable for the deepening of the division of Germany, and the majority of the West Germans held and continue to hold only the Soviet Union and the GDR responsible for Cold War and dictatorship. Third, there was, upon joining the FRG, no longer any place for the former political and economic and cultural élites of the GDR. They were, in the name of the “battle against the old networks”, pushed aside by the no less old “networks” of the West. Hardly anyone would have waged only a cent on the PDS in 1990/91 – except for those who were trying to defend the socialist life ideal of the founding generation of GDR in the struggle for their own dignity: “Heads up and not the hands!” became one of Gregor Gysi’s most successful election posters.

period, 95 percent had quit the SED-PDS. Many retired from politics, many voted for other parties. At the end of 2004, the PDS still had 62,000 members, 4,500 of them in the West. Nonetheless, the PDS was able, until today, to scoop considerable force from this political class of the GDR. Together with the fight for one’s own dignity, there was waged, however, often on behalf of many other East Germans, the struggle for equivalent recognition of one’s own biography, life achievements, social incomes such as pensions, but also for equal wages and salaries. Still today, however, unemployment in East Germany is still three to four times higher than in many regions of West Germany; wages, by contrast, are lower. Many have only found work on a short term basis. Only seldom are they paid normal wages based on collective agreements. The PDS is by far, with a huge advance before all other parties, the most convincing interest representative of the East Germans (Graph 10). But: almost the equal amount see in none of the parties a convincing representative of the interests of the East, 19 percent do not say anything or do not know.

The conflicts among the East Germans, on

Graph 10: Which party in your opinion defends the interests of the East Germans the most convincingly? (Persons asked in East Germany, end of July 2005, Neues Deutschland, August 1)



However, how could this successor party emerge as one of the three large parties in East Germany? The reference to the milieu of the state-socialist service class is not a sufficient reason. Of the over 2 million members of the SED, within a brief

the one hand, and the ruling West German élite, on the other hand, were from the beginning on also conflicts over social justice and basic rights vs the imposition of highly monopolised markets and great power of companies. The struggle of many East Germans for their enterprises, for jobs, pensions, job placement and promotion, ground and real estate, buildings and apartments was a struggle for more social security and self-determination as well as for lived democracy. The unification was

⁴ See the in particular contributions by Dan Hough and by the author in: *For another Europe. Left Parties in the Upswing*, Berlin: Dietz 2005.

experienced by many as expropriation: They lost their jobs, real estate property, apartments and social benefits. In many areas, they were placed worse with respect to the West Germans. This conflict was understood, precisely because of the contradictory experiences in and with the GDR, increasingly also as a contradiction between socialist ideals and capitalist reality. This made it possible for the PDS to link practical interest politics in favour of the East Germans with their ideas of a democratic socialism.

From the socio-structural point of view, this is proven at least by the experiences of the election where the PDS was the most successful before 2005, namely the election of the end of 2001 in Berlin, where it was, at the same time, capable of addressing groups touched by social exclusion, discrimination and stigmatisation (unemployed, single women with children, gays and lesbians, foreign citizens and recent migrants) as well as groups, which belong to the modern middle strata, dispose of a high qualification and above-average income, and want to link self-determination with social justice and solidarity as well as a solidary and peaceful world order. It has also been able to reach broader circles of youth, which distinguish themselves by a strong alternative protest orientation.⁵ The result of the elections to the European parliament 2004, at which the PDS obtained 6.1% of the votes cast federation-wide, also spoke a similar tongue.

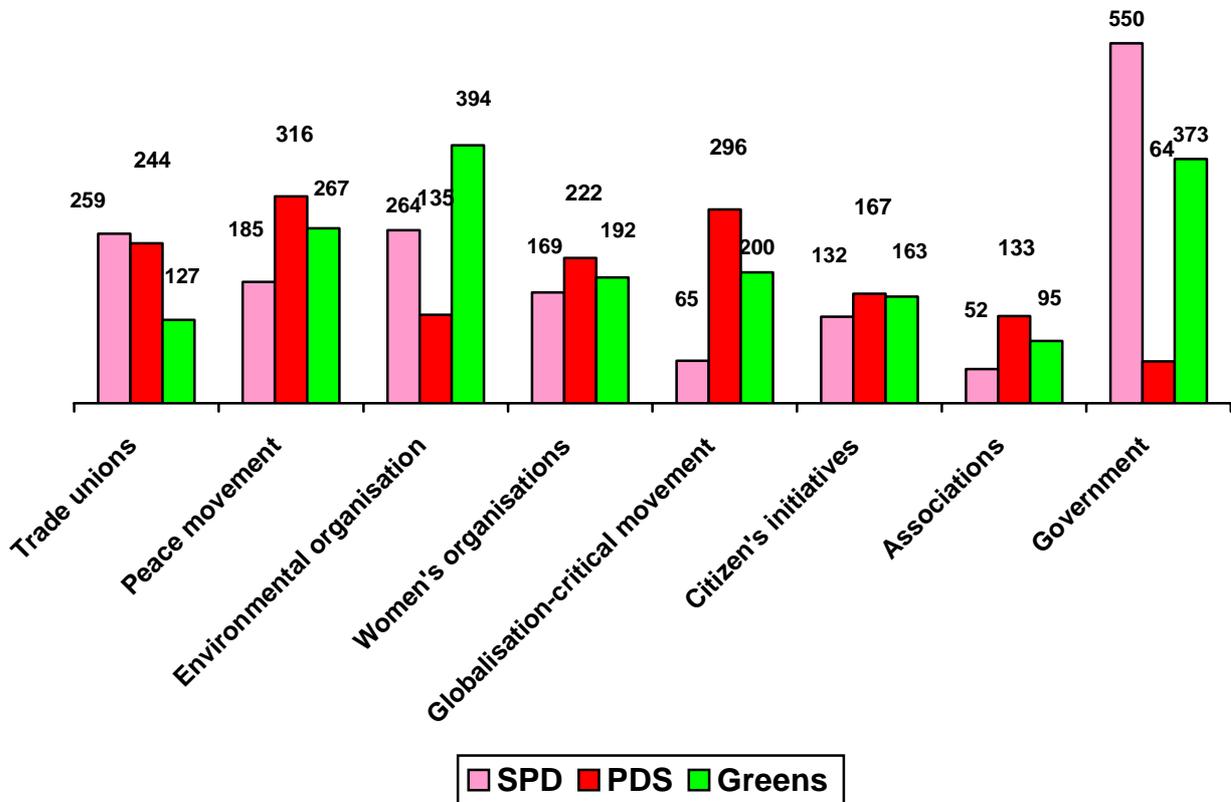
Over longer time periods, it could be noted that there existed and continue to exist for the PDS certainly relevant potentials in the population, which at the same time also relate positively to social movements and/or the trade unions *and* also positively to the PDS. This was and is particularly pronounced in East Germany (Graph 11). The PDS is here a left popular party that simultaneously enjoys large backing in the population *and* is supported by many, who commit in an emancipative and solidary fashion for social change. Newer investigations of the year 2005 also showed that the Left Party.PDS can rely on a strong anchoring in alternative anti-authoritarian-creative milieus and, simultaneously, also in solidary and performance-oriented groups.



“Hartz IV – poverty by law” – a poster of the PDS 2004

⁵ In 2001, it could be said: “The social profile of the voters of the PDS is marked especially strongly by women, in the West younger people, in the East older ones, persons with medium to high educational achievement, employed and unemployed, generally service workers, in the East workers; leading management and free professionals, small entrepreneurs and informational workers. The PDS finds stronger acceptance among women, younger people, well employed, pupils and students as well as in the groups of network-surfing youth and informational workers.” (Chrapa, Michael; Wittich, Dietmar: *Zwischen den Wahlen. Politische Meinungen. Erwartungen, Vorstellungen und Positionen* (In between the elections. Political Opinions. Expectations, Ideas and Positions. Study of the Irls, p. 53).

Graph 11: Correlation of interest representation by a Party (SPD,PDS, Greens) and by associations/social movements/initiatives/federal government in East Germany in the year 2002



The Graph above shows⁶ that the PDS can certainly point to a certain positive correlation with civil society. In the East, it competes in this respect in part also successfully with SPD and the Greens, and the values in West Germany were not bad, even in 2002, the year of the defeat at the federal elections. At the same time, this positive reference corresponded neither to the personnel composition of the party

executives (there are too few “docking” possibilities for civil society) nor among the activists. The PDS was considered as too little attractive and too weak for articulating, representing and pushing through the interests of those, who took up positively with the emancipative forces of civil society. Only out of its own forces, a renewal and establishment as really all-German party was impossible.

The question the PDS had to face was that of its capability for real social change and future orientation. Especially voters of the PDS face elections critically and, according to their own statements, only let themselves be influenced by them to an under-average extent. The voters and voters, in their majority, want to change something by their vote. At the same time, in the last couple of years, only 4 to 6 per cent trusted the PDS with such a capacity for change, a problem that is also faced by today's Left Party.

Especially in this connection, one has to consider the significance of governmental

⁶ Presentation of the correlation coefficient (x 1000) of mutual interest representation: Adherents of the party/movement/organisation X say: “Party/movement/organisation Y could defend my interests: yes/somewhat/no.” This coefficient expresses relatively clearly the relative “proximity” of the different actors to one another. Chrapa, Michael: *SPD und PDS im Verhältnis zu Verbänden und sozialen Bewegungen – aktuelle empirische Fakten zum Meinungsbild der Parteihängerschaften* (SPD and PDS in relationship to the associations and social movements – current empirical facts on the opinion picture of the party adherents), manuscript 2002.

coalitions of the PDS with the SPD at the regional level and the eight-year-long model of tolerating a SPD minority government in Saxony-Anhalt. By taking over direct or indirect governmental responsibility at the regional level, the left character of the PDS had to confirm itself in a new way, or it will also lose in the areas, where it enjoyed approval up to now. The balance seems very contradictory, but in no case only negative. The reproach made to the PDS that it was doing nothing in government but to implement neoliberal policy is wrong. However, it is true that it was not able to bring about a change of direction in policy at the regional area in the socio-economic domains, but was at best able to somewhat alleviate the effects of neoliberal policy. That is more than nothing, but less than many of its women and men voters had hoped and the electoral programme had promised.⁷

The PDS has reacted with great delay to its own crisis. With great pains, a programmatic renewal was started, which in October 2003, led to the adoption of a new party programme. While the programme of 1993 by and large represented a compromise between a "modern socialism" and traditions of state-socialist Marxism, in the programme discussions after 1998, an approach became dominant that derived the basic values of democratic socialism and the contours of a democratic-socialist reform politics uniformly from the claims of each and everyone to a self-determined life. The radicalism of the emphasis on the value of equality *in* liberty and the orientation at comprehensive changes of property and power relations mark clear differences to social democracy in Germany.⁸

⁷ Compare on that the political science study of Rolf Reißig: *Building Bridges. Participating in the Berlin government. The PDS on the test bench*, Text series of the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation, Berlin 2005 as well as Michael Brie/Rolf Reißig: *Restrictions and options of left-socialist policies in governmental responsibility. The Example of Berlin*. Standpoints 11/2005 of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

⁸ Compare on that in more detail: Brie, Michael; Chrapa, Michael; Klein, Dieter: *Socialism as the order of the day*, Berlin 2003.

From the party programme of the *Left Party.PDS*

Our programmatic goals depart from a simple question: What do people need in order to be able to live in a self-determined way? In the struggles of exploited, oppressed, and demeaned social groups, it has shown itself: people need the possibility to decide on the social conditions of their life themselves and together with others. They need the protection against violence. They need clean air and clean water. They need work, income, and distributive justice. They need education and culture. They need social security and health. For hundreds of millions of people, this is still a question of the most elementary: of overcoming absolute poverty. They need their daily bread in order not to starve.

Individuals must be able to develop their capacities and needs, their productive forces and their moral standards. The disposal over these goods decides whether people are free or unfree. They are basic freedom goods. The claim to equal participation in these is at the same time the claim to the realisation of fundamental human rights. It was the International, which made the struggle for these human rights its world- encompassing message.

Socialism, in our understanding, does not develop as a result of an abstract historical plan, but it departs from the real needs and interests of the people. Therefore, the PDS develops its programmes not in isolation from the citizens, women and men, the activists, men and women, of social movements, organisations and initiatives. Socialism develops in democratic struggles, which are conducted in order to push back and to overcome the structural conditions for lack of liberty, inequality and exploitation as well as those relationships of power and property on which these rely. In these struggles, we want to join with our insights and experiences.

The social basis of socialist struggle is considered, in the currently valid party programme of the Left Party.PDS, to be an alliance of social forces, between those, "who are socially better off, but do not want to accept social exclusion from society, with those, whom the current policy

pushes into social insecurity and impoverishment, and with all those, who are committed to a more just society as the condition of their own self-determined life.”



Hans Modrow, honorable chair of the Left-party.PDS

In clear distinction to any kind of old-fashioned Communist avant-gardism, it is being stressed. “The PDS wants to be part of a broad alliance, which is directed against a policy, whose goal it has been to achieve agreement with the economically mighty at the expense of the socially disadvantaged. We commit to overcoming the spiritual and political hegemony of neoliberal ideology and politics in Germany and in the European Union. We want to establish socialist policy for the duration as an independent self-determined political project, so that future-oriented democratic, social, and ecological alternatives may be brought to flourish. We are ready as a socialist party to participate for the duration in a middle-left alliance, which is aimed at such changes.” This matches the expectations of the potential votresses and voters of the Left Party.PDS. They expect of it, in their majority, first of all, a strong, left opposition. These goals only seem to find their real party-political foundation with the intention of PDS and WASG to found a common Left Party.

In the PDS, there began, after the electoral defeat of fall 2002, a long neglected, strategic discussion, whose positions might also be interesting to a common Left Party. This discussion started with the appreciation of the strategic environment, in which the PDS acts: the political project of social democracy and the Greens, which has ruled Germany since 1998; the

possibility or impossibility of creating an alternative social and political alliance; the relationship to the social movements and trade unions as well as the possibility of developing basic alternatives. While the first group saw no chance of a fundamental alternative to the course of Red and Green, the second emphasised the possibility of a change of direction; while by the first the difference between CDU/CSU and FDP, on the one hand, and SPD and Greens, on the other, was considered as the contradiction between two opposing camps, the second evaluated this contradiction, in comparison to the communalities between the two, as secondary and restricted to differences between a more libertarian or authoritarian view. While the former position saw no possibility for the creation of a broad alternative formation with its large own voter class and considered the chances for extra-parliamentary mobilisation as well as for overcoming neoliberal hegemony as small, the latter position reached directly opposite conclusions.

In the course of the discussion within the PDS, there were, on that basis, ultimately developed two alternative positions that are – in a very simplified manner – opposed to one another in the following table (Table 1):



Lothar Bisky, chairman of the Left-party.PDS

Table 1: Alternative Conceptions on the Self-understanding of the PDS

Position A		Position B
2006 (strategy of self-assertion at the elections)	Time horizon	A decade (2006 only as an intermediate step)
Change of the parliamentary relationship of forces	Immediate political goal	Undermining of the political legitimacy of the ruling course and creation of conditions for a new alliance
Given basic constancy of direction, more left inclination of a "Third Way" by way of a governmental alliance with SPD and Greens	Strategic political objective	Creation of the prerequisites for a change of direction (in the direction of civil and social democracy by way of change of hegemony in society)
Middle with "cushioning" of bottom	Social orientation	Middle-Bottom
The "Middle"	Social groups with whom to communicate with special emphasis (potential voters and votresses)	Groups with high cultural capital and solidary attitudes and specifically disadvantaged groups (single women with children; gays; unemployed etc.)
SPD and Greens (they in turn socially anchored)	Primary alliance partner	Left trade unionists and social movements
Parties	Long-term partners	New network of left-oriented social organisations with the PDS as their part and partner
Parliament and government-centred project	Party project	As party-political actor in a network of organisations and movements
Fractions and "staffs"; parliamentary and government machine Function and voter party	Organisational basic forms of the party	Network moderating groups and projects (of which fractions and BOs are a part), a member and activist party anchored in civil society and reaches broad sections of the population immediately in their daily life

The Electoral Alternative – Labour and Social Justice (WASG) (by Helge Mewes)

The party “Electoral Alternative – Labour and Social Justice” (WASG) came into being in the beginning of 2004 from two parallel initiatives – the “Electoral Alternative” (German abr. W) and the Initiative “Work and Social Justice” (German abr. ASG). The electoral alternative was a reservoir of trade union- oriented left intellectuals, scientists and publicists with party backgrounds from the Greens, the SPD and the PDS. Their regional focus was the North of West Germany. It was founded by a “left social-democratic triangle’, consisting of the magazine ‘*Sozialismus*’, appearing in Hamburg, the Memorandum group of alternative economists, and the section economic policy at the executive of the trade union Ver.Di.”⁹ The ASG on the contrary developed from a discussion circle of left IG Metal representatives with long-standing SPD membership, anchored mainly in South West Germany.



Demonstrations for an alternative policy in Berlin, autumn 2004

The foundation of the WASG was, on the one hand, the reaction to the neoliberal counter-reforms of the ruling forces and parties and surfaced from the need to oppose it with a new force. In the party-political realm as well, the idea that such a policy was to have no alternatives should no longer remain without objection. The

founding of the WASG, however, was also a reaction to problems in the trade unions, in the social movements and to the continued weakness of the PDS as federal party as well as with regard to certain tendencies of adaptation to the neoliberal developments within it.

The trade unions, thus it had become apparent, in the course of the distributive struggle, had successively given up a political interest representation of the employed and the unemployed, forcing left forces in the trade unions to confrontation. The trade union function of the trade union beyond a business interest politics had become unclear. “With the breach of the social-state consensus, the trade unions are in a structural crisis, unsolved up until today.”¹⁰ In order to escape to this crisis by way of a new socio-strategic orientation, the unilateral party-political connection of the Trade unions to the SPD also had to be broken.

The social and the globalisation critical movements such as Attac reach mainly academically educated circles and do not themselves aim at a parliamentary reinforcement and support of their political positions, let alone a parliamentary representation. The PDS, by contrast, had never won a sufficiently strong capability for German-wide confrontation, and with the concentration on its regional competence in East Germany, in particular after the electoral defeat of 2002, de facto gave up parts of the political space. All actors had considerable deficits in the popular presentation of their strategies, which resulted in the fact that a part of the possible communication partners and of those concerned by social demolition were simply not reached.

Trigger and catalyser of the creation and development of the WASG was the

⁹ Tom Strohschneider, „The belief in the feasible. To the left of the SPD, one puts one’s stakes on redistribution”, in *Neues Deutschland*, May 15, 2005.

¹⁰ Peter Wahl: Zwischenzeiten: Ein politischer Rückblick und Ausblick auf die globalisierungskritische Bewegung (Interim times: A political look back and look ahead at the globalisation-critical movement), in: *Sozialismus* 4/2005, p. 5.

Agenda 2010 policy of the SPD, which no longer seized only individual groups or strata such as migrants, employed and unemployed, women, East Germans, pensioners, but with its general attack tried to expropriate, without distinction, a larger share of the population, generated a Federal parliament without opposition and alienated the social élites from the general societal debates. On the one hand, this enabled partial solidarity tendencies of the most diverse groups, which had up to then acted separately, and on the other hand, opened, from the point of view of the initiators of the WASG, the possibility for the creation of an overarching new political formation.

Already before the first secret meeting of the electoral alternative on March 5, 2004 and the first press conference of the ASG on March 19, 2004, there appeared first articles on these two initiatives. Panic reaction in the SPD as, for instance, Olaf Scholz' call for the hunt on "dissidents" in a letter to all SPD functionaries from the county level upwards and the subsequent procedures of party exclusion against the Bavarian initiators of the ASG, reinforced the interest considerably: "There have already been many such attempts, they have all failed. Nevertheless, we ask you to inform us, in case there should form such initiatives in your under-districts and county associations. It is clear: whoever participates in such activities, excludes himself from the SPD."¹¹

For the first time in the history of the Federal Republic, a political initiative was built up, to a large extent, without face-to-face communication of the initiators and a corresponding "earthly" structure and almost exclusively by way of use of the media, the internet and an e-mail list. The political marketing by way of the website and the e-mail list was used to generate a self-reinforcing, exponentially growing chain of events, which in its effects was without precedent in the Federal Republic. The number of subscribers to this e-mail news list rose from 1,500 interested on March

15, 2004 to up to 10,000 after the merging of the e-mail lists of both initiatives in June 2004.

Despite the very different personal composition of the two founding initiatives of the WASG, there existed, on most substantive questions, a consensus. Dissent was rather a fact as far as organisational, strategic questions were concerned. Both initiatives criticised the policy of social demolition and set in with their critique at the neoliberal turn of the SPD. The first appeal by the initiators of the ASG opens with the sentence: "The SPD has parted from its principles."¹², in order to then continue: "Precisely because there exists, by way of the change of course of the SPD no relevant organised political grouping, which would represent a counter-pole to the neoliberal reconstruction of our society, we want to engage ourselves politically and work for the defence of this social state."¹³ In a very similar way, the Electoral Initiative took off in its first strategy paper: "In particular in the area of trade unionists and the employed, who up to now had a predominantly social-democratic orientation, but also among the young people and the pensioners, political frustration and readiness for opposition is spreading."¹⁴

The ASG proved the social demolition by pointing to labour market, tax, pension, health and educational policy. The Electoral Alternative shared these positions; however, beyond that, it put much more emphasis on the key position of finance and economic policy.

In contrast to the first ASG papers, the Electoral Initiative also presented a strategy for the construction of a new party. It understood the commitment to an election political alternative 2006 (which was at that time the supposed year for the next federal elections) "as a complement to growing extra-parliamentary protest."¹⁵ "In

¹¹ Quoted following „New Left Party. Scholz threatens deviators with kick-out“, In: *SpiegelOnline* of March 13, 2004.

¹² First sentence of the Appeal by the Initiative Work and Social Justice.

¹³ Appeal by the Initiative Work & Social Justice.

¹⁴ For an election-political alternative 2006, Version of April 15, 2004, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

order to push pack neoliberalism in the party-political realm, we must attack it on its own terrain. In order to advance politically, a serious alternative is necessary which transforms the pressure developed extra-parliamentarily into the political system."¹⁶



**A Poster of the WASG:
"We'll stop Hartz IV"**

Finally, the electoral alternative also pointed to the limits of the existing left formations and the representational vacuum resulting from it: "Basically, these are the working people strata which are or were also the main bases for Red-Green. The electoral publicity and the description of the contents must be popular, clear and simple and address and win over the people, not exclude them. The approach must be: Who is not against us is for us."¹⁷ With these positions of departure, it was clear that both initiatives would take on the breadth of the socio-critical concepts towards the Left, but that it was not to be a matter of an explicitly left-socialist party, but of the creation of a broad opposition against neoliberal politics.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

In the question of the way and form of the organisational build-up, the electoral alternative engaged in a "top-down project in the first stage"¹⁸ until a "critical mass of relevant persons and groups" was collected. In contrast to the creation of the Greens, the federation-wide party construction could not build on pre-existing local and regional political structures; on the other hand, however, in all German regions and larger cities, there existed a sufficient potential of suitable people to be activated. This allowed the focusing of the project on a new form of organisational build-up – breaking with the bottom-up traditions of the Left. The limits of this top-down project were soon reached, especially in the East German regions, because de-industrialisation had broken up the trade union structures, and a considerable part of the possible potential had found a political home in the PDS or, respectively, related positively to it.

The attitudes, later on also across the two initiatives and in the whole party, differed on two points. They were grounded on differing assessments of the strength and ripeness of anti-neoliberal politics and the existing substantive and organisational concepts. On the one hand, there exist different opinions on the strategic alignment within the party spectrum. These go back for one thing to the idea of a social democracy to be recreated from scratch, yet conceptually still in its classical form. The other organisational and substantively broader approach consists in a formation acting durably to the left of social democracy, which incorporates concepts and experiences of left socialism and of the new social and globalisation critical movements into a new kind of political party. Secondly, there exist different opinions on organisational structures. These range from a centrally-personalised concept of policy mediation, which orients itself more towards traditional concepts in the SPD and a part of the trade unions, to more open, dynamic approaches.

¹⁸ These references are contained in the long version of the strategy paper of February 5, 2005, p. 10.

With the rapidly growing associational structure and action capability, there arose, in the regions, questions for the objectives of actions and the relationship to the social movements. The surge of the Monday demonstrations surprised the WASG just as the traditional social movements and even more so parties and uncovered problems. Finally, in these and in the following strategy debates, the founding consensus was confirmed: "The contradiction between 'social state party' and 'a movement to gather the left' does not exist in political reality. The social state is a project of civilising capitalism. To defend, to renew and to extend the social state means to unambiguously take up arms against the 'economisation' of all social areas of life. Whatever opinion surveys are consulted: This social state is perceived by the majority of the population as a 'left project' and positively evaluated as such. The creation of a collective political movement, which sets itself as a goal the maintenance of the historical achievements of the workers' movement, is everybody's task in the ASG."¹⁹

The federal conference of delegates of November 4, 2004 decided the organisation of a general ballot on the creation of the party in December and adapted the time frames accordingly. After the successful ballot on party creation, the party was formally created on January 22, 2005 with a party programme and a new statute.

The WASG produced a political profile, by which it could gather a large part of the various anti-neoliberal groups and strata. It placed the confrontation with neoliberal politics into the centre of its programme and strategy, hooked on to the breadth of the socio-critical debate, integrated alternative economic policy approaches and positions. It aimed at a German-wide parliamentary representation and a popular controversy over neoliberal politics. It represented personally and substantially left trade union positions, looked for contact to the social and globalisation-critical move-

ments and networked with these. Ultimately, this profile and one's own claim were credibly presentable in the political space: the new political actors with their, in part, decade-long work in trade unions, science, parties and in the socio-critical debate in general stood for an alternative. It was believed that they would be able to fill the existing representational gaps and that they can, next to the existing political actors, legitimately occupy one part of the political space.

With this strategy, the WASG succeeded in addressing frustrated former members and voters of Red-Green as well as non-voters and fetch them back into the political confrontations in the Federal Republic. Internal differences in the questions of strategic alignment within the party spectrum and the organisational orientation as well as the shortcomings of party construction in the new federal regions, with the exception of Berlin, do not diminish the successes: the WASG has managed to establish itself with an election result of 2.2% at the regional elections in NRW²⁰ out of nothing within 15 month as a factor in the Federal Republican party spectrum.

In this way, the basis for reacting quickly after the announcement of new elections and the promised candidacies of Gregor Gysi and Oskar Lafontaine was created and the initial strategy modified. It was possible to reach an arrangement for the unification of the parties within the nearer future and on the possibility of the candidacy of representatives of the WASG on the open list of the PDS at the anticipated federal elections. This decision was taken with a great majority by a general ballot of the WASG. The PDS approved of this resolution at a session of its Party Congress on July 17, 2005 and renamed itself into Left Party.PDS.

¹⁹ Hüseyin Aydın, Joachim Bischoff, Murat Cakir, Werner Dreibus, Thomas Händel, Sabine Lösing, Björn Radke, Axel Troost: Answer to the Open Letter by Klaus Ernst of February 16, 2005.

²⁰ Helge Mewes: Für eine neue Wahlpartei (For a new electoral party), speech manuscript of May 24, 2005.

The chronology of the WASG and of its cooperation with the Left Party.PDS (Helge Mewes)

March 2, 2004	First initial reports in the press on the secret founding activities of the initiatives
March 5, 2004	First meeting of the initiate "Electoral Initiative 2006" in Berlin
March 15, 2004	Publication of the appeal "For an election alternative" over the e-mail distributor of www.wahlalternative.de and of the appeal of the initiative "Work and Social Justice"
March 19, 2004	First press conference and presentation of the initiative "Work and Social Justice" in Fürth
April 3, 2004	European Action Day against social demolition with about 500,000 federation-wide
May 8/9, 2004	First common meeting of initiators and regional coordinators and the agreement to build up the common structures in common from now on
June 13, 2004	At the European elections, the PDS reaches 6.1% federation-wide
June 15, 2004	ASG founders Klaus Ernst and Thomas Händel are excluded from the SPD
June 20, 2004	Conference "For an election alternative Berlin 2006" in the Humboldt University Berlin with ca. 700 participants
July 3 and 4, 2004	Unification of both initiatives in the association "Electoral Alternative and Social Justice"
July 11, 2004	In a survey of TNS Emnid, the WASG obtains 11 percent
October 2, 2004	Federation-wide Monday demonstration in Berlin
Nov. 3 to 4, 2004	Federal delegate conference of the WASG in Nürnberg; Decision over organisation of a general ballot on party foundation
Dec. 19, 2004	General ballot results in 96.07 % for party founding; Berlin declaration of the WASG
Jan. 22, 2005	Founding of the party "Work and Social Justice – the Electoral Alternative" in Göttingen
April 12, 2005	Resolution of Saarbrücken
7 to 8 May, 2005	Founding Congress of the WASG in Dortmund
May 22, 2005	The WASG obtains 2.2% at the regional elections in NRW, the PDS 0.9 percent
May 24, 2005	Oskar Lafontaine quits the SPD and offers to be a candidate for a left alliance
May 30, 2005	First official conversations between the federal executives of the PDS and the WASG
June 11, 2005	Federal executive of the PDS confirms the preliminary result of the negotiations and the intention to rename the PDS
June/July 2005	The Left Party in several surveys for the first time reaches more than 10 percent
July 3, 2005	Party Congress of the WASG in Kassel decides a general ballot about the candidacy by WASG members on the lists of the Left Party (PDS) and the introduction of a discussion process, with its result open, for the creation of a broad democratic left alliance
July 15, 2005	Result of the WASG general ballot: 81.8 percent vote for a candidacy on the open lists of a Left Party, 85.3 percent for the introduction of a discussion processes with open ending for the creation of a broad democratic left alliance
July 17, 2005	Party Congress of the PDS decides by 74.6 percent the renaming into "Left Party.PDS"
August 7, 2005	Close of nomination of candidates for the regional lists of the Left Party by the assembly of representatives of the Left Party, Berlin
August 27, 2005	The Party Congress of the Left Party.PDS in Berlin adopts the electoral programme
Sept. 18, 2005	The Left Party.PDS got 8.7 percent at the federal elections and sends 54 representatives to the parliament

III. The Goals

Another economic and social policy (by Dieter Klein)

In the society of the Federal Republic – so the neoliberal ideas – man must be “efficient and profitable”. Everybody, man and woman, is supposed to function in the global competition as “flexible” individuals and “entrepreneurs of their own labour power and existential provision.”²¹ In fact, “capitalism, acting short-sightedly, threatens... in particular those character traits (of people – the author), which link people to each other and convey a stable sense of his or her own worth to the individual.”²² The society and the individuals are subordinated to the allegedly inevitable constraints of the economy.

Four basic points of left economic and social policy

Neoliberal policies have plunged the Federal Republic into a heavy social, political, cultural and above all also economic crisis. After so many years of neoliberal experiments, a fourfold turn is necessary to overcome this crisis.

First Turn: The goals and contemporary politics of the Left Party are determined by the conviction that *the economy is supposed to be there for the people*. In electoral proclamations, other parties also swear to that. However, providing equal conditions for an autonomous life in social security in dignity – this, the others are not ready to do. Heiner Geißler, the former general secretary of the CDU, criticises: “The central question is after all, how our economic system should look like in the global economy. Both large parties have no concept of an answer to the problems of globalisation. People notice that they

are exposed to an economic system that is neither democratically controlled, nor in a position to form change in a human way. They are outraged and desperate that the political, economic and journalistic elites are not in a position to develop a concept that will shape this globalisation process in a human way.”²³ The reality in the Federal Republic and in the European Union is still worlds away from that.

Second Turn: If this reality is supposed to be changed, in the place of a subjection of politics under the interest and the power of economic élites and mainly of global financial capital, *the primacy of an alternative policy, which links economic efficiency with social justice and ecological sustainability, must step in*. The Left Party wants to contribute, with all of its possibilities, to a broad social alliance, which in the upcoming learning and search processes and struggles will bring up the courage for the breach with the predominant market-radical development.

Third Turn: The currently dominating economic policy in Germany and in the European Union is focussed on the *supply strength* of the globally operating firms. Pressure on wages and workers’ rights, lowering of social standards and low business taxes – that is their creed. In Germany, high export surpluses (see Graph 13) are opposed to an almost continually sinking domestic demand. Export has, between 2000 and 2004, produced on average an annual positive growth impulse of 1.2%; stagnating or sinking public demand, on the contrary, has reduced growth by an annual 0.5%. The reason that Germany is the tail light in the Euro region in terms of growth is precisely not due to insufficient export and competitive ability, but to the impoverishment of the

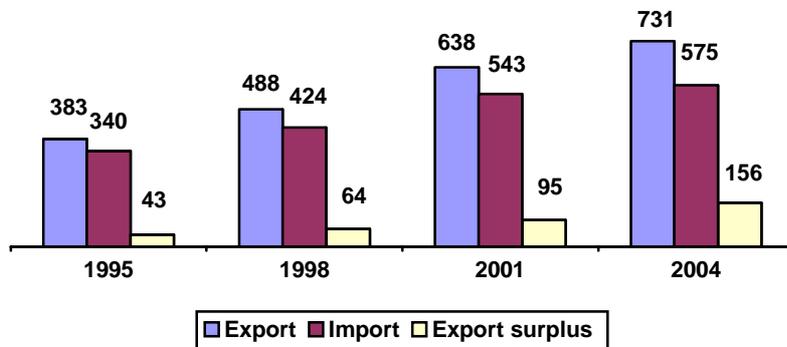
²¹ Commission for Future Research of the Free States Bavaria and Saxony 1997: Employment and Unemployment in Germany. Development, Origins and Measures, Part III, p. 23.

²² Sennett, Richard 1998: The Flexible Individual. The Culture of new Capitalism. Berlin 1998, p. 31.

²³ Heiner Geißler in an interview with the *Berliner Zeitung* of August 11, 2005.

public budgets and the absolute lag of wages behind the development of productivity.

Graph 13: German foreign trade in billions of Euro



The Left Party continues to consider the *weakness of demand* on the interior markets as a decisive obstacle to growth and new jobs. Consequently, it is its economic policy and at the same time social point of departure to strengthen purchasing power on the German and European domestic market. This means:

- Renunciation to low-wage strategies; legal introduction of minimal wages; increase of wage incomes at least to the extent that economy-wide productivity and prices rise; defence of collective bargaining autonomy and strengthening of trade unions.
- No further lowering of social incomes! They must correspond to the dignity of people. At the same time, they stabilise purchasing power.
- Mass purchasing power, however, is only one component of the strengthening of domestic demand, public investments are the other. Their significance reaches decisively further. By way of investments in ecological reconstruction, in education and science, in health, care, and cultural institution, into public short-distance traffic and the infrastructure of public services, politics will gain designing power. An *public future investment programme* with such points of emphasis would contribute to the launch of a socio-ecological transformation of society. Social coldness and the ecological blindness of the market would meet with an effective counterweight.

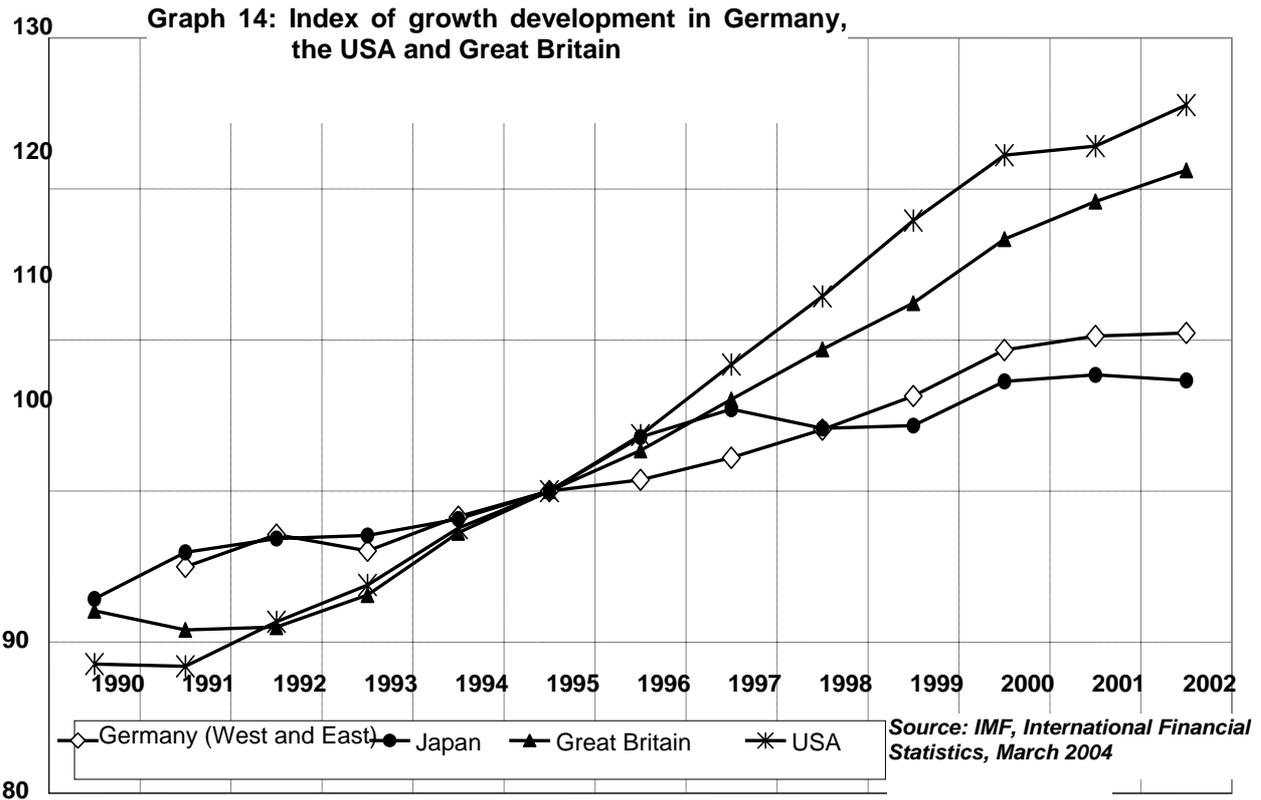
Only a turn-around in economic policy can overcome the chronic weakness of growth

of Germany in relationship not last to the USA and Great Britain (see Graph 9).

The allegation that the Left Party has only distributional questions in mind is not pertinent. Ecological reconstruction applies to the production structures, and, just as public existential provision, also to the change in ways of life. What remains a fact, however, is the clear orientation of neoliberalism to a redistribution from the bottom to the top and from the wage recipients to the capital owners as well as the continuation of a non-ecological and unjust economic policy.

Fourth Turn: The development of a new Left will, therefore, be linked with struggles over another *way of regulation* in the economy. The unavoidable upheavals – an ecological turn of the era, the overcoming of poverty in the world, the transition to the knowledge society, cross-generational demographic change – are not to be won over in a social way by the dictate of the markets, not by the short-term course fluctuations on the stock and bond markets. Hostile attacks against the Left Party that it only wants back to the state-led economy, simply ignore the need for strategic action. They are purely and simply unqualified.

In future ways of regulation, civil society confrontations over the necessary decisions – in the shape of participative budgetary policy, for example, long-term state action and market mechanisms in a new framework of regulation will interlace. This holds for the local and regional level, for regions, the federal level and the European Union up to the global. On all levels, economic development must be embedded into democratisation processes, into *more direct democracy, more proximity to the citizens and extension of co-determination in the economy*, with an obligation above all to the social needs, justice and sustainable development.



Democratic socialism – a transformational process

The Left Party expects that in the struggle for the realisation of these basic points into real steps of change, a process that transforms social relationships in a social and emancipative fashion will develop. In small steps and greater breaks, it wants to push back profit dominance in economy and society and ultimately overcome them. The more in the course of such a development, socially equal conditions for a free self-determination of each female or male person over their own lives will replace omnipresent profit dominance, the more democratic socialism will win. Democratic socialism, in the understanding of the Left Party, PDS is a transformational project which takes off from present conditions and, in the long term, points beyond the frontiers of capitalism. The goal is a society, "in which the free development of each and everyone has become the condition of the free development of all."²⁴

²⁴ Thus the party programme of the Left Party, PDS with reference to the *Manifesto* by Marx and Engels.

The PDS, therefore, took part in protests and resistance against the Hartz reforms. From the beginning on, it submitted proposals for the alleviation of the gravest injustices and hardships of the Hartz laws. Some very few of them, other parties have, with some compromises, now also seized upon. The Left Party, in other words, looks for improvements under the given relationships. Yet, it wants more. Its original proposal is to combine the billions of Euros allocated for the permanent financing of long-term unemployed with other available promotion funds and with a part of the additional tax receipts obtainable by its alternative tax concept. Persons, who were up to now long-term unemployed, could in this way receive regular, insured jobs covering their existential needs. Instead of continued privatisation even of public existential provision, these jobs should be created in non-profit, publicly-sponsored employment sectors – negotiated collectively, the projects strongly determined by the employed themselves, including older people, equality of the sexes writ large. In these sectors, people no longer have to be "efficient and profitable", they could do useful things for the common weal – a

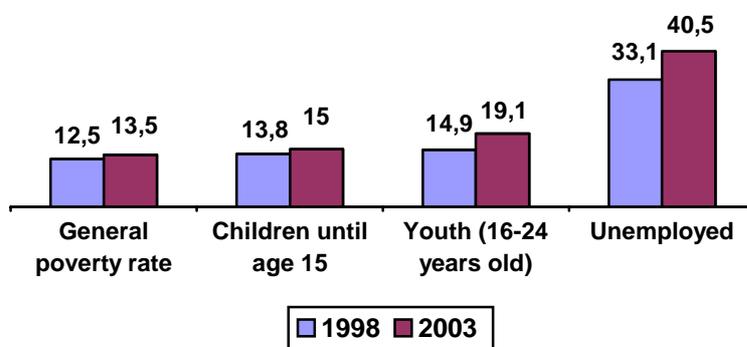
breath of transformation, contrary to the neoliberal spirit of the times.

A new linkage of economic and social policy

The Left Party does not consider the social as the rest that reminds, after all other costs are paid. *High social standards have an independent value* – as goals of a just society, for peace and inner social cohesion, for a productive economic climate and also as a factor of domestic demand. *Simultaneously, it holds that a renewed social state presupposes an effectively functioning economy and high employment quotas.*

The privileges from capital and wealth manifests itself in a decreasing quota of income from work and a relative autonomy of the financial markets. Empirically, we can state that the “inequality of the incomes of the private households reached on the labour and capital markets... has continuously increased since the beginning of the 1990s in Germany.”²⁵ The upper five percent of the population now no longer hold “only” 44.7 percent, but already 46.5 percent of the general wealth in their hands, while the lower ten percent are increasingly indebted. At the same time, the poverty of children, young people, and the unemployed has in part drastically increased (Graph 15). This is also a part of the balance sheet of Red and Green.

Graph 15: Poverty quota (poor is, who has less than 60 percent of the medium income at his or her disposal)



More social security therefore begins with more jobs, guaranteeing a decent exist-

²⁵ DIW Monthly Reports, Issue 10/2005. p. 175.

tence: by way of innovative future investments; stabilising domestic demand; launching of publicly sponsored non-profit sectors there, where the private economy sees no profit chances; reduction of work time and redistribution of work; voluntary switch between employment and temporary, socially cushioned family work and non-profit work. Education for all independent of social origins must favour the equal participation in work. If the president of the German Institute for Economic Research, Klaus Zimmermann, in chorus with others, claims that the offer of the Left Party burns down to tax increases and extensions of the social state²⁶, this simply is not true. Structural and industrial policy, environmental policy, work and labour market policies and social policies are understood in a close interconnection by the Left Party.

Ignoring global constraints?

The Left Party, just as the whole Left, is criticised to be not from this world, because it ignores that the world market inevitably exercised pressure on wage and wage supplement costs towards the bottom. For instance, Prof. Hans Werner Sinn, president of the influential *ifo institute* answers to the question, how jobs should be generated: “By a strong tax reduction and lower non-wage labour costs, which are concentrated in the low wage sector. If the wages fall and the people work longer

hours, the companies will create new jobs and let people instead of machines work in the factory halls.”²⁷ Precisely this policy, however, has failed in every respect.

First of all, it is last but not least the wage struggles and the confrontations over maintenance

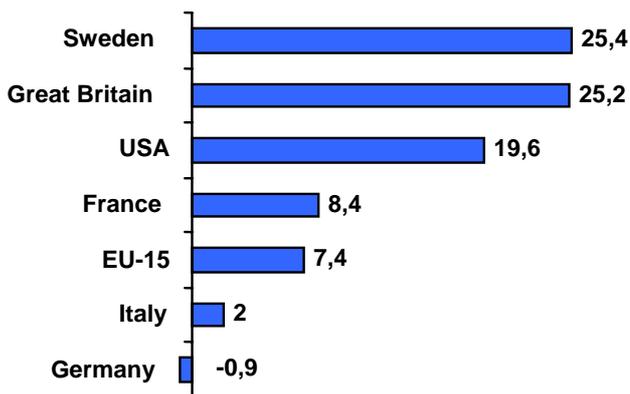
²⁶ *Berliner Zeitung* of July 16, 2005

²⁷

www.politikforum.de/forum/showthread.php?threadid=39974.

and improvement of social benefits, which help to secure the demand on the world markets; otherwise these markets could not even function. The market liberals should thank Mercury, the God of Trade and Thievery, for this service by the Left and by the trade unions. The idea that, in the age of globalisation, one had to follow suit to the pressure for the lowering of wages, is also empirically wrong. It cannot explain, why in many national economies (except precisely in Germany), massive wage increases took place (see Graph 16). Today as well, there is no “iron wage law”, which would force all working people to impoverishment. For many people, the contrary is true.

Graph 16: Development of real wages 1995-2004 in percent (Süddeutsche Zeitung, June 14, 2005)



Second, it is the educational, science and technology policy of the Left Party, just as its encouragement, already practiced in Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, of small and medium-type firms with view to productivity increases that continue to limit the unit wage costs despite high wages and non-wage labour costs. In this way, the competitiveness of businesses can be maintained, and it will, at the same time, become possible to tear down in a solidary way the import barriers built up against low-wage developing countries. The Federal Republic would not be world export champion, if wages and social standards in Germany, measured against the productivity level, were disproportionately high.

Thirdly, the Left Party proposes to decouple the social insurance contributions of the employer side from the wage sum

as reference basis. They should no longer be computed as non-wage labour costs, but be derived from the sum of the value of the products of a firm, its value creation. Small, work-intensively producing firms would then no longer be punished by high non-wage labour costs, and large firms strong in investment, with extensive use of machinery and small personnel would no longer be rewarded for rationalisation processes leading to mass dismissals at the detriment of society by lower social contributions.

Fourthly, it must be investigated, whether the social security systems, in view of the shortening of life work times (as a consequence of longer educational periods, frequent interruptions of work biographies, and longer pension times) had better be financed by taxes rather than by contributions depending on the wages. The latter would fundamentally relieve the factor labour and transfer the costs of social security and the inner stability resting on it to a larger extent to the society as a whole.

Fifth, the competition on the world markets is in no way as fateful as the multinational corporations dominating them want to make believe, in their own interest. The Left Party, therefore, demands control and regulation of international financial markets, the introduction of a tax on international currency transaction, a consequent battle against tax oases and other steps to curb global capital power.

The Left, however, categorically rejects one position; that globalisation fatefully means competition which leads to “labour becoming cheap as dirt” (Horst Afheldt) and social security has to be privatised entirely, as the FDP is striving for.

Left alternatives can be financed

The last trump of the critics of Left Party always sounds that its concepts cannot be financed. But why in the world, in the light of rising productivity, scientific-technical revolutions, perfected work organisation, global division of labour and growing wealth, there should not even be payable, what decades ago in a much weaker national economy was still no problem? Why should it not be possible to finance, what is economically reasonable and, moreover,

social? In a country where, during Schröder's time of government, the net wealth of the upper 10 percent among the income recipients rose by almost 450 billion Euros, whose 43 billionaires count among the richest men on earth, where there live 4,400 super rich with a pure money income more than 30 million Euro each!

Under the current circumstances, the reform alternatives of the Left can really not be financed. Because the relationships of forces between super-rich power elites and the democratic counter-forces do not allow this. But: "for the first time, the political class of this country does not confront the misery not only as diffuse mood, but in the person of a political opponent. That makes them perplexed"! This was written

in "*Die Welt*" on June 19 about the Left Party.

The unification of the PDS and WASG might bring into swing not only the party landscape, but the whole social tectonics of forces. If this succeeds, left alternatives will become affordable. Ver.di, the IG Metal, Attac, the Left Party.PDS and the WASG all have concepts for that. According to the tax concepts of the Left Party, additional tax receipts of 64 billion € a year are possible – without ruinous burdens on the economy: by the reintroduction of a wealth tax, the progressive fashioning of business taxes, internationally comparable increases of inheritance and gift taxes on large amounts, introduction of a stock market and a currency transaction tax and consequent elimination of tax flight and evasion.

Democratisation (by Lutz Brangsch)

In particular after September 11, 2001 and the announcement of the "war on terror" by the USA and its allies, the question for the future of democracy and rights of the citizens, has again stepped into the foreground. But beyond that, the curtailment of social benefits, the restructuring of social security systems and the privatisation of elements of public existential services, *services of general or general economic interest in EU language* (water, public short-distance traffic, hospitals etc.), drew in its wake the exclusion of ever more people from the possibility to exercise their rights. Even more alarming is the growing repression by way of the social system, as it is realised, for instance, in the Hartz laws. The control and evaluation of individual behaviour by an agency undermines, in a sneaking way, democratic mechanisms and continues the authoritarian tendencies, inherent in the social state since its inception, in a new dimension. Already the way and form in which, for instance, the Hartz laws came into being, has precious little to do with democratic expression of opinion – the Hartz commission was a body of technocrats. And there declared aim – the reduction of unemployment in three years by 50 percent – was never reached, on the contrary unemployment rose further by one million.

Last but not least, the crisis of local finances acts into a similar direction. If it is no longer possible to take part in public life due to increased fares, one has to renounce to Internet and newspapers, libraries are no longer reachable, associations offering their help to people in trouble have to limit or cease their services and there no longer exist any public rooms, where one can meet, without having to pay, and talk about problems, this always also means an infringement of democracy.



The meeting of Social movements at the 5th World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, January 2005 (in the centre: João Pedro Stedele, chairman of the Landless Movement of Brazil)

Next to the restriction of democratic freedoms in the domestic policy area, there stands therefore, simultaneously, a limitation of possibilities, caused by social and financial decisions, to exercise existing rights.



A poster in support of the participatory budget (Brazil)

On the other hand, manifold forms of participation of citizens in decisions exist, especially at the local level. This participation, however, is designed in a way that the initiative and the decisive power lies with the administrations, the strategic decisions are taken there, and the vote of the citizens is considered an expression of opinion, but not given any political weight. In many cases, the proposals of the citizens fail due to the alleged lack of funds, the so-called budgetary constraints. The participation of citizens currently is asked especially when it is a matter of legitimising the reduction of public services.

The relationships seem stuck, the positions of politicians as well as administrations seem unshakeable, the public paralyzed under the impression of missing money in lethargy and resignation, the lobbyists are overwhelmingly powerful, ideas of economic democracy are discredited. Do the contemporary left and a left party project in particular at this point even have the potential for opening new ways to the solution of these problems?

One should remember that in the beginning of the history of the PDS, there stood the conflict over the role of democracy within society and within the organisation itself. It was, on the one hand, a matter of overcoming the inheritance of a state so-

cialist one-party rule, and on the other hand, of coming to terms with the undemocratic traits of German unification. The constitutional discussions in the beginning of the 90s, or respectively the statute and programmatic discussions of the PDS turned again and again around these questions. In the programmatic statements and electoral programmes building on that, often also in political practice, these points of reference were also reflected in many ways. The question for the relationship between representative and direct democracy, in this connection, was always in the background; however, it could not be resolved conceptually.

Surely, the PDS fought for decisions by the citizens and other forms of their direct influence on politics. Parliamentary resistance against the sharpening of police laws, the intervention for the maintenance of public infrastructure, the struggle against the exclusion of socially disadvantaged stood and stands in first place in PDS policy. The active involvement of the PDS on the side of the popular petition for a children and youth friendly Saxony-Anhalt and in the case of petitions of citizens against privatisations shows possibilities for widening scopes of action within the given democratic systems, which need to be extended.

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that there exist many different instruments of direct petitions by citizens mainly at the local level. Before the background of real power relations and the often frustrating experiences regarding the mobilisation capacity for demands by the PDS, even though these are as a matter of fact supported by many people, the PDS, as other left organisations, lacked an approach how elements of extended democratic rights can be stabilised and converted into a permanent factor in political confrontations. The reality of governmental participations of the PDS and the coming to terms with its opportunities and limits within the Left in general, not only among the immediate actors, is an expression of this shortcoming of left strategies. The challenges, before which the Left stands in this area today, consist in determining how to get from a policy *for* the citizens to a politics *by* the citizens *themselves*, and how rep-

representative democracy can be linked to direct-democratic kinds of policies.

Decisive impulses for the answer to this question came by way of the First World Social Forum in South Brasil in January 2000.²⁸ The discussions conducted in Latin America on the relationship between representative and direct democracy, the corresponding experiences of political struggle and, finally, the political practice of the participative budget (in Germany usually called “citizens’ budget”), which already back then had been successful for over ten years in Porto Alegre and in other cities, contributed to the inspiration of our own reflections in this field.²⁹ Already in the time before that, the Bertelsmann Foundation had, with reference to Porto Alegre, developed its own model project “citizens’ budget”, and conducted a broad campaign in support of the “modernisation of administration”.

It was a matter of finding answers to this policy, moreover, since in the local and regional administrations, these “reforms”, to a large extent independently of the action of deputies and the public, were already being conducted. In the last years, in this context, the topics citizen/referendum and citizens’ budget revealed themselves as themes and instruments, by which not only the scopes of democratic influence were broadened, but to which there could also be tied the interaction of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action, and governmental participation could also be used in this sense.

²⁸ Anand, Anita; Escobar, Arturo; Sen, Jan; Waterman, Peter (eds.): *Challenging Empires – the World Social Forum, New Dehli 2003 and Berlin 2004*. (<http://www.rosalux.de/cms/index.php?id=4295> in German).

²⁹ More on this topic in Petra Brangsch (ed.): *Haushalt, Haushaltspolitik und Demokratie. Bedingungen und Strategien einer partizipativen Haushaltspolitik (Budget, budgetary policy and democracy. Conditions and strategies of a participative budgetary policy)*, Berlin 2005 as well as in the internet, the corresponding project web site of the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation: www.partizipativerhaushalt.de.

If in this area, the demands of Left Party.PDS and WASG overlap and, at the same time, also the interest of other left people precisely in citizens’ and participative budget is growing, the experiences of diverse orientations of left politics will meet, be it organised in parties, otherwise or unattached. The agreement between PDS and WASG, in this vein, explicitly includes the struggle for “more citizens’ rights with direct democracy” into the common goals.

Despite all contradictions, in general, precisely these results and also the experiences of the governmental participation of the PDS in Berlin can mark directions for future project for the renewal of democracy. With a federal law package by the PDS for the introduction of district-level citizens’ petitions and decisions, for the extension of information and participation rights of citizens in the districts³⁰, for the extension of the rights of district representatives and of the inclusion of the citizens’ budget at the district level into the circle of projects subsidised in the framework of administrative modernisation, there were created possibilities to conduct political conflicts at the local and regional level in a new way in Berlin. The association *More Democracy*³¹ appreciates the corresponding law as the “most citizen-friendly ever decided by a regional parliament”³². That this legislative package came about in precisely this way, and finally was also accepted by the other parties, has to do essentially with the cooperation between *More Democracy* and parliamentary deputies.

Even more far-reaching in their effects might be the activities concerning the introduction of district citizens’ budgets in Berlin. The topic was, last but not least under the impression of the Berlin bank

³⁰ The city of Berlin is subdivided in urban districts, which dispose of a certain measure of local self-administration, their own parliament – the assembly of district representatives – and of their own mayor and other elected officials.

³¹ *More Democracy* is one of the most important citizens’ movements for the extension of direct democracy.

³² Compare [www.mehr-demokratie.de/berlin.html?&no_cache=1&sword_list\[0\]=berlin](http://www.mehr-demokratie.de/berlin.html?&no_cache=1&sword_list[0]=berlin).

scandal, raised by a Working Group *Citizens' Budget*, consisting mainly by activists of the *Agenda-21 movement*, as a demand for a citizens' budget for Berlin on the agenda of public debate.³³ Beyond the question, *what* decisions are to be taken, it placed the question, *how* politics is made and *how* these decisions are taken, into centre of political struggle.

In its resolution, "The District as a Citizens' Commune" (September 2003), the PDS seized this demand and put it into the context of a large extension of forms of direct democracy, the creation of a "new culture of participation" and a new "culture of administration".³⁴ It is, therefore, not only a matter of letting citizens participate from time to time, but rather to get their basic vote on the basic direction of budgetary policy. This vote, finally, should, as this is also the case in Porto Alegre, be worked out in a self-organised process by citizens, in which administration and politics appear as partners and consultants, no longer as norm setters.

In this way, a field of work was elaborated, whose extent was at that point foreseeable by the fewest. There was set in motion in process of learning, which – in case it is pursued further in a consequent manner – will not only change the framework of political action, but also the organisation of parties such as the Left Party.PDS itself. The experiences, which are available at this point above all from the project citizens' budget in Berlin Lichtenberg, confirm this. In many discussions, the PDS fraction and the basic district organisation of the PDS not only had to be explained the project, but also the consequences had to be made clear: the deputies exposed their work, also during periods where there were no electoral campaigns, to permanent publicity and criticism; they, therefore,

also put their classical function permanently into question – even if the final decision over the district household continues to fall in the assembly of district deputies.

How the participation process will finally look like, what orientations of budgetary policy and what concrete projects ultimately find the support of citizens, will be contingent on mobilising a large number of citizens for active participation in this process. One has to talk to people and convince them to get involved, to accept responsibility in such a process as organisers. Assemblies of inhabitants must be organised, in which everybody can express freely. And procedures must be found, which reflect the vote of citizens. In the process, compromises must be reached – not by the internal conversations of small circles, but in public.

Therefore, the procedure now installed in the Berlin district of Lichtenberg was elaborated by a working group, where politicians, administration and citizens are represented on an equal footing.³⁵ The PDS, by the way, renounced to the opportunity to dominate the process on the basis of its absolute majority in the assembly of district representatives – representatives of all parties represented in equal force took part. In this way, it was to be made sure that even in the case that the PDS should no longer have the same political weight, the procedure was to be guaranteed legitimacy and permanency.

Finally, deputies and department heads stand before the challenge to find allies in the administration, to adjust the working procedure of the administration to another form of citizens' participation. In Lichtenberg, on that topic, series of workshops were organised, in which the administrative work was criticised by colleagues of the administration themselves, and corresponding consequences were worked out. Citizens can, in such a context, not be considered as "customers" but become

³³ For more information see www.buergerhaushalt-berlin.de. During the period 2001 to 2005, there formed on this basis a working circle, moderated by the Federal Centre for Political Education and by the party foundations active in Berlin, to create preconditions for the introduction of citizens' budgets in Berlin.

³⁴ www.pds-berlin.de/partei/lpt/08/04/b01.html.

³⁵ More detailed information under www.berlin.de/ba-lichtenberg/verwaltung/persfinkult/buergerhaushalt/index.html (soon under www.buergerhaushalt-lichtenberg.de).

political partners with equal rights. That is an upheaval in political culture that is often harder to manage than changes in organisation.

If one considers that, in the years since 2001, a discussion processes took place in Berlin, which has now led to an independent model of a citizens' budget, including important emancipative moments, proving that even within a neoliberally marked environment, points of departure towards other ways of politics can be created. The process has just begun – the capacity for action of the Left as a whole will decide which direction it will take.



Members of the Leftparty.PDS at the Brandenburger Gate on the Day of Democracy

The introduction of the participative budget is only one, but important example. Precisely, the turning of budgetary policy into the context of democracy opens new possibilities of discussing distribution question, as well as who finally decides on the granting of social rights and whose interests state decisions follow. Conflicts, which usually only take place in a small circle of deputies, are brought into the public, whereby this public itself receives new political weight and this in part against the so-called media public. In this way, the approach of direct democracy becomes "expansionary" – it constantly provokes new questions for the Why? and for extensions of its applicability. Because: as long as democracy does not encompass the property question, it will not be able to be social.

The general conditions of all social action must be subject to democratic votes by the citizens, which arise in participative processes. Real partaking of the citizens as

equal subjects in the decision-making processes is just as important as the protection of political, social, and cultural basic right. In the light of the attacks against elementary citizens' rights, the conversation, utilisation and consequent enlargement of democratic scopes of action is an important connecting piece between various policy fields and a starting point for new social alliances.

This presupposes, however, that the organisations involved change themselves. Political concept, political action and organisational structures will be derived less from the perspective of the maintenance of organisational identity, but increasingly from the activities of people, who are not necessarily organised in parties or classical non-governmental organisations. The history of the Hartz IV protests has shown, be it briefly, in its outlines, the scope of the new challenges. This tendency does not render organisations superfluous. However, it leads to growing demands to their capacity for learning and flexibility.

The renewed beginning of the discussion of a left, political project as the unity of parties and movements as well as a new determination of the relationship between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary work becomes, therefore, inevitable. Karl Liebknecht, confronted with the helplessness of social democracy in spring 1918, formulated this in the following words: "Even if one only wants to reach parliamentary successes, everything will depend on... the Party having behind itself an extra-parliamentary power, which it is ready and able to throw, regardless of all defeats, in inexhaustible diversity and quick-wittedness of methods, with ever-increasing energy, into the battle, and that this is demonstrated to the opponent by the facts *ad oculus* (visible – the author)."³⁶

³⁶ Liebknecht, Karl: Theoretisches über die Wirkung erfolgloser politischer Aktionen (Theoretical reflections on the effects of unsuccessful political actions) in: the same: Gesammelte Reden und Schriften (Collected Speeches and Writings), vol. IX, Berlin 1982, p. 461 f.

For a social, democratic, and peaceful Europe (by Cornelia Hildebrandt)

With the rejection of the European constitutional treaty in France and in the Netherlands³⁷, the lack of clarity concerning the beginning of negotiations with Turkey about its full EU-membership and the failure, up to this point, of the budgetary negotiations for the next six years, the crisis-prone development of the European integration process becomes apparent. The attempt by the European Union to give itself a political framework by way of a neoliberal constitutional draft simply had to fail, given the increasing social polarisation in a larger Union and the simultaneous dismantling of social state existential provision as part of a radical restructuring of the whole society.



The representation of the European Left and the Nordic Green Left in the European Parliament

Did, by way of the enlargement to 25 states, and the creation of a currency and economic union, the forces of integration already exhaust themselves? Does the approach of the Lisbon strategy to turn the European Union, until 2010, into “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economic space with more and better jobs and a greater social cohesion” still hold, or will now, after the failure of the constitution, by setting of priorities in favour of growth and strengthening of the competitive ability of the Union, the last part of the strategy finally become secondary? Is the militarization of the EU the natural and inevitable consequence of the

enlarged and ever more intensive integration into an alliance of states, which wants to get involved world-wide with imperial ambition?

Militarization, a democratic deficit and the neoliberal one-sidedness of the Stability Pact condition and affect one another. The obligation of the member states to “gradually improve their military capabilities” (Art. I-41/3, European constitutional draft), the bundling of armament capacities to a common European arms programme, the creation of an agency for the areas Development of Defence Capabilities, Research, Acquisition and Armaments” (European Defence Agency), the build-up of a European army of intervention for world-wide combat-type interventions³⁸ and the credits required for that, do not fall under the criteria of the Stability Pact.

A special problem is the “permanent structured (military) cooperation”, written into Art. III-312. It provides that member states, which fulfil ambitious criteria with respect to military capabilities and which with view to missions with highest requirements, have engaged into firmer commitments with one another, may institute a special cooperation in the area of mutual defence (Art. I- 41, 6, draft of the EU Constitution) - forming in this way an avant-garde within the European Union. Whether this can be slowed down or prevented by other single EU states remains open (consider Art. I-40); neutral EU states such as Finland, Ireland, Austria and Sweden, when implementing closer collaboration with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, lose their status of neutrality in favour of a NATO membership “light”; a loss in relevance of parliamentary decision and control is then unavoidable. A qualitatively

³⁷ The draft was rejected by large majorities in spring 2005 in France and then in the Netherlands. The reasons were mainly the rejection of a strongly neoliberally oriented economic order.

³⁸ The EU envisages Rapid Intervention Corps of the EU with about 80,000 soldiers, to be ready for deployment in 2007, which according to the constitutional draft (Art. III-309) are to be used for “combat interventions in the framework of crisis management including peace-making”.

new gravitation and power centre of Europe around the states, which closely cooperate militarily, is formed.

Different speeds and inequalities of the development of countries and regions produce a new European centre-periphery conflict not only between the countries of Europe, but also within these countries. In between prospering ones, there lie regions given up to decay: "Flourishing landscapes next to declining villages, blooming enterprises next to some, which only live from quarter to quarter; well-earning people under time pressure next to under-paid ones or such, which have to live on the social state and whose life time is gobbled up by the stress of unemployment."³⁹ On this soil, there also grow Euro-scepticism and hostility, xenophobia and anti-Semitism.

Abroad plural Left in Europe must place the great emancipative potentials of Europe again into the centre of the European debates on future perspectives, linking up to democratic traditions and institutions, to a rich civil society, to close connections to countries of the South that are looking for similar paths and to the historical experiences of deep-reaching civilizational upheavals and two World Wars, and this in the sharpest confrontation with the history of colonialism, militarism and fascism. To make full use of this potential, Europe needs another vision, that of the social and solidary Europe linked with the permanent goals of the European Union: peace, liberty and the equality of the basic life conditions of the citizens⁴⁰; a Europe, where everyone can live in a self-determined and dignified way. Only in this way, will the process of European integration receive the kind of impulse needed for the deepening of integration and enlargement.

³⁹ Land, Rainer: Ostdeutschland. Fragmentierte Entwicklung (East Germany. Fragmented Development), In: Berliner Debatte Initial, Issue 146 (2003), p. 76.

⁴⁰ Brie, André: The Social is modern, the social is economical. Article on European Social Policy EPC. www.andrebrie.de.

How to realise such a vision, however?

The civilised form of conflict treatment – "Never yet has there been war between EU states"⁴¹ – is an achievement of the European people. It is now being put into question in the process of the continued economic, social and political, also foreign policy integration: While the objective of the EU, "to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its people" is anchored in Part I (Art. 1-2, draft of the European constitutional treaty), the common foreign and defence policy, and above all the common security and defence policy aims at arming up the European Union to a globally acting military power. Therefore, the Left Party.PDS demands the elimination of all resolutions which are supporting the militarization in European law.



A meeting of the Group of Left European parliamentarians

The extended European Union has the historical chance to act as an all-European space of peace, as a state and people's alliance oriented towards civilian values, to maintain its autonomous, international role in confrontation with the imperial foreign, military and economic policy of the USA and to develop independent active policies in these areas. The real task of the European Union consists precisely not in the build-up of a global force of intervention, but in a contribution to the pacification and the civilising of conflicts in its own environment – in the area of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Eastern Europe

⁴¹ Lothar Bisky (2004): Lasst uns für ein gemeinsames Projekt Europa von links streiten (Let us struggle for a common project of Europe from the left). www.pds-online.de/partei/strukturen/parteitag/pt0803/view_html?zid=28600.

and the Caucasus. This means that Europe has to practice itself disarmament of conventional weaponry and weapons of mass destruction, the creation of an Agency for Disarmament, Arms Control and Conversion, the lowering of the military expenditures of all EU member states. The Common Foreign and Security Policy must be redesigned – under the full and unrestrained control of the European parliament and the national parliaments of the member states. It must be aligned with multilateralism and the respect of international law, in particular the defence of the threat with and application of military force in international relations except for those cases, which are regulated by the UN statutes, the priority of economic, social, developmental, ecological and cultural cooperation. It should aim at the extension of the OSCE as security political institution, which includes Europe, North America, Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and at the democratisation and strengthening of the UN.

Europe must make an active contribution to the democratic control and regulation of international financial markets and to a globally agreed exchange rate policy. At the same time, there is needed the strengthening of an autonomous European economic policy, the reinforcement of European domestic economy and domestic demand, oriented towards consumer and environmental protection, in line with social standards, supplemented by a tax and social policy agreed on at the national and at the European level, an active, demand- and investment-oriented budgetary policy, a monetary policy of the European Central Bank, which is oriented in equal measure towards price stability, full employment and lasting economic development and whose action is subject to democratic control.

The vision of a peaceful, democratic, social, open and ecological Europe is possible only by a process of creation of all-European structures including the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia as well as North Africa and the Near East and by strengthening regional integra-

tion.⁴² European-wide also means: opening of the Union. The Left Party.PDS closes the EU door to no one, declares Petra Pau, member of the German parliament for the PDS.⁴³ She argues for offering the countries of Middle and Eastern Europe a clear perspective for joining the EU, but for recognising, at the same time, their right to self-determination over their developmental path and to insist vis-à-vis them on the observation of the rights of national minorities.⁴⁴ The Left Party.PDS favours the acceptance of Bulgaria and Rumania into the EU in the year 2007, it refuses all reasons to refuse the entry of Turkey for religious reasons, refers, however, to the Copenhagen criteria, according to which an acceptance is only possible, when human rights are guaranteed for all minorities living in Turkey and when the Cyprus question is cleared.

Questions concerning joining are questions of identity, power and structure. By way of the enlargement, questions on the democratisation of European structures, a membership with equal political and social rights, a changed subsidy, tax and budgetary policy arise. The Gross Domestic Product has only risen by 5 percent by the enlargement of the E.U. from 15 to 25 members, at the same time economic production per capita dropped by 10 percent, so that the whole EU budget should have increased to guarantee the same level of expenditure per inhabitant. Yet, the increase of the contributions by the member states from 1 percent to 1.24% was refused. In this way, the EU budgetary volume per inhabitant sank and, despite increased need, this puts into question the financing of the European development programmes.

⁴² Also see: Political Positions of the PDS: Demands for Working Out a European Refugee Convention before the Elections to the European Parliament on June 12, 1994, p. 21.

⁴³ Petra Pau (2004). We have another idea of the EU than the CDU/CSU. Sozialisten.de/politik/mbd/view_html?zid19967, July 29, 2005.

⁴⁴ Elections to the European Parliament on June 12, 1994. Opus cit., p. 14.

Another question is how the further integration should proceed? Should it proceed in the sense of a European central state or as a “European federation of national states”, or rather like a Europe of different integration forms and centres? How does the strengthening of the European parliament relate to the federal character of the union, which should at the same time be linked to the stronger autonomy of the regions and localities? The Left Party.PDS strives for a new order among EU and national states, countries, regions, and counties and municipalities: “In this connection, competencies will surely have to be regulated in a different way. For example, we favour a common foreign and security policy, we approve of the idea of a European foreign minister. We are also in favour, however, of a strengthening of the regions and local communities, for instance by way of a strengthening of local participation in the committee of the regions and a continued development of this committee into a second chamber in the European parliament.”⁴⁵

The Left in Germany and the Left in Europe stand for a social, peaceful and democratic Europe, which guarantees freedom, security, and the state of law and is characterised by the diversity of art and culture, education and science. To this end, European alliances, strategies and projects are required.

The successful struggle against the EU constitutional project was a common protest of a plural European left, which was able to overcome the lack of simultaneity and connection among social movements and protests. It could rely on the emergence of new European alliances, political spaces and cultures such as the European and regional social forums, which have developed since 2002 together with social movements and trade unions in Europe to become independent, assertive actors.

⁴⁵ Für starke Kommunen in einem sozialen, demokratischen und friedlichen Europa. Sömmerdaer Erklärung der Bundeskommunalkonferenz der PDS vom 14.-16. Mai 2004 (For strong local communities in a social, democratic and peaceful Europe. Sömmerda declaration of the federal conference of local communities of the PDS of May 14-16, 2004).

New political alliances such as the Party of the European Left (EL)⁴⁶, the Nordic Green-Left Alliance and the European Anti-capitalist Left (EAL) have formed. A new political and social dynamic is growing against neoliberal predominance.

The Left Party.PDS says: “We want a European Union, which manages its economy in a socially and ecologically sustainable way, gives itself common minimal standards as far as wages and taxes and social benefits are concerned, and consequently becomes a non-military association.”⁴⁷ Unavoidable is the complementation of the currency union by an economic, employment, social and environmental union. The political instruments and decision-making processes in Europe must be democratised and enable real participation by the citizens in Europe.

What concrete projects can be derived from these aims? Let us name five:

An alternative constitutional draft

Together with the Left in Europe, the German Left Party demands an alternative constitutional treaty, which summarises and changes the Charta of Basic Rights and the basic principles of the valid treaty in such a way that they do justice to the requirements of a peaceful, social, and democratic Europe. The responsibility of

⁴⁶ The Party of the European Left (in this country usually called the European Left Party) is the most important left-socialist party at the EU level. At this point (beginning of July 2005), the European Left Party consists of 23 member parties (15 full members, 8 with observer status) from 18 countries, among them also non-EU-member countries. The PDS belongs to the full members, just as does the Rifondazione Comunista (Italy), PCF (France), PCE (Spain), Izquierda Unida (Spain), Party of Labour (Switzerland), KPÖ (Austria), ESDTP (Estonia), Party of Democratic Socialism (SDS-Czech Republic), Communist Party of Slovakia, Synaspismos (Greece), Munkaspárt (Workers' Party - Hungary), Socialist Alliance Party (PAS - Rumania, and - completely new - the Left Alliance (Bloco d'Esquerda) from Portugal. Quite recently, the German DKP has also joined the observers.

⁴⁷ Left Party.PDS. Electoral Programme for the Federal Elections 2005. Draft, p. 27.

Europe for the maintenance of peace, the strengthening of the role of the United Nation and the prohibition of military force in international relations must be anchored and conceptually enshrined, meaning the elimination of all provisions, which promote a militarization of the European Union. A real constitution must guarantee the basic openness of the economic orders of the member states, and integrate the social obligation of property just as the social state models analogous to the German constitution. This includes social basic rights and minimal wages above the poverty line. In this constitution, there should be guaranteed political co-determination and a European right to strike. It must democratise its structures and decision-making processes. In the constitution, the right of the European parliament to legislative initiative and to elect the commission president and the imposition of the legal state principle of separation of powers should be included.

Social stability pact

An agreement on a social stability pact is necessary, which integrates the differences in the national social system in Europe and relies on the social state quotas, the share of the whole social expenditures in the gross domestic product, and in this way establishes the link between the social benefits and the economic development level of the countries. Countries with a similar level of development would be placed together in one group (corridor) and a corridor would be fixed in which the share of social expenditures should be develop. A deviation to the top is desirable; a deviation towards the bottom is sanctioned.⁴⁸

Employment

The Left Party in Germany, together with the European Left Party, demands to guarantee collective bargaining autonomy in an extended union completely and over the whole territory. It demands the introduction of minimal wage standards, an active wage policy, which encompasses productivity growth, a compensation for

inflation as well as a re-distributional component. The share of expenditures of the Work Agencies for active measures of training and education should be extended to 50 percent of the total budget. For this purpose, an European ecological and social investment programme and the protection of the non-profit economy and the third sector are necessary. The value-added tax for labour-intensive services should be reduced.



**Anti-Iraq-War Demonstrations
in London 2003**

Conversion of the armament industry

The Left Party.PDS is committed to a civil character of the European integration, the development of a common civil foreign and security policy. Europe has the political, cultural, and economic as well as financial potentials for that. The European Left should develop concrete alternatives to the "Agency for the Sectors Development of Defence Capabilities, Research, Procurement, and Defence" instituted for the surveillance of the obligation to modernise military capabilities (Art. I-41, 3, draft of the EU constitution) and to the imposition of "useful measure(s) for strengthening of the industrial and technological basis of the defence sector" (Art. III-311, draft constitution of the EU). A European Agency for Arms Reduction, Arms Control and Conversion would be one of these alternatives.

⁴⁸ Brie, André: Social is modern, opus cit.

IV. Strategic considerations

Six theses on the perspective of the Left Party: Open questions, problems, and challenges (by André Brie)

First thesis

The Left Party.PDS finished the federal elections with a success, nobody of thought of only half a year before. The basis is twofold. To start with, there exists a voter potential left of the SPD (and the Greens), which has grown noticeably in the last couple of years, of at least 15 percent. It consists to almost two-thirds of disappointed former SPD, in part also CDU voters and votresses, or respectively so-called non-voters and non-votresses, predominantly in the West German federal regions, to whom the SPD has not been able to offer anything for years already. The left self-definition of these people and their certainly complex agreement with political evaluations and demands of the PDS were well known. Nonetheless, the barrier the PDS faced was, for historical and cultural reasons, as well as due to the weakness of the party in West Germany, practically insurmountable, and this even one decade and a half after German unification.



Logo of the Left Part.PDS

Second, the meeting of PDS and WASG as well as the readiness, spectacular to many people, of Oskar Lafontaine and Gregor Gysi, to place themselves at the head of an unambiguous alternative to neoliberal politics, was precisely the signal that corresponded to the protest attitude and the hopes of many people, experiencing the current policy as social threat, division and exclusion. In the light of the lack of a political mood of new departure and the weakness of the alternative social movements, there was the need for this strong symbolism, in order to transform

the widespread passivity and resignation, if not into an active social movement, but at least (and abruptly) into a real, alternative voter potential.

Second thesis

This has also made apparent, however, first problems and challenges, which have to be solved to secure a durable perspective of the Left Party. The Left Party can be certain to be a strong force in the German parliament. But it enjoys absolute no certainty of a lasting perspective and of becoming the possible and necessary platform in party politics of a modern, new Left in Germany. This is not the question, for how long and how effectively Gysi, Lafontaine, and Bisky will stand for this new constitution of the Left, even though behind them, there stand – with all due appreciation – a number of maybe competent, but not even remotely as mass effective and integrative personalities.

The actual problems, however, are much larger: The Left party profits quickly from massive political disappointment with the established parties and the erosion of the traditional social democratic milieu. The latter is owed, in my conviction, not only to the turning away of the SPD from social and democratic policy, but also due to the deep-reaching socio-structural changes in modern societies, in particular to the ever greater social and cultural differentiation in all social classes and strata. The Left Party as well will, for the foreseeable future, not be able to base itself on any solid milieu and only in the minority on standing voters, especially if it is not capable of linking a policy of social justice, cohesion, and solidarity with answers to the great differentiation and individuality of life plans of the people.

Moreover, three immediate deficits of the Left Party are probably, in any event, hard to deny: first of all, its over-age and its difficulties in opening itself culturally to young people (the occasional youth cult in the PDS when nominating candidates does not change anything to this), second, the male dominance in the PDS and even more so in the WASG, and the dramatically receding real attention to feminist politics, thirdly, the very few points of contacts with the new socially-critical movements, with critical intellectuals and European and international left discussion.

Third thesis

However, it is here, as in all other political and programmatic questions, not a question of the – also needed – answers to be worked out in party chambers or in parliaments, as convincing as they may be in detail. It is a question of the social resonance, the change of the political climate, without which the most perfect concepts will remain politically irrelevant. It is a matter of counter-hegemony, which challenges neoliberalism fundamentally in social protest and in parliamentary work and challenges it – there lies the gravest deficit at this moment – with modern, realistic alternatives. For that, the greatest intellectual, communicative and political efforts are needed, which are in any event not in ample supply.

From the side of the PDS executives, directly after Schröder's decision to advance the elections of the federal parliament, an "end of the academic discussion" over an opening to the WASG was demanded. Only under the pressure of the declaration by Oskar Lafontaine that he was ready to be a candidate for a Left alliance, two days later, a turn by 180 degrees was operated. Even more problematic is the fact that this discussion before had been led by the party executive neither "academically" and even less so politically inside the PDS.

The PDS has numerous, often also convincing and differentiated concepts against Hartz IV and the Agenda 2010, for a more just tax and financial policy, ever newly developed concepts for a self-sustainable economic development in East Germany, or for social security system which is fi-

nanced mostly by the enterprises in depends of their gross product (and not, as is the case now, on the labour they employ). What was hardly seen in the last couple of years (with the notable exception of book "So many dreams" by Lothar Bisky) are intellectual impulses and offers reaching into the society or the participation in the intellectual and social discussion. Monologues and the fear to actively engage into the dialogue with the critics still dominate.

There is also the lack both of the force and of the readiness to lead the confrontation over a realistic peace and security concept or to bundle the concepts, ripened in the PDS more than in any other political and social organisation, of a new public economic sector into a fascinating and strategic project of a strong third economic sector, which could combine civil society property forms, local social provision, social and ecological sustainability, regional economic circuits and the extension of the cultural infrastructure. The social resonance to the political protest attitude of the PDS or respectively the Left Party is not minor and often positive. The resonance to the alternative concept is small, however.

Fourth thesis

Yet, this is only one side, not even the hardest. There is a need of something even more important: a society, at least important parts of society, who do not only protest or resign or at best defend the standards of the past (which of course is important nonetheless), but one of new answers which, for instance, develops ideas of a civil society-based democracy, an emancipative restructuring of social cohesion and social solidarity, a European and international society and economy, and discusses them itself, and whose political and social movements develop primarily outside of parties.

The German society is currently still far away. In the survey results of the past decade, around 80% of the people, in a rather stable fashion, have demanded fundamental social changes, while simultaneously 75% held them to be impossible. The social resonance to the political protest attitude of the PDS or respectively the Left Party is not at all minor and often

positive. The resonance to the alternative concepts, on the contrary, is small. Resonance, however, is not a one-way street, unless one wants to relapse again into a dangerous and futile elitist avant-gardism. Society, especially the critical social movement and their debates, must also find strong resonance in the Left Party.



Gregor Gysi, head of the parliamentary group of the Left Party

How can this problem be solved, however, as long as there is a lack in social optimism, strong social movements and social counter-hegemony? I am not so pessimistic in this respect, because, first of all, I see that neoliberalism, at this point politically so dominating, already is in an intellectual crisis. Second, in my opinion, Franz Walter, in his *Zeit* article (23/2005) "Republic in departure" seems to be right, when he writes: "The Germans will elect a government, whose project, rhetoric and also leading figures they are already fed up with... The new liberalism may well approach power – but in its core, the majority of the society has already left it behind." I share especially his opinion that "in the future... it will become ever clearer, how destructively the factor of change really is, what destructive force deregulated capitalism unfolds... This development will lead to the renewed increase in social regulatory ideas and social integrative instruments. It may well be that the state will be rediscovered as inner guarantor of freedom and peace. There will be discussions over integrative occupational and organisational patterns, also about a new restructuring of the political, much more strongly oriented toward participation."

Thirdly, there after all already exist the more or less effective actors of these new social debates and of a new intellectual and political climate: left social movements on anti-racist, internationalist, feminist, peace and socio-ecological questions and a not so small stratum of critical intellectuals. Ulrich Brand, member of the scientific co-advisory board of Attac, stated in *Frankfurter Rundschau* of July 13, 2005: "Neither PDS nor WASG have been attractive so far to either of the two spectra." This criticism has to be taken seriously. I think it is pertinent. This has to do less with the good will within the PDS/Left Party, with lack of respect of these social movements (with regard to the intellectuals, however, it looks different), least of all with the very many nice declarations of intent. The programmatic points of contact are not few, even if contradictory. The common interest in a "substantial-strategic and organisational reconstruction of a plural left" is great. Yet, the personal, cultural, and concrete, practical points of contact are lacking on both sides.

The reservations in the left social movements against parties, the fears to get exploited or the adaptation of left parties to "parliamentary-representative procedures" (Brand) loom large. While Brand sees "interesting developments" in the PDS, "a non-exploitative relationship", according to him, presupposed trust. This, in my opinion, however, can only be established by way of competent, continuous, and critical working contacts, by high-calibre offerings from the side of the Left Party and its opening in the direction of the left movements and the intellectuals. This, however, does not mean, at least not at all primarily, to let representatives of these forces run as candidates for the Left Party, but its opening for their topics and discussions, for their criticism and the capacity to also bring to bear anti-neoliberal, system-critical claims in the parliaments or in regional governments.

The concepts of a value-creation-based contribution, the citizens' insurance or the social basic security can, in the beginning debates of the globalisation-critical movement, join debates about such new concepts as global public goods, new property forms in the "knowledge society" (free

software, *copyleft*), about participative budgets and the strengthening of communal democracy ("reclaiming the state"). Nonetheless, a party with such great municipal and regional anchoring and acceptance as the PDS will also have to give morally conscionable and realistic answers to diehard budgetary questions on the evolution of communal taxes, on the conditions of kindergartens, theatre or local and regional labour market topics.

Fifth thesis

The question just discussed is of a fundamental, but also of a particularly significance. In my opinion, the conditions mentioned by Franz Walter in the *Zeit*, but also the programmatic and intellectual weakness of the CDU/CSU and FDP as well as the deep contradictions within the Union and between the Union and the FDP speak in favour of not expecting, in contrast to earlier decades, no long black-yellow governmental period, Already in 2009, other parliamentary relationships of forces are possible, maybe even probable. That the Left Party, in 2005, under no conditions, would be prepared for a coalition with the SPD and the Alliance Greens is consensus and, in light of the "red-green" governmental policy as well as the history of the Left Party, unavoidable.

What will happen in 2009, however? SPD and Greens will try in the opposition to again develop somewhat more of a left profile; with what kind of credibility, we shall see. Many things cannot be evaluated seriously at present. But a situation, in which the Left Party, would, for arithmetical reasons, become part of a coalition which would not be ready for a truly anti-neoliberal policy, would draw the existential rug from under this party and deprive it of all possibility of continued existence. Maybe four years are a lot of time for initiatives, law proposals and speeches in the Bundestag. They are very little in society.

Therefore, the intellectual and political work reaching into society and cooperation with its critical parts can no longer be postponed for a single further day. In case the coalition with the SPD, already not excluded by Gysi and Lafontaine, were to

become possible in 2009, then only in a different political climate in the whole republic, only with a SPD that would have found back to its social and democratic roots, only for a really different policy, really socially just, oriented towards the domestic economy of Europe, more civilian, sustainable, emancipative.

Sixth thesis

Only the possibility to oppose effective political resistance to the demolition of the social state and to link it with publicly persuasive alternatives as well as an emancipative, enlightening and solidarity-based policy will be capable to prevent that protests are captured by the Right and channelled in a xenophobic, racist and nationalist direction. Yet, I am convinced that the Left Party must also give to such a strategy and policy a foundation critical of capitalism and aimed at democratic socialism.

The struggle for a new left social democracy does not do sufficient justice to the social responsibility and the perspective of a new Left Party. Anti-neoliberalism will not be adequate as a simple remembrance or even renewal of Keynesian policies. In a time of almost catastrophic political and intellectual defensive of the left critical of capitalism and the factual taboo of power and property questions, it must finally be dared to also ask these again in an offensive manner, because the system-inherent scopes for the urgent social democratisation and democratic socialisation of the society are obviously exhausted. This takes place, in a politically relevant way, at present, neither in the PDS nor in the WASG, least of all in a form that would reach millions of people with their actual interests and experiences, because party-Communist orthodoxy is no longer apt to win you a pot of flowers. This debate must be led with the part of the WASG, which rejects goals that are critical of capitalist society and reach beyond capital dominance. Left social movements can, however, they do not have to have such a far-reaching goal, the Left Party, however, must.

Whatever way he may have imagined the answer, Ralf Dahrendorf has described this challenge already years ago in this

book "*The modern social conflict*", but the democratic left critical of capitalism has up to now not been prepared and ready to seize upon it with a modern content and to make it the subject of real politics: "There are times, in which social conflicts and their scientific discussion take on a fundamental or constitutional character... That was the case in the 18th century...; it again holds at the end of the 20th century. In such times, the rules of the game of power and society themselves are at stake."

The neoliberal mainstream, in it the parties of CDU/CSU and FDP reaching to the Greens and the SPD, as a matter of fact, put the rules of the game up to now actually at disposal, however, without open and "scientific debate" of the striven for and practised change of paradigms, but with the propagandistic claim, with the lie that they simply want to renew them.

The Left, however, the PDS and the WASG as well, remains primarily in a defensive attitude and resigns itself to its own situation of defensive and weakness. In order not to be misunderstood, this defensive and weakness is real, and the conclusion in my opinion can in no way be any societal fundamentalism, no black and

white alternative, no dusty verbal revolutionism, no reduction to a social breach with social continuity, on the contrary: the alternative to the market society is above all the decisive democratisation of politics and society. And without political realism and without real politics, this I also say in a reduced and consciously abstract way, it won't be possible to put up for discussion the "rules of the game of power and society" from the left, with a tendency critical of capitalism in a politically and socially effective way.

Ulrich Brand's conclusion is also mine, as long as it is not understood as lack of self-assurance and lacking battle spirit of a Left Party or of extra-parliamentary resistance, which would also be far from Brand's point: "A party can only be part of social changes and cannot replace the commitment of millions of people for a better society in different contexts. It can also not simply produce this commitment, but at best bundle it in circumspect actions for certain causes. Otherwise, we shall live a brief straw fire, which for the xth time and supported by the ruling powers nourishes the illusions of parliamentarism."

The Left Party in Germany – Chances and Problems (by Erhard Crome)

A spectre is haunting again

“Spectre!” – this image was repeatedly used in the description of the Left Party. This is a reference to Marx and Engels and the classical first sentence of the *Communist Manifesto*: “A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism!”⁴⁹ Is such a calling aiming too high, or does it reflect the actual historical context? To be sure, the term Communism should be replaced, for example, by the expression: “Another world is possible!” or by the term “socialist idea”. The specifics of the contemporary political debates about the Left Party in Germany result precisely from the fact that it is being perceived as the political alternative to the neoliberal point of view and way of acting of the other parties, which are represented at this point in the German Federal parliament.

If, briefly after the fiasco of real socialism, the former Opel worker and former minister in the Kohl government, Norbert Blüm, said that Marx was dead and Jesus lived, then at the beginning of the new century, it becomes clear to ever more people that Marx has to be questioned afresh, when it is a matter of the analysis of the current constitution of society and elaboration of alternatives. (Actually, precisely the movement of the social forums shows too taking Jesus taken seriously, one may very well get to a critical view on today’s world.)

This was, during recent years, also experienced in other contexts and, therefore, an analogous reference chosen: the “spectre” problem cannot be laid ad acta.

Thus, Uli Schöler, at that time secretary of the programmatic commission at the party executive of the SPD, titled his book of 1999 “about Marx and the socialist idea after the failure of Soviet state socialism”: “A spectre disappeared in Europe”. His analysis back then led Schöler to the conclusion that, “on the basis of today’s conditions and the challenges of the new century, old as well as new principles of the socialist idea can be considered likely”:

- the principle of the primacy of long-term social interests over the capital utilisation interest, currently imposing itself as if naturally and on a global scale, or respectively the principle of slowing down instead of acceleration;
- the principle of sustainable development, of a rational, resource-saving and energy-economising in relation to nature;
- the principle of labour, to be distributed as justly and as equally as possible, as well as the principle of a democratic public and of co-determination;
- the principle of gender equality;
- the principle of international solidarity, peace and universal validity of human rights.”

His conclusion then was: “Who would dispute that – understood in this way, the socialist idea also in the next century will still have to accomplish quite a number of tasks.”⁵⁰ He was right. However, Schöler back then could not have guessed that his own party, under Gerhard Schröder, in its practical politics, would part completely with this idea. This shall not be pursued further here. Still it belongs to the understanding of the current political situation in Germany.

⁴⁹ Compare Rainer Rilling, Christoph Spehr: Die Wahl 2006, die Linke und der jähe Bedarf an Gespenstern (The elections 2006, the Left and the sudden need for spectres), Rosa-Luxemburg Stiftung: rls Standpoints 6/2005; the same: Good morning, Spectre! Approaches to the sudden appearance of a party projects, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in English, 2005.

⁵⁰ Uli Schöler: Ein Gespenst verschwand in Europa (A spectre disappeared in Europe), Research Institute of the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, Politics and History of Society Series, Vol. 52, Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Successors 1999, p. 332 f.

Today we have to do in Germany with the “spectre” of the Left Party, which is just about to step from the realm of ideas into that of reality.⁵¹ Now the second sentence in the *Manifesto* gains in importance, which goes as follows: “All powers of Europe have united in a holy witch hunt against this spectre...” This also could have been written yesterday. In any event, it is an exact description of what the other parties in Germany, the bourgeois media, the self-named think tanks and experts and also the public opinion researchers are doing in these last weeks before the anticipated elections.

Given a strategic perspective – precisely because the socialist idea is not finished – one may depart from the assumption that the real potential of the Left Party lies clearly over 12 percent. However, this under the assumption that all Hartz IV victims, all whose pensions have been cut, all precariously employed, all those driven into poverty and all those who continue to receive a good earning, but who remember that there are alternatives despite madams Thatcher’s “There is no alternative” (which was the entry gate for neoliberalism as against social justice and the welfare state principle also in Germany) vote according to their objective situation. Neoliberalism has been able to take over every-day discourse as well. Insofar the Left Party is the expression of the dwindling of the intellectual hegemony of neoliberalism in Germany.

Neoliberalism continues to rule, however, in the structures and fights tooth and claw against the loss of its dominance. Therefore, this electoral campaign in this late summer of 2005 is a particularly sharp electoral campaign, in which the other side puts its stakes less on arguments, but

rather on denunciations, insinuations and defamations. The other four parties in the Federal Parliament, Black and Yellow on the one side and Rose-Green, on the other, are certainly in a confrontation about who has to lead the neoliberal campaign, but against Red, against the Left Party, they all stand together. Yet, the new Left, which amounts to a tectonic shift in the German party system, is nothing else but the political expression of the class struggle which those “Up there”, since 1990, have been consciously leading against those “Down there” – and which now also in Germany receives an answer from the left.

The new cleavage

Classical political science has explained the emergence of political parties along so-called historical lines of conflict, or respectively cleavages. In Europe, the processes of industrialisation, of nation-building, of secularisation and extension of the right to vote to ever larger parts of the adult population were determining. In this connection, cleavages were distinguished in the problem areas: state – church or respectively confessions; state – land or respectively industry and trade interests versus agrarian interests; capital – labour as well as centre – periphery.⁵² The traditional parties, from the conservative passing by liberals, Christian democrats and parties of national, cultural, or religious minorities as well as peasant parties can be explained socio-historically in the light of these interest-constituting cleavages. Moreover, since the 1960s/1980s, there was determined a “change of values” from rather traditional or respectively “materialistic” values to “post-materialistic” ones.⁵³

⁵¹ The *Financial Times Germany* as well uses – not accidentally – the expression “spectre” in describing the sudden, and to its mind probably unexpected attraction of the Left Party in the far West. Maïke Rademacher: Ein Gespenst geht um in Uedelhoven (A spectre is haunting Uedelhoven), in: *Financial Times Germany*, August 9, 2005. Earlier, the *Spiegel* had already done so, when on July 11 (no. 28/2005) on p. 54, it titled: Das Linksgespenst (The Left Spectre).

⁵² Compare Seymour M. Lipset, Stein Rokkan, eds.: *Party systems and Voter Alignments*, New York, 1967. Compare also: Klaus von Beyme: *Parteien in westlichen Demokratien*, München: Piper Publishers 1984.

⁵³ Compare Ronald Inglehart: Wertewandel in westlichen Gesellschaften (Change of values in Western societies), in: Helmut Klages, Peter Kmieciak (eds.) *Wertewandel und gesellschaftlicher Wandel (Change of values and social change)*, Frankfurt a.M./New York 1979, p. 279-316; Ronald Inglehart: *Kultureller Um-*

This means cultural, social, finally intellectual expectations and their fulfilment, which always has, however, the satisfaction of the physiological and psychic needs as their prerequisites. (Formulated in a Marxist way: people first have to eat, clothe and dwell somewhere, before they can devote themselves to philosophy and politics, or rather put environmental protection at the top of their priority lists.) This then was used to explain the emergence of Green Parties in Europe.

Already in the wake of the First World War a cleavage emerged within the “socialist camp – reformism vs. revolutionism”, which led to the conflict between social democratic parties, on the one hand, and Communist, on the other. Essentially, the struggle was about whether the primacy should lie with democracy, which asks for elections and majorities, or whether the revolution – following the model of the Russian Bolsheviks, should – in the sense of the quick expropriation of capitalists – enjoy precedence before democratic rules of the game.

The notion of the “political camp” is appropriate for the analysis of party systems and voting behaviour over longer historical periods. It can make apparent continuities and constellations of forces, even if the concrete party formations change by way of refoundations and new foundations. A political camp is distinct from a milieu and lives much more strongly of the demarcation to other political camps. It can contain very heterogeneous environments, which once upon a time, for often surely very different reasons, have entered a historical coalition with certain political elites. “A political camp may, therefore, include not only different parties, but moreover different socio-moral surroundings, moreover, it may contain people, who have dropped out of local and cross-local milieu connections altogether.”⁵⁴

bruch (Cultural upheaval), Frankfurt a.M./New York, 1989.

⁵⁴ Karl Rohe: Wahlen und Wählertraditionen in Deutschland (Elections and electoral traditions). Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag 1992, pp. 21-22.

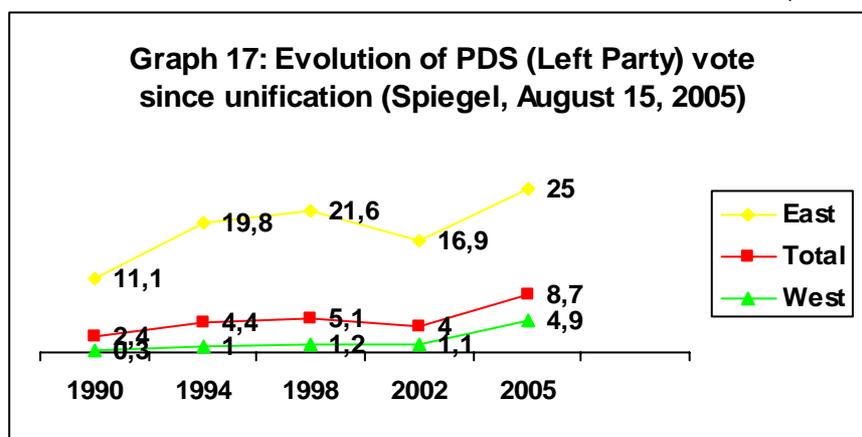
The deep break between social democrats and Communists in many ways marked the political struggles of the 20th century and determined the historical division within the “socialist camp” until the failure of real socialism. After 1989, this split was historically done with. The real-socialist societal fabrics with exercise of power by the Communist Party and the centrally planned economic system had failed and were voted down by the respective populations. In this way, however, in contrast to the expectations of the self-named “victors of history”, the social question was not laid ad acta. It is rather constantly reproduced by real-existing capitalism. Therefore, the “socialist camp” remains the constant companion of capitalism, its most genuine, nature-grown product, its critic, its challenge with the perspective for alternatives. The PDS, as a left-socialist party, which had broken with the Communist tradition of Leninism and Stalinism, but also did not simply want to administer capitalism efficiently in a duet with social democracy, tried to attain its own, historically new profile. These attempts had in the past almost always been suppressed in the battle between Communists and social democrats.

At first, however, the situation in Germany remained divided, however. To the above-mentioned cleavages, there was added, after 1989, in East Germany, as in all post-Communist societies, the line: “Communism – anti-Communism”. It also remained constitutive, even when political-programmatic positions, after the turn, should actually have signalled proximity. In daily life of social politics, this appeared again and again in the relationship between SPD or Alliance 90/The Greens and the PDS, or in the case of certain substantial topics, for instance, the exacerbating problem of pension for persons formerly “close to the system” in their GDR past.

In other words, in the left field, the PDS faced the traditional SPD – to a certain extent also Alliance90/The Greens – whose political potential and impact it hardly could measure up to on the all-German scale. The electoral results of the 1990s – to the Federal Parliament (compare Graph 17), to the East German regional parliaments, as well as to the different local representations – however,

pointed to the PDS having become a solid fixture of the political fabric in Germany.

Between PDS and social democrats in East Germany, it seemed to be, in the first line, not the programmes, which constituted the political difference, but the deep gap between the opponents, inherited from the old regime. The membership of the PDS in the old system consisted in its large majority of former SED members, while the founding membership of the SPD in the East was composed mainly of oppositionists, which had gathered in the GDR in the 1980s under the roof of the church.



In the second half of the 1990s, the evolution seemed to burn down to a permanent competition of two parties on the left-wing field. While the PDS was able to anchor itself in the East of Germany firmly as a “popular party”, its reach in the West remained narrowly constrained. Also among large sections of the workers and the Left, the stereotypes of anti-Communism continued to act, or respectively, it had the reputation of being “Easty” and not “modern” enough. The SPD ruled the field.

If one departs from the assumption that political systems are coalitions between concrete political elites, which have formed parties and mark these and certain voter segments, then the constitution, the articulation and the “life trajectories” of parties in a political field can certainly be understood as a historically open process. Especially open are times, in which a party system crystallises socially in a new way. Karl Rohe describes this with respect to the situation on Germany in the last third of the 19th century; in a broader sense, however, this approach can be applied to

the transformational societies of post-Communist type, among them the East of Germany. There emerges a new party system; new political parties are looking for support among the possibly broadest strata of voters, who in turn only became their voters as a result of historical upheavals, in order to impact in this way on political action under the prerequisite of democracy. Rohe transformed a Marxist approach and called this an “original political accumulation”.

In the East of Germany, this process was embedded in a dominating all-German context; however, it fed back on it. For the first time, in 2002, the federal elections

were decided predominantly in the East, because the groupings of the electoral camps in the West were approximately of equal size. Elections serve the assertion of such support, or rather, the voicing of a rejection. For this reason, party systems, and therefore, the relationship between voters and political elites require

constant care and symbolical renewal, if they are not to erode. But conversely this means: The change of party systems does not have to have its origins only in the eroding of the social basis of parties, but it may also happen that political elites have failed, consciously or unconsciously, to renew in time the “political coalition” with certain voter segments.⁵⁵

At this point, one should return one more time to social-democracy under Schröder. Advised by political scientists, who think that the working class no longer has a great influence in society and that it is better to position the SPD at the centre, and under the pressure of employers’ association as well as the apparent financial constraints of the globalising world economy, the party leadership has, to a considerable degree, expelled its political and social basis, which still existed in 1998. The reform notion, to large parts of the popula-

⁵⁵ Karl Rohe, opus cit., p. 25/26.

tion, was from then on linked with negative associations; while “reforms”, under Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, had meant political measures to the benefit of the working people and the socially disadvantaged, reforms are now set tantamount to social demolition and worse positions of workers, employees, craftsman and the socially weak.

It was, to use the analytical approach used by Rohe, consciously omitted, by the Agenda 2010 and the Hartz laws, to renew the political coalition with the former voter segments. Schröder has facilitated certain processes in Germany: a left image of the SPD no longer exists. The SPD is, with its green offshoot, a neoliberal formation. It has moved so far “into the middle”, that the open space to the left has become ever larger. It now has to be filled. The characteristic cleavage now is: neoliberalism vs. social responsibility. It overlays all other cleavages: the anti-Communism has lost its power. The party SPD as organisation of its “political elite” has left the socialist camp and finds itself on the other side of this cleavage. A new political situation in Germany emerged.

The Left Party is not the construct of some politicians. Its party executive as well as other actors in Germany have understood that it is not a matter of the party as goal in itself, but about the changing of the basic structure of the party system in Germany. The PDS was able, despite its many internal political and programmatic problems, to move at the height of the historical challenge. The socio-historical cleavage neoliberalism vs. social responsibility finds its political expression in the difference between the neoliberal consensus of all other parties in the Federal parliament and the Left Party.

Justice should rule the world

In Biblical times, good times were, when the people were doing well. Good rule was measured by that standard. Today the people are indifferent to the rulers. The yield has become the only criterion. The firms in the Frankfurt stock market index DAX earned by 60% more in 2004 than in the year before. The dividend payments were increased by 40%. The executive

revenues in German stock companies, in 2003, lay by 88.8% higher than in 1997; wages and salaries, by contrast, sank by 1.4%. The number of employed in the producing sector, in the meantime, in Germany, decreased from 14 million in the year 1991 to currently 10.3 million, and the number of the unemployed grew from 2.6 million to 5.2 millions. All of this is reflected in the bourgeois press. But seemingly without consequences: as if it was a matter of natural events, like the Tsunami. There, however, aid came. Here, by contrast, the “aid” means: Hartz IV – in other words, poverty by law and forced labour.

“Capitalism has declared war on the working class, and it has won”, Lester Thurow wrote in the 1990s. All the talk about the allegedly non-existing money for the social budget has this background. However, no one says that in the bourgeois media, at least not in this country. Yet, it became time to name the things by their names again. The name is the old one, precisely not worn: *class struggle*.

Real socialism caused its own demise, by hallucinating to itself ideologically the solution of generally human tasks. The others laughed up their sleeve and turned an ever bigger wheel. War as the again usable means of world politics, the degrading of the formerly Communist world region to what is again periphery of the West, the sinking of the former “Third” World into ever greater poverty, linked to the falling apart of the state, chaos and civil war massacres and the demolishing of the social security system of the countries of the West – all this belongs together and is part of a class struggle from the top. It is not over yet. The European governments have capitulated or better: they play along with that game. If social democracy in Germany, after Helmut Schmidt, had stopped implementing economic policy, it in the meantime has also parted with the idea of implementing social policy.

The capital side seems to be getting ever stronger. Wage dumping in the “South” is used as a means of extortion against the working in the “North”. Mass unemployment and the precariousness of ever larger segments of the “labour market” are supposed to increase the pressure and the lower strata, in the meantime unemployed

– that is the meaning of the Hartz concept and Agenda 2010. The government makes itself the lackey of the capital owners. “Who has unemployment, does not need any Stasi!” (GDR State security) Heiner Müller already knew in the beginning of the 90s.

At this point, let us point to a historical analogy: The Thirty Years’ War in Germany (1618-48) had its deeper roots not simply in the bloody conflicts of faith between Catholics and Protestants. The effect on history was a mutual lack of comprehension between the generations. Those, who in the first half of the 16th century had waged the war for the “right faith”, by the end, came to the conclusion that only by way of mutual tolerance and thus compromise, an agreement was possible. This compromise had been reached at the Congress of the multitude of states of the German Empire at Augsburg in 1555. The following generation, which had no longer experienced these religious wars itself and also did not know, how arduous the way to reconciliation had been, no longer felt that the old compromise was a solution reached by both sides of the conflict. It put the compromise into question again and made demands which just let the conflict flare up again which resulted in the devastating war of the 17th century in Middle Europe.

Precisely this is happening today with respect to the welfare state regulation of the social conflict. It had been a social compromise of the same type as that between Catholics and Protestants, and it had, after 1945, civilized the hard class struggles of over one hundred years. The rescinding of this compromise is at the core of what is going on these days in Germany and in Western EU Europe.

The abdication of politics is a moment of that process. The sociologist Erwin Scheuch and his wife Ute, quite unsuspected of Communist subversion, wrote in the book: “Cliques, cronies and careers” that a “liquidation” of political contents has taken place. “Hard topics” are pushed into the background, or respectively, their media presentation shifts into centre stage. “In the meantime, there has worked itself its way up until high into the leaderships at the federal level a political personnel that

is simply only capable of ‘soft’ politics by means of setting signals and remains baffled by the challenges of the ‘hard’ topics.”⁵⁶ This could be a commentary on what Schröder, Fischer, Mrs. Merkel and others at present conduct in the name of “reform policies”, but it was written in 1992, in Kohl times. From the Left, one might add here that those to whom this country and the globalised world economy belong, precisely need that kind of politicians. Others might disturb their circles.

Another finding of the Scheuchs was that there took place a “feudalisation of the political system” in Germany. An exchange of privileges against loyalty emerged. And this loyalty, “in the feudal system, is always connected with the person, although legally, it pertains only to the office.” The functional connections in politics are determined by the interpersonal network parties, who after all do not approach a problem programmatically, “but propagandistically – namely by way of the appropriateness of certain positions to bring about, by means of a good medial echo, populist successes.” The Scheuchs did not shy away from asking the question, whether this feudalisation was only a transitional phenomenon or rather “a systemic change”.⁵⁷ This would have to be answered today with a “Yes”, and it would have to be added, whether capitalism does not move, in general, in a cycle analogous to feudalism, and we today, in the countries of the centre, are everywhere entering into the phase of an absolutist capitalism.

And precisely because the leadership today no longer knows, why, in the 20th century, the compromises between capital and labour were reached, they today follow the demands of the business associations to increase the pressure on the working, the unemployed and the socially disadvantaged. If the German writer Kurt Tu-

⁵⁶ Erwin K. and Ute Scheuch: Cliques, Klüngel und Karrieren. Über den Verfall der politischen Parteien – eine Studie (Cliques, cronies, and careers. About the disintegration of political parties – a study), Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag 1992, p. 112, 114.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 117 and 118.

cholsky remarked in the 1920s that, in contrast to the rulers of the past, one hardly noticed the really mighty of his day in their dark limousines, the McKinsey advertising agency in summer 2004 celebrated its 40th anniversary in Germany together with 5,000 people in central buildings of Berlin – guarded by 500 policemen. Again wealth is consciously demonstrated.

The system of rule apparently corresponds to the management patterns and to the concentration of property. That question, by the way, also troubled the Scheuchs. In an investigation of the acting of German big-company managers and their bankruptcies around the turn of the century, they reached the conclusion that there had taken place, in the economy, a shift of accents from production to marketing, from marketing to services and within these to financial affairs. In this way, a large part of economic management turned into a virtual world. A scope of action for the decisions of managers developed, in which business criteria do no longer enjoy the predominant importance in the economy that they used to have. The more, therefore, management operates according to the rules of casino-type capitalism, the less it can be determined what is still rational doing at all.

The Scheuchs insisted on a notion of social market economy: It is based on “the social obligation of property”. Under this condition it holds: “Speculative capital in this sense enjoys no protection of property rights, because it is, in a substantive sense, not property at all. The goal of an economic order is the maximisation of utility for a society, or respectively, primarily its population. That individual economic power-seekers do not want to tow the line here is natural in a society, where individualism enjoys a high value. It must also be natural, however, that the scopes of action of such power-seekers remain limited.” What is necessary is “a competitive order at the service of the common weal.” Such an order and also “democracy itself cannot survive... without such countersteering.” The conclusion of both Scheuchs: “The way the economic acting of the large firms of the economically lead-

ing states in the 90s has developed cannot continue without ending in a crash.”⁵⁸

Immanuel Wallerstein, the world-known historian and lucid analyst of the global economic system, at the end of the 1990s, had reached a similar conclusion; however, he went further in his deductions. His thesis was: the system of capitalism cannot endure. The world is in an age of transition. In the beginning of the 21st century, a structural crisis has seized the centres of the world economy. The relationships between North and South, dominated by the USA and the profiteers of the global economy, get out of balance and threaten to plunge into chaos. The liberalist ideology and the welfare projects in the centres lose their credibility. Radicalisms and fundamentalisms, in the North and in the South, in the centres as on the periphery, move into the foreground.⁵⁹

In a text published later on the “geopolitical conflict lines in the 21st century”, Wallerstein identified three fundamental cleavages that shall determine the world in the 21st century. That he sees one conflict line “within the triad”, especially in between Western Europe and the United States, cannot really surprise after the war on Iraq by Mr. Bush Jr., just as little as the restating of the break between “North and South”, but the assessment that there exist a “Davos-Porto Alegre” break is noteworthy in a way. (“Porto Alegre” does not stand here for the city in the south of Brazil, but as a synonym for the movement of the World Social Forums.) Both in the “spirit of Davos” as well as in that of “Porto Alegre”, Wallerstein recognises movements of transformation, which both react to changes in the world, the “structural crisis of the world system”, however, they are basically different, even opposite. It is these two poles, in between which the

⁵⁸ Erwin K. and Ute Scheuch: *Deutsche Pleiten. Manager im Größen-Wahn oder Der irrationale Faktor* (German bankruptcies. Megalomaniac managers, or The irrational factor), Berlin: Rowohlt Publishers 2001, p. 379, 382.

⁵⁹ Immanuel Wallerstein: *Utopistik. Historische Alternativen des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Historical alternatives of the 21st century), Wien: Promedia 2002 (US original of 1998).

political and moral fundamental decisions on the future are made: is man, are his and her needs and interests the measure of all things, or is it an unlimited profit-mongering economy? All of this, Wallerstein does not say in these words. But he emphasises: “The divide between the spirit of Davos and that of Porto Alegre cannot be located geographically. However, it is the most fundamental of the three cleavages. At its frontiers, it is not the struggle for the next 25 to 50 years, which is taking place, but for the next 500.”⁶⁰

From the positions of the Scheuchs and by Wallerstein three conclusions can be drawn: We find ourselves in a qualitatively new historical situation of transition. The outcome of the confrontations lying ahead of us, not to say struggles, is essentially dependent on the relationship of forces. Here the social movements are important (keyword: spirit of Porto Alegre) – in the political space, however, also the political parties. Since the other parties in the Federal parliament defend the side of the capital interests, the needs and interests of the people also require a political representation. This is the historical challenge the Left Party is facing.

Because the absolutist tendency of contemporary capitalism undermines democracy and strives towards undermining it further, the creation, formation, and strengthening of the counter-forces at the same time constitutes the realisation of spirit and letter of the German constitution, the struggle for the social obligation of property included. It is a matter of re-politicising the social questions and of regaining the power for social responsible politics. The question arises whether the Left Party will be able to establish itself for the duration in the political landscape of the Federal Republic and to act in an effectively political way or not. Yes, it has this chance – to the extent that it and its political actors succeed to live up to the tasks of the hour. Or, put differently, in a

somewhat more old-fashioned way: the objective situation cries for a representation of the interests and needs of the working of people, of the socially weak, of all the victims of present neoliberal policy, but also by the wishes of those, who in the name of democracy and human dignity want another policy. The question is whether the subjective prerequisites are adequate to the magnitude of the historical task.

Politics and programme

Wolfgang Fritz Haug has placed the book that Frigga Haug and he edited before the elections 2002⁶¹, on a website as this year's election approached. In a preface written especially for this purpose, he refers in particular to the disappointment cycle active in society: “behind the crisis of legitimacy of the Red-Green government, there looms the crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy.” The conservatives seemed to gain from this situation, those, “who, however, in contrast to this designation do not conserve but further radicalise the neoliberal revolution against the social state.” Since the “basic determinants of unemployment”, however, won't change, the next disappointment is already pre-programmed. This results in the “legitimacy crisis of representative democracy”, of which the extreme right threatens to profit. From here as well, the historical responsibility of the Left arises: “The dialectic of close-range and long-term goals under such conditions presents a surprise. The furthest is the closest. For democracy's sake, the Left must strive towards turning the legitimacy crisis of representative democracy into the legitimacy crisis of capitalism as a whole. Because there is – not yet! – no alternative to capitalism as a whole in sight, many different forms of solidary economy, which transgress the borders of capitalism in anticipation and in

⁶⁰ Immanuel Wallerstein: *Wohin steuert die Welt? Geopolitische Brüche im 21. Jahrhundert* (Where is this world going to? Geopolitical breaks in the 21st century), in: *WeltTrends*, no. 40, Potsdam, autumn 2003, p. 97 ff., quote, p. 109.

⁶¹ *Unterhaltungen über den Sozialismus nach dem Verschwinden* (Conversations about socialism after its departure), Berlin Institute for Critical Theory 2002 (Book Trading: Papy-Rossa Publishers Cologne).

particular points, become the order of the day.”⁶²

The historical chance of a Left Party in Germany is given “thanks to the people from East Germany”, its realisation, however, is decided in the West. This Haug had noted in 2002 and now emphasises with respect to the Left Party: “It has happened precisely this way. The unequal forces from the West and the East are about to jump over their respective shadows and to establish an all-German force left of the SPD. The mere perspective of that has been sufficient to stir up the established parties and to transform them into an all-party coalition of hatred...”⁶³

These insights stress both the historical dimension of contemporary events as well as the immense difficulties. The Left in Germany has, for the first time since 1918, or respectively, since 1945 engaged into a common process of party formation, which is aimed at creating radical political capacity of democratic action and leaves the conflicts of the past behind.

Keeping in mind these historical tendencies the German left faces the following challenges:

1. The Left in Germany constitutes itself self-consciously as a transformational Left, which has parted from all forms of an avant-garde claim. The goal consists in the capacity for politics. The criterion for that is action reaching into society, not a self-sufficient dogmatism. Such a party does not have the goal to be, in a traditional sense, “representative” of political goals and social interests, but it incorporates the interests and needs existing in society, cooperates with the political movements and carries articulated positions into political space. It is neither only the political arm of the social Left nor its guardian. It delimits itself both from a social democratic understanding of society, which only thinks about managing real existing capitalism “better”, as well as from a revolutionary image of society, which waits for the great trans-

formation via a revolution and ignores the real interests of the concrete people.

2. It is not sufficient to be only advocate of the social interests of those victimised by neoliberalism and to defend former social state images, stemming from the past of Fordist capitalism, but it is necessary to move toward social and political images, which result from the struggles of the past centuries in the widest sense. The Erfurt Social Forum in July 2005 has brought together the most diverse political and social forces, at home in various environments and cultures, into one discussion context: unemployed initiatives and trade unions, young people, students and the women’s movement, peace, migrants, ecologists, civil society initiatives. That is the achieved level of the struggle of social movements, which has to serve as reference. Even if, for instance, the controversy whether work for everybody and minimal wage or, first of all, of an unconditional basic income for everyone, will probably continue. Probably both have to be brought into an inner conceptual and political relationship. Then the positions won’t be so far apart any longer. Another world, which should become possible in Germany, that means more time for life, less rush work and more quality of life in a world that is peaceful, solidary, social, just, compatible with the environment and sustainable. Against that standard, left politics should ultimately be measured.
3. The positions elaborated in the past couple of years – the “triangle” of politics, (1) to face the tasks of daily politics consciously and with concrete alternatives, (2) to care for a cooperative relationship to the social, civil society, feminist, ecological and peace movements and represent protest and resistance, as well as (3) to work on social concepts beyond the real-existing capitalism, i.e. to work for a socialism in a new democratic sense – would have to continue to be discussed and on a much broader scale. We can neither insist that the PDS has already had a process of several years of programmatic debate, which everybody else simply has to acquiesce to, nor simply do as if there had not been many di-

⁶² http://www.hkwm.de/inkrit/framu/unterhaltungen_all.htm.

⁶³ Ibidem.

verse programmatic debates in the various political formation of the Left since 1989. In that respect, also the SPD programme of 1989 that the SPD of today wants to have hardly anything to do with, would have to be reviewed once more. In any case, the plan to form, within the next two years a new all-German Left Party, also means to conduct a comprehensive, new programmatic debate. It should unify, however, not divide.

4. On the other hand, the importance of programmatic utterances should not be overestimated. Let us quote again Rohe here: "Voters must 'recognise' themselves with their interests in the signals and signs that a party emits. This is not simply a question of party programmes, which in any event serve more to the integration of members than of voters, but a question of the perceived character of the party, which represents a complex magnitude, and consists of a multiplicity of real and symbolic 'policies'. To this end, however, not any concrete policy without distinction that a party picks up is significant in the same way. Important are mainly those 'policies' and 'issues' which touch on the reasons why the 'political coalition' was once entered into – and these are, with reference to the standing voters, always policy contents with a cultural dimension. Decisive is therefore the capacity of a party, communicated mainly by the leading personnel and the politicians, to make clear to its core clientele, at least from time to time, for what it basically stands."⁶⁴ And the current political framework conditions will not offer the possibility to do this calmly, as if under laboratory conditions. The programme remains coupled to politics, just as politics will hover over the waters quasi homeless, if it is not bound into a programmatic overall concept.
5. This concept, however, does not spring out of the heads of intellectuals or politicians, but emerges from the political struggles themselves. In this respect, statements about governmental

participation are, for instance, constitutive of meaning and relevant to policy in the highest degree. The refusal to participate in the current rose-green governmental coalition is the condition for locating the the Party on the left side of the cleavage neoliberalism vs. social responsibility credible at all to adherents and voters of the Left Party. They expect the redemption of the promise that there won't be a continuation of the current governmental policy with the support of the Left Party after the Federal Parliamentary elections 2005, because the differences between the various neoliberal party formations are so small that the social democratic argument "to be the smaller evil" cannot be adequate. At the same time, statements about governmental participation after 2009 are contingent on a change in the conditions of hegemony in German politics, at whose centre the Left Party stands. From this point of view, the Left Party does not stand outside of governmental capabilities, as its political opponents at this point do not get tired of pretending, but it stands for another policy. That also holds in the sense that the Left Party is part of the democratic spectrum in Germany, seeks majorities for its politics and then looks for partners for the realisation of its goals. It is, for instance, constitutional mandate to guarantee the social obligation of property (Art. 14 Basic Law), to defend the social state, which also includes existential provision (Art. 20 Basic Law), to realise freedom of choice of profession and the defence of forced labour (Art. 12 Basic Law) as well as the defence of a war of aggression (Art. 26 Basic Law), and this in a lasting way. In this sense, all basic demands of the confrontations with the neoliberal hardships are not only in agreement with the Basic Law, but are urgently commanded by the constitutional order.

6. In light of these theses, realistic proposals for the different policy areas are fundamental. At the same time it holds, however, that it must at first also be sufficient to say "No!" to various decisions of the neoliberal camp, even if

⁶⁴ Karl Rohe, opus cit., p. 27.

the alternative counter-concepts do not lie ready on the table yet.

The continuity of political action of the Left Party after the elections to the Federal parliament will be decided by the concretely acting persons, the organisations

of the party and the movements linked to it and the Left as a whole able or not to solve these tasks simultaneously and in relation to each other. There are times, when giants are needed, Friedrich Engels once wrote. Now is such a time.

V. Analysis

The departure from the German post-war model of capital (by Joachim Bischoff)

In the history of the Federal Republic of Germany various precedents for the project of a left-socialist party failed. The PDS, for instance, in 1990, tried, together with a Left List, to fashion the unification of Left groups, West and East, into a common democratic and socialist force in Germany. But it remained to a large degree an East German party. For defeats of the past, there is in the final analysis always responsible a whole bundle of social-cultural and personal political fractions. One of the most difficult aspects of understanding, however, also results from the problem: In what kind of capitalism do we live? What are the tendencies of current development? What are the alternatives that can be realised in the short run and what are we aiming for in the middle range? These questions arise anew.

In recent years, a debate about the crisis of capitalism after the Second World War and the culture of a new capitalism developed. Capitalism after 1945 with its wage worker societies in the metropolises certainly had various national colourations. All of these societies were determined by a system of social regulations that bore certain common features. Characteristic, in particular in Western Europe, was the social state compromise, which also articulated itself in "Rhenanian capitalism", the "Model West Germany". The destruction of this capitalism is part of a process of change that has set in since the middle of the 1970s in all main capitalist countries, whose driving force was a coalition of neoliberal actors from economy, politics, culture and also the military.

The neoliberal offensive

Mass unemployment, sharp distributional conflicts and a tendency that has lasted for years towards the deterioration of social benefits mark both the private living conditions of many people as well as the social relations and the political public. Despite intensified labour input, despite prolonged

work times, despite higher qualification and performance during the last decade, the standard of living of the wage dependents and above all of the unemployed has receded. At the same time, there are higher expenditures for health protection and pensions. The insecurity in all relationships of life is supposed to be compensated by growing self-insurance without, however, the financial prerequisites existing for that with large segments of the population. In one sentence: contemporary capitalism has moved far away from the times of the social market economy.

Trade unionists and other critics of capitalism speak about a brutalisation of social relationships. The most obvious reason for this change in the quality of capitalism – so runs an often presented argument – is the dissolution of the confrontation between the state socialist societies and the capitalist world. After the end of the East-West confrontation, the model of the European welfare state is supposed to have served its term; capitalism, to be freed from state regulations, can unveil its true face. The change in other relationships – among the financial investors and the managers of large concerns, firm locations, core work forces and whole chains of dependent middle and small subcontractors, the old and new marginal groups – has contributed to this brutalisation.

The interpretation that the formerly tamed capitalism, after the end of the confrontation between the USA and the Soviet Union, has taken off its human face and, under the "terror of the economic", has mutated back to pure capitalism, turbo- or even predatory capitalism, is very popular. In my mind, this argumentation nonetheless does not seem sufficient.

It is not simply a question of stripping off regulators and returning to a brutal exploitative mechanism; the appropriation of unpaid labour under the semblance of equivalent exchange is characteristic of

capitalism in general. The question is always, how this “nature” of capitalism, its basic relationship of exploitation, will be modified by the social and cultural relationships of forces. And moreover, there are fundamentally new developments that cannot be dismissed as return to the “old capitalism”.

In my opinion, it is the question, at present, also of a new quality, which can be characterised as flexibility, unleashed competition, and the despotism of the financial markets. The characteristics of the contemporary capitalism show themselves the most clearly in the “shareholder value concept.” It moves the interests of the share holders (the holders of the financial assets of the corporations) into the centre of business politics and economic life. The share holders have been able to impose the pre-eminence of their interests in short-term rent or profit over all other interests and to subjugate all national societies to the competition for the investment of capital. The large capital investors and financial funds rule the whole production and utilisation chain. One can, therefore, speak of finance-driven accumulation. It marks social economics as a whole.

From Fordism to finance-driven capital accumulation

The keyword “Fordism” stands for a type of capitalism, which imposed itself during the time after the Second World War: “The power of the large companies, a standardised work organisation and powerful trade unions provide for the dominance of these collective forms of regulation. The workers, who unite in large associations and are represented by these, bow to the requirements of developing industrial capitalism and profit in turn of comprehensive social benefits on the basis of stable employment relationships... The two pillars, on which the collective security systems were built – the state and the homogenous socio-professional groups –, after the 70s, now begin to break apart.”⁶⁵ The transition from the social structures, marked fordistically, of the 20th century, to the flexibility

⁶⁵ Castel, Robert: *Die Stärkung des Sozialen* (The strengthening of the social), Hamburg 2004, p. 55.

and precariousness⁶⁶ of social labour finds its expression in a political economy of uncertainty, whose effects can be proven in all sectors of society.

Put to the point: social security and social cohesion is sacrificed to flexibility. This flexibility is mainly a consequence of the fact that the short-term capital investment determines the time rhythm: “Social insecurity actually does not only create poverty - like a virus, which penetrates daily life, dissolves social relationships and undermines the psychic structures of individuals, it also acts in a demoralising fashion, as a principle of social dissolution... To find oneself in a situation of constant insecurity means to be able to master neither the present, nor to be able to form the future in a positive way.”⁶⁷ For this destruction of social capitalism, three developmental relationships are essential:

- On the basis of a chronic over-accumulation of capital, a new financial regime⁶⁸ with the pre-dominance of financial markets developed, that imposes a heavily shift in the power structures of the companies. The investors or their representatives exercise much stronger influence than before on company policy and strategy. It is a matter of a power shift or switching power from the managers to the shareholders or investors in the large companies. “In the beginning, the managers believed that they had to do with investors as they knew them from the past, meaning with largely passive institutions and individuals... But the managers soon had to realise that they had been mistaken. The investors began to take active influence.”⁶⁹ The shift of power came about by

⁶⁶ *Precarisation* refers to the process of conversion of well-paid work relationships protected by collective agreements into short-term, uncertain and unprotected work relationships.

⁶⁷ Castel, Robert, opus cit., p. 38.

⁶⁸ Aglietta, Michel; Rebérioux, Antoine: *Vom Finanzkapitalismus zur Wiederbelebung der sozialen Demokratie* (From financial capitalism to the reinvigoration of social democracy), in: supplement to the journal *Sozialismus*, 3/2005.

⁶⁹ Sennett, Richard: *Die Kultur des neuen Kapitalismus* (The culture of new capitalism), Berlin: 2005. p. 35.

way of the appearance of the capital funds and the acting of professional wealth administrators.

- “This switch of power led to a second new development. The now much wealthier investors rather wished for short-term results rather than long-term successes.”⁷⁰ A shift away toward the evaluation of companies in terms of short-time profit occurred. This orientation promotes the concentration on the core business and a corresponding reorganisation of the respective company networks. The real value creation and utilisation processes in the companies get under the pressure to have to show optimal yields at any time. This has far-reaching consequences for the innovations and draws a revolution of the value creation chain in its wake: instead of one’s own development, the emphasis shifts to acquisition and shareholdings in other companies; next to the rounding-off of market shares, this aims at the acquisition of innovation potential, because in the slimmed down value-creation process at the business level geared to the shareholder value, continued and new development is neglected.⁷¹ Companies live of on their resources.

- A third developmental tendency follows from the information and communication technologies. These make possible a new form of centralism and a lean enterprise management. The automatization of intellectual labour and the more centralised steering and controlling of the business value creation chain conditions a massive increase in productivity and intensification of labour. Many work elements can be outsourced, often to the other side of the globe. The consequences of the controlling of flexible work processes manifests in mass unemployment and a widening loss of autonomy. “One of the strangest consequences of the rule of flexible capitalism consists in robbing the life of the middle-class of its orientation, in taking from it in particular the typical ex-

⁷⁰ Opus cit., p. 36.

⁷¹ Hack, Lothar; Hack, Irmgard: Neue Formationen oligopolistischer Konzentration von Kompetenzen (New formations of oligopolistic competencies). In WSI-Mitteilungen 11/2001.

perience of middle-class, namely the experience of autonomy.”⁷² Even the members of the middle classes are less and less able to lead an autonomous life, while the lower strata have lost every hope for it.

The orientation of capital towards optimal investment opportunities and quick gains is in no way new. At the same time, the share in a firm by way of stocks is not at all a new phenomenon under capitalism. In past developmental phases, the yields secured the tie of the stockholders to the firm. Today, however, the sharing of stockholders over the dividend payout constitutes a subordinated moment. The stock loses the character of a long-term link between the innovative companies and the owners. The latter are interested above in high quotations of stocks, which they can in that case sell quickly again. The stock companies get under pressure of the financial markets and the organised wealth administrators.

“The three tendencies described are today significant only for quite particular economic bureaucracies. These are large stock companies, which are able to use the advanced technologies. The majority of the companies in America and in Great Britain, on the contrary, therefore, have less than 3,000 employees. Many act only in their local surroundings or are in family ownership.”⁷³ They are seized, however, in the whirl of the restructuring of the large companies and, as the weaker ones, often are pushed even more than these to subject themselves to the constraints of short-term interests, flexibility, reduction of wages and precarious employment.

Core of the restructuring of capital accumulation is the new quality of financial markets developed by way of the liberalisation of capital at the end of the 70s. The “new” financial regime disposes of three pillars: *first*, the extension of a net of trans-

⁷² Sennett, Richard: Arbeit und soziale Inklusion (Work and social inclusion). In: Koska, Jürgen; Offe, Claus (eds.): Geschichte und Zukunft der Arbeit (The History and Future of Work), Frankfurt 2000, p. 440.

⁷³ Sennett, Richard: Die Kultur des neuen Kapitalismus (The culture of new capitalism), opus cit., p. 39.

national financial institutions, which work beyond the control of the central banks or financial market agencies; *second*, the rapid rise of the institutional investors (capital funds and insurance agencies); *third*, the loss of significance of bank credits in comparison to borrowed capital on the international financial markets. The emergence of global financial markets enabled by neoliberal policies and their dominance over other markets is the powerful engine, by which the so-called material constraints of globalisation are created, which the neoliberal politicians then refer to in order to argue the lack of alternatives of their policies.

The predominance of financial markets realises itself in the individual enterprises in the hegemony of shareholder value; this leads to an accelerated restructuring of the company landscape and to an extension of the financial transactions. Within the companies, the power structure (*corporate governance*) changes and is oriented no longer towards a substance- but only a yield value-determined evaluation of company assets. In accordance with the concentration on the core business, a new organisation of the company networks emerges. Everything has to be profitable in the short term.

In the last two decades of the 20th century, on the basis of a liberalisation of capital transfers and a strong expansion of financial markets, shareholder value became the dominating business management orientation of the stock companies. Over-average profits were pressed out of the firms – to the detriment of the workers and employees, of the suppliers and cooperation partners and to the disadvantage of innovation potentials. Labour power was again treated increasingly as mere commodity. The social claims and protective guarantees (unemployment claims, pensions guaranteeing living standards, protection against dismissal etc.) were reduced or eliminated.

Such a business policy in the short run certainly provides the sector of stock companies with impulses and at first supports the shareholder orientation. In the medium term, however, this slimming down of company substance is not sustainable, because many developments demand a

long time horizon, and human life loses its values, if it is supposed to be “profitable” from one day to the next.

The processes of value creation at the firm level transformed under the imperative of shareholder value feed back on the macro-economy; economic processes are in turn – in contrast to the first post-war decades – marked by the fluctuations and crisis on the financial markets; the high number of business crashes over the whole business cycle proves that mainly the small and medium-level firms also suffer from the reverberations of the inequality of distribution; the contradiction between great wealth on the one side and the growing poverty of large population strata on the other sides drives the economy ever more strongly into a chronic crisis constellation.

The temporary strengthening of stock values is the expression of the fact that no lasting value creation took place. By the massive taking over and fusing with other companies, the firms lose more and more of their innovative potential, which was precisely, what in the past constituted the dynamics of capital accumulation. Not only is the productive substance of the society consumed, but there takes place, secondly, a feed-back to the distributive relations in society. As a result of the stagnating and receding mass purchasing power and a ruinous competition of the small and medium-sized businesses, mass purchasing power stagnates or even sinks. The domestic economy is chronically weakened.

The orientation towards shareholder value and the preferential treatment of unproductive incomes from capital and wealth shows in a falling economy-wide quota of work incomes and in a relative independence of the financial markets. Empirically, one finds that the “inequality of the incomes reached on the labour and capital markets... has continuously increased since the beginning of the 90s.”⁷⁴ The upper five percent of the population at present no longer have “only” 44.7%, but already 46.5% of total wealth in their hands, while the lower ten percent are increasingly indebted. At the same time, the pov-

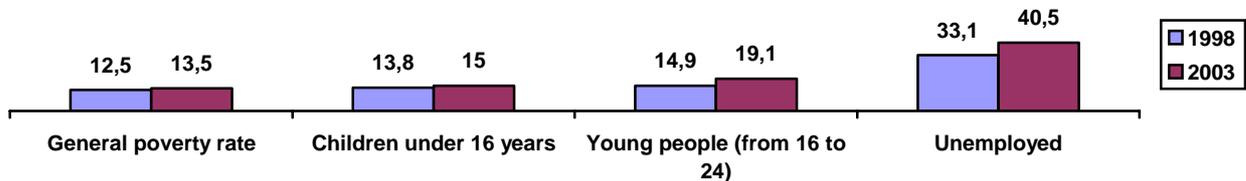
⁷⁴ DIW Monthly Report, Issue 10/2005, p. 175.

erty of children, young people and unemployed has in part drastically increased (see Graph 10, p. 39). This is also a part of the Red-Green balance sheet.

Political actors

The new quality of capital accumulation claimed by the slogan “globalisation” since the last decade of the 20th century, veils

Graph 18: Poverty rate (poor are those who own less than 60 percent of the medium income)



By way of neoliberal policy, this tendency is solidified. Public finances and the financial bases of the social security systems, both by way of the falling share of wages with respect to capital incomes in Gross Domestic Products and by way of the chronic social crises (unemployment, social and cultural disintegration, environmental destruction etc.), get into an ever greater disequilibrium. The flattening economic growth, the dissolution of normal work relationships, the increasing need for support payments due to the crisis and the extension of the informal sectors have corresponding repercussions on the public budgets.

The consequence of the neoliberal economic conception is the deep crisis of public finances. The erosion of financial foundations at the public and social insurances is sharpened by a tax reduction and tax shifting policy benefiting the owners of capital and high-income earners. The reaction to this exacerbation is, on the one hand, an exacerbation of the course of consolidation the public budgets by the reduction of expenditures, this in turn, by way of the cut-backs in social expenditures and limits to crisis interventions themselves, leads to a rigidifying of weak accumulation and growth. On the other hand, the ruling elites, by way of the privatisation of public installations and reduction of public investments worsen the general conditions for a social control over the reproduction process. There is set in motion a downward spiral, which seizes ever larger shares of the population.

the real tendencies of development. The actual change refers to a comprehensive situation of the production model (turn away from Fordism), the international currency and credit system, which is marked by the predominance of global finance capital, and a massive shift in the distributive relations to the benefit of the capital owners. At the same time, the national economies are being subjugated under the apparently objective logic of the international markets.

The social state regulation of capital accumulation was threatened by the erosion of the Fordist structures of value creation. The neoliberal dismantling of the social state and the unleashing of capitalism are politically implemented by way of class-overarching alliances between wage labour and capital.⁷⁵ The bundling of existing interventions in the distributive relations and the destruction of the previously conquered forms of social security begins sneakily; gradually, a change of power relations is produced. There develops an intertwining of power and counter-power, which makes class-overarching alliances possible. In this way, the Agenda 2010 was passed by a grand party coalition.

In the course of radicalisation of this policy – ever more massive redistributions, without a return to accelerated capital accumulation being discernable – social democracy itself changes. We are confronted with a creeping transition of social democracy from a social state party to a forma-

⁷⁵ Mares, Isabella: Warum die Wirtschaft den Sozialstaat braucht (Why the economy needs the social state), Frankfurt-am-Main, 2004.

tion of the “New Middle”, which is duty-bound to a socially feathered neoliberal supply-side policy.

The transition of social democracy from a social state policy towards a neoliberal formation, which in the final analysis burns down to a hidden or open exclusion of the social strata at the bottom of the society from interest representation, determines the political agenda at the beginning of the 21st century. The Red-green governmental project had come to office under the leadership of social democracy in order to stop the unleashing of capital. As in the European neighbouring countries, however, their policy has revealed itself as catalyser for an accelerated destruction of the post-war German model, the “Rhenanian or Rheinisch capitalism”.

The politics of the New Middle has relied, at first, on the socially climbing strata among the wage-dependent. Precisely the better-earning strata have had the most of the real transfers of the social state (health, education), but were ever less ready to bear the redistributive costs, which they were faced with as a result of the stagnation of work incomes, precariousness of work and mass unemployment. At the same time the social strata of the New Middle succumbed to the illusion that they were able to harness the existential risks (sickness, pension, unemployment) by capital funds and capitalist insurance products.

The majority of the “new” social democracy departs from the assumption that the new under-class should be limited to around a third, that the upper classes can only increase their wealth, if redistribution in the social systems and the tax burden are limited and that it will be possible, nonetheless, to pursue a policy of alleviating the suffering of the lower social tiers. It assumes that the more well-to-do social strata do not want any solidary equalisation and redistribution processes.

Neoliberalism has become the ruling ideology in all highly developed capitalist countries. This ideology is not a passive factor, although it reflects itself a specific socio-economic substructure; neoliberal ideology becomes hegemonic, that is, it determines the action of powerful actors of

civil society such as the economic elite, economic and interest associations, parties etc.

Neoliberal politics aims at a politically imposed change in the income distribution; with every step in this direction, the competition of the different capitals, the attempt at maintaining and extending their individual shares of space gets stronger; by the downward spiral, the representatives of neoliberal politics are getting more radical. This holds on the one hand for the parties of the bourgeois camp; on the other hand, it cannot be overlooked that the classical Middle-Left parties belong to the decisive actors of an adverse transformation of “Rhenanian capitalism”: “In the German party spectrum, the SPD shows as political promoter of finance market capitalism that seeks to break up cooperative, coordinating and therefore market-constraining relationships between companies.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Höpner, Martin: Social democracy, trade unions, and organised capitalism, in: MPI Discussion Paper 10/2004, S.5; compare also, the same: Capital-market-friendly Left, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 18, 2005.

VI. Kaleidoscope of opinions (collected by Michael Brie)

The trigger: The resistance against Hartz IV

“This Hartz summer (the summer of 2004, where large demonstrations against the reforms of the SPD-Green Government took place, the so called Monday demonstrations – ed.) was the breakthrough. It ultimately fused the PDS with the people... Of course, the PDS had always been an East German popular party, a party, however, which oscillated in between politics and sociological circumstance, as party of a certain milieu, as party of the deprived cadres, of the devalued and wound-up intelligentsia, the ‘red barons’ and their new backers in the empty country, of frustrated GDR teachers, of pragmatic local politicians. But the emphatic “We are the people!” party, it after all could not be. That was always its gashing wound. After all, in the opening scene of the German people, in autumn 1989, the SED successors had been on the wrong side. They were the enemies of the We. But now they belong to the We, they are with hindsight filed into the ranks of the peaceful revolution...” Klaus Hartung, in *Die Zeit* of August 26, 2004

“The long-term effect of the protests [anti-Hartz protests and Monday demonstrations] was like a trigger – the process of disintegration of the SPD was furthered. There is, therefore, no reason why the initiators of the social protests should now run around with long dog’s ears and complain that the actions were not able to prevent the introduction of ‘Hartz IV’. The protests against it were successful nonetheless.” Peter Grottian, political scientist, professor at the Free University of Berlin and member of the Berlin Social Forum, in an interview with *Junge Welt* of July 25, 2005

“I am quite sure that the new Left alliance also formed, because many have noticed that the citizens need an alternative, which one can really trust. The people have noticed that one must stand together, if one wants to get anywhere – there formed,

after all, also many other alliances. In Angermünde, for instance, we formed a ‘Citizens’ Alliance against Social Demolition’ that wants to present itself at the local elections. That would never have happened, if there had not been the wave of protests. We have high expectations of the Left Party, and I hope that it at least won’t disappoint us.” Birgit Kühr, one of the organisers of the Monday demonstrations in Angermünde, in an interview with *Junge Welt*, July 1, 2005

“‘Necessary reforms’, which have ‘no alternative’ – this kind of talk has a totalitarian ring. One suspicion: The reformers argue so apodictically, because they know that by this kind of policy, they destroy well and nays everything for which the ‘social market economy’ of the Federal Republic of Germany used to stand: a social state that provided for the private risks: age, unemployment, illness being on principle collectively insured. The ‘model Germany’, the social democratic chancellor Helmut Schmidt called this full of pride. Don’t the CDU/SPD/CSU/FDP/Green politicians defend their reform philosophy so vehemently, because they know that they are making a coup from the very top? *A coup?* Yes, the Agenda 2010 and Hartz IV are ciphers for the concerted aggression from the very top against the social state. They call it ‘reconstruction’ – but the choice of words only masks the qualitative leap into another *polity*. The Berlin Republic stands for the departure from the solidarity-based community.” Arno Luik in *Stern* of October 21, 2004

“Not the spectre of Communism, rather fear is haunting Europe – paired with rage, disgust and deep suspicion face to the political, economic and scientific elites, who similar to those responsible in the time of the transition from feudalism to industrial society are obviously incapable to shape the inevitable globalisation of the economy in a human way. Claiming alleged laws of the market, they are rather talking about an anarchical economic order that goes over dead bodies. 100 millions of people threatened by unemployment in Europe and the USA and 3 billion

poor people, which together have a lower income than the 400 richest families of the earth, accuse: the adepts of a shareholder value economy which knows no values beyond demand and supply, favours speculators and handicaps long-term investors. They accuse: the statesman of the Western world who allow themselves to be extorted and played out against each other by the multinational trusts. They accuse: a cartel of opinion of economics professors and publicists, who think that human society should function like Daimler Chrysler and who obstinately refuse to acknowledge that the market has to be ordered, global rules also have to be kept and that wage dumping destroys the quality of work and of products... The triumphant howl of the Federal Association of German Industry concerning the cheap wage competition from the East still in the ears, marginalised people and people threatened by marginalisation have to let themselves be insulted as Neonazis and Communists, when they vote for radical parties, because there is no longer any opposition, and they see themselves confronted with a grand coalition, which obviously has the republic confused with a butcher's store, in which they cut so deeply into the social flesh that blood just splashes, instead of finally liberating wages from their supplements by way of a citizens' insurance and tax financing." Heiner Geißler, former general secretary of the CDU in *Die Zeit* of November 11, 2004

Left and Right in Germany

"What is 'left' after all? The fundamentals first: The emancipation of the lower strata to real citizenship is only complete, if next to the liberty from political arbitrariness and the equality before the law, solidarity also becomes the fundamental law of society... The struggles of the workers' movement, therefore, had as their goal the right to work, alternatively full employment – because only these can balance the power of capital and, in this way, can create 'economic dignity'... Left is – second – a social state that guarantees 'equal' conditions of life (see German Constitution, Article 20.72 and 106), not as 'charity', but

as the foundation for democracy." Matthias Greffrath in *Die Zeit* of July 14th, 2005

"The modern European societies do not have any lack of competition, of markets, of spaces of freedom, of individualisation, of autonomy: All that is there in abundance. In great deficit, however, as a result of overproduction in the new liberalist change, are the binding values. There is a lack of cohesion, of meaning, of goals, of orientation, of intact and integrative institutions... This development will lead to a renewed increase in socio-regulative ideas and socio-integrative instruments. It may even be the case that the state is positively re-discovered as internal guarantor of freedom and peace. One will have to discuss integrative patterns of action and organisation, also a new structure of the political, much more strongly oriented towards participation." Franz Walter, political scientist, professor at the University of Göttingen in *Die Zeit*, June 2, 2005

Left is "a policy that does not leave the society to the market, which – if push comes to shove – may not even offer existence-covering wages. Where strong and weak ones confront each other, left politics does not leave things their course, but sets rules and limits in order to compensate the relationship of forces." Frank Bsirske, head of service trade union Ver.di in *Welt am Sonntag*, July 24, 2005

The social state was a "genuine SPD project of the psychosocial class compromise. As its prerequisites dwindle in the capital-form globalisation, this policy is also at its end or rather, only to be had at the price of a confrontation – at least *à la Lafontaine* with the ruling system. For that, however, the historically grown SPD has neither will nor capacity. It is only in a position, fit into the ruling cost logic, to play, by way of the newest counter-reforms such as Hartz IV, a nasty trick on their traditional clientele, which by contrast serves capital very well. After this dirty work, for which the SPD will soon receive its check, it may and it will step down as actor of traditional social democratic policy. Contour and identityless, it is at the end of its rope and superfluous. The die-hard, Christian Democratic cousins, with whom it has been under cover anyhow for a long time, take over the baton. The SPD is no longer the

smaller evil, but only a wing of the same unsavoury cartel. The social reformist space it occupied is taken over by disappointed left social democrats and parts of the PDS; therefore, their association makes sense. The key point, however, will be the question, whether the reconstruction still constitutes a possible and sensible goal. Surely, its remainders have to be defended tooth and nail. Already in this respect and even more so in the interest of the structural reforms necessary in the social democratic sense, the crash with capital interests is pre-programmed. A new left will and cannot avoid that." Gerhard Armanski, cultural and social scientists, University of Osnabrück, in *Neues Deutschland* of June 2, 2005.

"The New Left has emerged to develop a counter model to the neoliberal concept. That is our historical task. In the current debates, it is typically declared that distributive policies begin when the state becomes active. That is a great mistake. Redistribution begins when Mr. Ackermann, Mr. Schrepp and the other managers negotiate, how many millions they will get, and when the stock holders of the firms decide, how high their profit should be. A minority of the society cuts itself off much too much from the commonly produced product. Just distribution must set in before the state, in the economy itself. For this reorientation, there stands the New Left." Oskar Lafontaine, top candidate of the Left Party in Nordrhein- Westfalia, in *Neues Deutschland*, August 13/14, 2005.

"The Left stands for blind belief in the state, for étatism, it sounds depreciatingly from the side of the established parties. But who has extended state power against civil society and the freedom of the individuals up to and including coercive measures against the long-term unemployed? The Left only wants that the state emancipates itself from the trusts and the investment funds acting world-wide and protects citizens, environment and culture against total marketisation. A social state won't let itself be disparaged as an outmoded charity affair. It is the basis of democracy. Democracy, however, is threatened in Germany by the faintness into which politics has manoeuvred itself vis-à-

vis the economy." Christa Luft, economist, in *Neues Deutschland*, of July 22, 2005.

"Left is a politics, which also concentrates on the globalisation losers, which defines social justice not only as equality of chances, but also as justice of distribution. Left is to know that the economy of the whole country does not function according to economic standards of single enterprises. Left is to commit to citizens' and human rights and to the equal standing of man and woman. Left is also not to settle social problems at the detriment of the weak and alleged black sheep. That means, for instance, not to hold moonlighters or migrants responsible for unemployment, but to fight against exploitative work conditions and for minimum wages – and this independently of the nationality and the legal status of those concerned." Harald Wolf, economic senator in Berlin for the PDS, in *Junge Welt* of July 1, 2005.

On the project of the left party

"There I am very hopeful that this won't disturb us a whole lot." Klaus Uwe Ben- neter, general secretary of the SPD, on the founding of the WASG, quoted in *Fo- cus*, issue 30/2004.

"For five years, nobody in this country did not think either that from the common initiative of some NGOs and Attac, there would emerge a politically important, productively struggling political actor. Therefore, I plead that the left movements deal somewhat more systematically with the possibilities and limits, chances and dangers of the Left Party. They should do this in a clarifying dispute and not by simply adapting to the rhythm of the campaign. That also does not mean to put forward demands to appear in the electoral programme (that, conversely, is precisely an attempt at controlling the party by parts of the movement). Yet, it should entail a precise sounding out of mutual relationships, which in the light of current programmes certainly does not mean an appeal to vote for a party or form formal alliances. For the Left Party, this means: If it wants to strengthen its political importance, it should restrain itself. It has to recognise

that a new foundation of a relevant left is a broad process, and quite a few things already happened in the movements. Without the critique by many diverse movements in the last couple of years, the Left Party would after all not even have its potential. A party can only be a part of social changes and cannot replace the commitment of millions of people for a better society in diverse contexts. It also cannot simply produce this engagement, but at most bundle it in circumspect action on certain issues. Otherwise, we shall live a brief straw fire that for the xth time, and supported by the ruling forces, will nourish the illusions of parliamentarism." Ulrich Brand, social scientist at the University of Kassel, member of the scientific advisory board of Attac, in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* of July 13th 2005.

"There is a strategic shifting of forces in the offing – and in this way the conclusion of 1989. At the moment – it is May 29th – not so few in PDS and WASG behave as if they had not understood that they have been irrevocably set free and have to learn to think 'without railing' (Hannah Arendt) . The Left will only become a serious political force, if it fairly and without conditions opens to all, who are concerned with lasting resistance to the class struggle from above. A 'round table is waiting', Carl von Ossietzky wrote in 1932 (briefly before Hitler became German chancellor – ed.). Back then, his call died away unheard." Jörn Schüttrumpf, executive manager of the Karl Dietz Publishers Berlin and editor of *Utopie kreativ*, in *Das Blättchen*, June 6, 2005.

"The Left has always become weaker and not stronger, when it has split." Michael Sommer, chairman of the DGB, the German trade union association, arguing against supporting the Left party, quoted in *Die Welt*, June 9, 2005.

"The new Left Party would be an important voice in the parliament, which would be close to our positions." Marget Mönig-Raane, deputy chairman of Ver.di, quoted in *Spiegel*, June 27, 2005.

"I think that the Left alliance has made the party landscape in the Federal republic more exciting and more colourful. The Greens profile themselves again as a

modern left party; the SPD is in the process of making its programme more concrete. I am excited how things will develop." Frank Bsirske, chairman of ver.di in *Welt am Sonntag*, July 24th, 2005.

"Today it is not yet a matter of unifying our parties, but of beginning a process. We are opening a process that in two years may possibly end with that result. And, dear comrades, I shall tell you: We are at the core of that! Who would have believed that in 1989 or 1990? Even the WASG still had to get used to that thought. But we will achieve something that we have not even witnessed in Germany since 1989: a really fair, democratic unification, in which the East, however, plays a somewhat larger role, because the thinking in terms of social justice is still more widespread around here than in the old federal regions! And that has to do with history!" Gregor Gysi, top candidate of the Left Party.PDS in Berlin at the Extraordinary Session of the 9th Party Congress of the Left Party.PDS on July 17th, 2005.

"The protagonists of the left electoral alliance stand before the task of transforming the up to now virtual project into real political action, which includes the overcoming of many political obstacles, political power claims and vanities. Next to convening on election political alternatives, the middle-range perspective should not degenerate into mere wishful thinking. The actual task consists in making sure that the participants are ready to investigate, beyond a briefly convened electoral list, whether there is enough potential for a new formation, which must also be open for other left currents. Such a formation can develop the force to become, under conditions of capitalism in the 21st century and the reinforcement of the neoliberal offensive, the catalyser of social resistance. This challenge is also a chance to prevent the drifting of larger part of the electoral population to the right or at least to limit it." Joachim Bischoff, member of the federal executive of the WASG in *Jungle World* of August 3, 2005.

"It is after all a fact that neither the PDS nor the WASG taken alone represent the decisive force. It is moot to constantly compare the membership numbers. And it is also not Lafontaine or Gysi by them-

selves. However, in the beginning, they may be able to do something together. And this is also, what has changed the situation to this extent: the possibility – indeed the historical possibility. It springs, as any really new possibility, from the crisis. Yet, it may also only stay mere part of it.” Bernd Rump, member of the regional executive of the PDS in Saxony in *Freitag* of June 24, 2004.

“To the possible electoral strata there also belong the old working class, the unorganised unemployed and social aid recipient groups of the modern knowledge-based societies, who are dispossessed.” Franz Walter, political scientist, professor at the University of Göttingen, in *Spiegel*, of 27th June, 2005.

“Of course, a social democratic SPD would be much better than the neoliberal one that we have today. But would that put into question the necessity of a socialist party in the least? We will at one time in the future, hopefully become strong enough again to force social concessions from capitalism. Yet, this should not be a reason for building our home in it. Therefore, I am convinced: cooperation between PDS and WASG before and after the election in all points, which permit a common advance. Yet, we should maintain the identity of our party as Party of Democratic Socialism.” Sahra Wagenknecht, Communist Platform of the PDS, European Deputy of the PDS, at the Extraordinary Session of the 9th Party Congress of the Left Party.PDS on July 17, 2005.

“The new Left Party is neither new nor left, just like the PDS, whatever it may call itself, does not stand for democratic socialism. On the contrary, the successor party to the SED has distanced itself from the police state GDR, including wall and shooting order, just as half-heartedly as its etiquette, Gregor Gysi, from his StaSi connections (this concerns the unproved allegations against Gregor Gysi that he had been collaborating with the GDR security forces against his own clients – ed.). And it is involuntarily comic, if the PDS today propagates the return to the West German welfare state, against which it fought so bitterly in the old times. The alliance with Oskar Lafontaine does not lend any credibility to this policy, because from

the globalised world and from the European Union, there leads no way back to the cut-off national state, which deems to create social security by closing its borders... If our unnerved citizens fell for populist demagogues and Anti-Europeans such as Gysi and Lafontaine, the democracy, just like in Weimar, would also be threatened in the Federal Republic.” Hans Christoph Buch, Wolf Biermann, Klaus Harpprecht, Uwe Kolbe, Günter Kunert, Gert Loschütz, Monika Maron, Peter Schneider and othr writers and artists in an appeal against the new Left Party of June 2005.

“The politics that I have acted out up to now on the streets, I now also want to bring to bear in parliament. At the moment, many important themes are certainly formulated in the movements; however, in the parliaments they do not appear. I want to change that. In the long run, however, I will stay faithful to the movements. If in my case, a deputy seat should come out of it, I see that in any event only as a temporary occupation. Because I am convinced: Fundamental changes will not come about in this country without strong social movements.” Heike Hänsel, speaker of the federation-wide Attac-EU-working group and candidate for the Left Party in Baden Württemberg in July 2005

Democratic Socialism

“At first, the new name still has to be approved by the party congress in mid-July by a two-thirds majority. For later on, I would like the name ‘Democratic Socialists’. I think Oskar Lafontaine and Lothar Bisky also do not dislike that.” Gregor Gysi, top candidate of the Left Party in Berlin, quoted in *junge Welt*, July 4, 2005.

“We have started as a social state party and are now landing as democratic socialists – many have a problem with that. I tell you: Of course, it would be a catastrophe, if the look at contemporary capitalism were the end of human thinking. We have to think on how to go on. Yet, our immediate task is to take along people, now and here, where they are! It is to seize the chance to dare the new departure together with them. And when we then have gone the first and

second step, when we have won these federal elections, when we have presented the alternatives – then, dear colleagues, we can also take the next steps.” Klaus Ernst, chairman of the WASG at the extraordinary session of the 9th Congress of the Left Party.PDS on July 17, 2005.

“The representatives of the PDS in the conversations with the WASG have always made it clear that we hold on programmatically to democratic socialism and will therefore also always act as democratic socialists.” Lothar Bisky, chairman of the PDS, at the extraordinary session of the 9th congress of the Left Party.PDS on July 17, 2005.

After the election

“On the way from the CDU headquarters to the FDP centre, the reporter sits in the taxi cab and tries to sort out in his mind what has happened... It does not come so easily. The car passes the Reichstag, where a gigantic screen flickers, in front of which the electorate happily romps around. To the Left lies the Chancellery, to which right now Angela Merkel and Gerhard Schröder raise pretensions. Now it looms there in the dark. Right at this moment, the cab driver also points to the power hub of this republic: ‘Strange result’, he says. ‘But it’s nifty that the sovereign decides differently than the politicians expect’.” Florian Güßgen for the *Stern* on September 19, 2005.

The votresses and voters “have by a majority of hardly over 50 percent chosen a basic orientation, which demands from politics not to play out three central points against each other: a competitive economy united to a social and ecological policy and a well-performing state, setting the framework for that. This basic attitude is reflected in the social majority left of centre, which results from adding up the results for the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party. That won’t lead to a functioning government today; nevertheless, it cannot be ignored by any party.” Wolfgang Storz in *Frankfurter Rundschau* of September 20, 2005.

“One has gotten a bit too used in the politicising elites to consider widows and or-

phans, yes, to say it squarely almost everybody, who cannot prove himself immediately as the success type, as obstacles on the road into a better future. That is, however, by far the larger part of the population.” Volker Zastrow in the *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung* of September 22, 2005.

“The greatest weakness of the Union’s electoral campaign was, without any doubt, the open social flank. If the CDU wants to be victorious again, it has got to close it.” Heiner Geißler, former general secretary of the CDU, in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of September 20, 2005.

“Our electoral success questions the way of politics up to now, which was to always say: social demolition and tax reductions lead to more work and a better economy.” Gregor Gysi, fraction chairman of the Left Party.PDS in the German federal parliament in *Spiegel*, September 21, 2005.

“The topic of social justice enlightens the crossroads, at which we have to debate, whether we want to part company with the programme of the French revolution to offer all members of society the taking part in society or not.” Dirk Baecker in the *Tageszeitung* of September 20, 2005.

“And thus the social poles of the new, deregulated knowledge society are characteristically the two only sectors of growth at the Federal elections 2005: here the ... interpersonal networks, composed only of men, of the executive floors of the Federal Republic, who have strengthened the FDP, there the losers in the process of neoliberal de-structuring, who have chosen the Left Party as the welfare state protective power for their fragile existences.” Franz Walter in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, September 20, 2005.

“For the first time, since the beginning of the 50s, there exists, in the old federal regions, the longing for a significant force left of social democracy. Only a year ago, I would not have thought such a development was possible, now it is there.” Gregor Gysi in the *Tageszeitung* of September 20, 2005.

“On September 18, it turned out that in Federal Republican politics, the game played is not check for beginners but ad-

vanced bowling. Persons and parties tumbled wildly into a muddle... The reason for this is the Left Party: In the large house of the Federal parliament, it has – with its 8.7% - only squatted in the cellar so far, but in between representational floor and attic, the furniture since then has been moved around hectically. Because the Gysi-Lafontaine grouping, declaredly unwilling to govern, earns decisive percentage points, there is no structural majority any longer in Germany for the left or right parliamentary majority of the old type.” Ines Zoettl in *Financial Times Germany* of September 20, 2005.

“I do not participate in the debate on who will tip over the first: red, green or yellow. For me, as a spokesperson for the Left Party, it is important: will Agenda 2010, Hartz IV and the foreign battalions of the Federal army be recalled or will at least serious negotiations take place? Until that is clarified, debates about governmental participation won't be served by us.” Lothar Bisky, chairman of the Left Party.PDS in *Freitag*, September 22, 2005.

“We will support neither the neoliberal policy by Schröder nor one that Merkel will conduct.” Gregor Gysi, fraction chairman of the Left Party.PDS in the German parliament in *Neues Deutschland*, Thursday, September 22, 2005.

“The voters and votresses have given the Left Party no mandate for supporting the Schröder policy of Hartz IV, Agenda 2010 and participation in wars in violation of international war. We want to bring about a change of policy for social justice, more opportunities of democratic participation, and for a peaceful foreign policy. It is for that reason that the Left Party was elected into the Federal parliament. Therefore, there will be neither at the ballot for chancellor nor at the votes on parliamentary initiatives a voice from the fraction of the Left in favour of the policy of Red-Green up to now and even less so for its black and yellow acceleration.” Bodo Ramelow, campaign chief of the Left Party.PDS on September 21, 2005.

VII. Positions from the presence and the past

We have the alternatives! Another world is possible! **Final Declaration of the Social Movements at the first Social Forum in Germany in Erfurt, July 24th, 2005**

The “No” at the French and Dutch referenda as well as the governmental crisis in Germany prove: The citizens, women and men, rely ever less on the recommendations and statements of the ruling politicians. The neoliberal policy of the past couple of years has failed. It has turned out to be wrong that by way of social build-down, one can lower the unemployment quota. The contrary has happened and is being reinforced by holding on to the Lisbon strategy: the increasing split of the society in poor and rich, young and old, people with or without privileged passport, “performers” and “charity dependents”. The trade unions and the dependent workers see themselves exposed to a general attack against tariff autonomy, co-determination rights and protection against dismissal. Demolition of democracy and increasing repressions go along with militarisation. The measures for the protection of the natural environment are completely inadequate. The gap between the winners and the losers of globalisation (both men and women) becomes ever deeper. All of that fills many people with growing concern about a future worth living in – globally, in Europe, and also here in Germany.



**The logo of the Social Forum
in Germany**

As part of the international and globalisation critical movement, we have met in Erfurt, not only to criticise fundamentally

the political and social relationships, but also in order to develop our alternatives for a solidary, democratic, ecological, non-patriarchal and socially just society.

Think the social and work in a new way. We demand a complete re-orientation of social and labour policy: an existence-guaranteeing minimal income/basic income now as alternative to Hartz IV, a legal minimal wage, a human, dignified pension without discrimination, a massive reduction in work time.

We struggle for a **society based on solidarity**, without exclusion and mass unemployment, without poverty and social division, in which each and everyone – woman or man – can educate and develop him- or herself comprehensively and can become active in different forms; chronically ill and handicapped people are put on the same level as healthy ones, and each person has the right to access to public goods and services. The privatisations in these sectors must be stopped. We don't want to leave the homeless people without a dwelling and we condemn the forced actions in the context of Hartz IV. We want a society, in which each and everyone (man or woman) has an adequate and secure share of social wealth. There is enough money!

A society secure to the inside and the outside, which renounces to military force and also economically cooperates with other countries and world regions on the basis of equal rights and solidarity. We condemn the terror attacks, for instance in London and Sharm el- Sheikh and also the suicide attempts in Iraq, because they cost too many innocent lives. We refuse the “war against terrorism” – it is taken as a pretext to limit human rights and to stigmatise Muslim women and men. We demand the repeal of the anti-terror laws and the law on immigration. We need no interven-

tion army capable to be deployed world-wide, but crisis prevention and civil conflict resolution. The Federal Army troops stationed outside Germany must be withdrawn. The practical support for the USA in the Iraq war must be ended. We appeal to Israel to tear down the wall and to withdraw its settlements and its troops from the occupied territories of Palestine. We appeal to both sides, Palestinians and Israelis, and to the other concerned parties to reach an agreement on a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.



The demonstration during the European Social Forum in Paris 2002

Create a society with an ecological future, which lowers the emissions of climatic gases and polluting substances as well as the consumption of non-renewable resources to an internationally agreeable level. In our area a consequently ecological agriculture, a settlement, energy and transport policy on the basis of regenerative energies and the immediate exit from atomic energy are required.

A society with just gender relations in which all live on equal terms and men do not decide on behalf of women, overcoming those tendencies that are still dominating politics, legislation and the world of labour.

A democratic society with democratic participation going far beyond electoral campaigns and election days as well as decision-making competence for all citizens (men and women) at all levels: from the immediate representation of interests to economic decision-making processes, from co-determination at the firm level up to general political and social questions - from the communal level up to the European and global level. The extension of citizens' petitions and citizens' decision-making at all level as well as participative budgets are steps forward in this direction.

Another world is possible, if we together stop the total merchandisation of human beings and their environment and shape global life together in a new way. For that we need exchange and meetings such as on occasion of this social forum in Erfurt.

Stronger networks of the social movements locally, last but not least in form of the local social forums, in order to enable people to become actors of direct democracy. In this context, the link-up to over-regional exchange and common action belongs.

Globalisation from below: Cooperation independent of culture, religion, gender and colour of the skin. Our task is the common, world-wide struggle for global social rights for everybody. We demand annulment of debt and the end of the neoliberal structural adjustment programmes.

Whether we succeed in preventing continued neoliberal restructuring depends essentially on the protests of the social movements before and after the federal elections. Whoever will rule and carry out further social demolition will have to count on our massive resistance.

Good morning, spectre! (by Rainer Rilling and Christoph Spehr)

A renewed left concept of justice and democratic shaping of policies requires a re-negotiation by the basis of such a project. The notion of justice used to react to the social demolition by the state, is often still stuck in his Fordist infancy. ...

... The Left should have no illusions, however, that the trademark “social justice” will simply fall into its lap simply by way of making a scandal out of glaring social inequalities. Such a reputation must be earned.

In the times of Hartz, the PDS and obviously even more so the WASG stand for *distributive justice* also as the basis of acceptance, diversity and hegemony. With regard to this form of justice both have a strong reputation. This element, as necessary it is, and as justly as it picks up the social democratic calling that the SPD has left aside, however, is not sufficient. A new left project must bring the proof that it is more than a defensive battle turned into a party. For that, three additional elements of a left justice and equality policy are required. The first is justice with regard to the mutual acceptance of each other – *acceptance equality*. In part, it is here a case of a former green alternative concern that the Greens have neglected, even if not so entirely as the distributive justice was neglected by the SPD. *Acceptance justice* means acknowledging the many different life situations, life models and individual situations and orientations as forms of expression of equal value within social normality and freeing them from the suppression and exclusion by the legal, economic and daily life practices of disparagement, discrimination and inequality. The Left must – formulated in general – stand for the *right to equal participation in social interaction* and be the social force that is sensible against any kind of denigration of people and forms a front against it.

The second element of a broadened and renewed notion of left justice and equality is *negotiation justice*. Among the individuals and social groups, which form the basis of a renewed left project, there are not

only interests with equal orientation, but also competition –structures, where one loses, what the other wins. That holds in between the Polish migrant handyman in Germany and his colleague of German nationality as well as between the still prevailing sole or main earner and his (in most cases) wife, in between families with several children and single parents, between refugees and those threatened by getting pushed out of work, between the maintenance of a German welfare level and the suppressed aspirations of the rest of the world. Here, there are often no simple solutions, here no “social security plus employment policy” creates a good world without any conflicts; here is the place for long, difficult negotiation processes, transitions and equilibrations, in which the Left can play a moderating and creative role but can claim no representative role.

Thence there follows the third necessary element of a renewed left notion of justice and equality: negotiating power and social spaces for negotiations, thus *justice of self-determination*. Justice and equality are nothing any longer, which the state, however well it may be ruled, can create directly for all. Instead it has to facilitate the spaces, where the bargaining and struggle for justice take place, and support those with solidarity and power, whose negotiating power up to now was systematically too little. Co-determination, for instance, is no substitute for lack of socialisation; it *is* socialisation, which finds its full redemption in structures of self-administration with equal rights and the shifting away of decision-making processes away from state and “private property holders” into the real society. In this way, a real policy of equality draws the consequence from the fact that practices and cultures of denigration, inequality and practices of discrimination all construct a relationship and a gap of power or rule. This is, as a rule, the unmentioned-hidden simple secret of bourgeois and social democratic rhetoric of justice: they obscure and fail to name in this way the always included dimension of power and rule.

Appeal by the Initiative: Trade Unionists vote Left

We live in a country with great wealth and constantly growing productivity of labour. Yet, for years, we have been the witnesses and victims of a policy that is apparently without alternative: the employed and the unemployed, the sick and people with low incomes are year after year asked higher sacrifices. Public infrastructure decays, payments are curtailed. At the same time, taxes on companies and on high incomes are drastically reduced. In short: a gigantic redistribution from below to the top is being operated. We oppose to that: an alternative is possible and necessary.



Unionists demonstrating against the Reform agenda of SPD and the Green party

The Red-Green federal government has imposed, by way of the Agenda 2010 and Hartz IV) an up to now unprecedented demolition of social achievements. The SPD has bid farewell to its social-democratic principles. For us, the policy of this party is no longer eligible. This holds in the same way for the policy of the Greens, who have mutated to a party groups with high income and a ecological etiquette. Both parties want to continue the policy of the "Agenda 2010".

The Agenda of the black-yellow block is not an alternative, but would constitute a further deterioration. Union and FDP plan

a far-reaching demolition of the rights of the workers and the socially disadvantaged: demolition of protection against dismissal, head taxes instead of solidarity-based health insurance, reduction of co-determination in the firms and in the enterprises, levering out of tariff autonomy, further wage reduction and work-time extension. The trade unions are supposed to be weakened.

Against this all-encompassing attack on the social and democratic achievements, we need a strong left opposition – in society and in the parliament. We need a political force, which fights in a parliamentary and extra-parliamentary way for a renewal of the social state and against privatisation. We need a new departure in the direction of public investment programmes and employment policy, a minimal wage and reduction in work time, education and training for all, equal rights for men and women, just taxes, a social Europe and equal rights for migrant women and men, a democratisation of the economy and the pushing back of the power of capital over politics and society.

The cooperation between Left Party.PDS and WASG opens the chance to bring the interests of the workers, the unemployed and the socially disadvantaged into politics with new force. Therefore, we want the Left Party to enter as a strong opposition into the Federal Parliament and to exercise pressure for social alternatives. This will at the same time improve the capacity of the trade unions and the extra-parliamentary movements to struggle for these alternatives

We therefore call on you to vote LEFT at the elections to the federal parliament 2005!

In memory of the USPD (Independent Social Democratic Party) (by André Brie)

“The revolutionary workers, dissatisfied with the antinational policy of the governing socialists, which had been excluded *en masse* from the SPD, saw in the USPD a new, revolutionary party. As a matter of fact, it had the task to prevent the switch of large parts of the organised workers to the position of the Spartacus Group. From the beginning onward, there existed, in the USPD, a deep split between the Centrist leaders and the revolutionary masses of the members.” That is how simply GDR dictionaries solved the problem of the USPD. This is how simply almost all of us saw things back then.

Here is not the place, and I am not the competent author, to carry out a differentiated and realistic analysis of the USPD. Yet, some questions have troubled me for a long time, and this could be the occasion to reflect on the ultimately brief episode of this party’s development. “Is that the historical chance for the creation of a new USPD?”, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* asked in the beginning of June. The reference was of course to the unification of PDS and WASG.



Party congress of the USPD, October 1920

Almost 90 years ago, in April 1917, 15 deputies of the *Reichstag* (German parliament of the Kaiserreich – ed.) and delegates from 91 social democratic electoral county associations in Gotha founded this

split-off from the SPD. Before, there had been the break with the so-called truce in the Reichstag (Emperor William II: “I no longer know any parties any longer, I only know Germans.”) by Karl Liebknecht, who, in December 1914, voted against a new war credit. When one year later, further SPD deputies did like he, there followed, for the “dissidents”, first the expulsion from the parliamentary group, then from the party.

Even though the demand for an end to the war stood in the centre of concerns, the conflict within social democracy had already ignited over the social question. While the Social Democratic Party of Germany, in the beginning of the 20th century, still in alliance with the trade unions, had been the most important advocate of proletarian interests, had counted more than one million members, and had supplied the largest fraction in the Reichstag, reformist interests increasingly won over in the party leadership. Practically a policy in favour of the “small people” no longer took place.

In large parts of the population, this course met with resistance. The USPD, by contrast, quickly found its political basis in the industrial centres and in large enterprises; the alliance with the trade unions was close. “We demand the immediate beginning of socialisation to break the capitalist power relations, to increase production to the highest possible level, to rearrange distribution in favour of the whole of the popular community”, was stated in the appeal of the USPD party leadership of December 9, 1918. After the foundation of the Weimar Republic in 1919 and the defeat of the proto-fascist Kapp-Lüttwitz coup a year later, the USPD at the Reichstag elections of June 1920 became the second-largest

fraction with 17.9% after the SPD with 21.7%.



Leaflet of the USPD

The original member list of the USPD reads like a great, never again even closely matched “Who is who?” of the political and intellectual contradictions of German left socialism: Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin, Paul Levy, Kurt Eisner, Max Hoelz, Ernst Reuter, August Thalheimer, Leo Jogiches, Wilhelm Pieck, Ernst Thälmann,

Wilhelm Dittmann, Hugo Haase, Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein, to only name a few.

Such diversity at that time was not tolerated. For the majority ideological opposition was more important than political correspondences and common opportunities. The fight against the war and for a more social policy was the smallest common denominator on which one might have built. However, it did not get as far as a clear determination of goals and programmatic, which would have ushered in concrete politics. Ultimately destructive were, in my opinion, the twenty-one conditions, tightened by Lenin, for acceptance into the Communist International, among them the de facto abandonment of independence by the member parties and the commitment to the orders by the executive committee of the Komintern, which left no space for a pluralist and democratic left party development. In October 1920, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany split.

One critique by Rosa Luxemburg against the USPD, however, lost nothing in actuality. “Names, programmes, party formations must measure up against the touchstone of real action. Nothing half-done or ambiguous will be able to last.”

VIII. Further Literature

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Some websites for further information

www.rosalux.de

www.left-parties.de

www.sozialisten.de

www.w-asg.de

Please ask for further information and English publications glaser@rosalux.de

Some explanations of events, organisations, persons and abbreviations

Agenda 2010	this is the neoliberal reform project of chancellor Gerhard Schröder, started in 2003, aiming at increasing the pressure on labour and unemployed and to reduce labour costs. It is failing in terms of growth and employment
ASG	the initiative Labour and Social Justice became part of the WASG
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	the German ecological liberal party with left traditions.
CSU	the Christian Social Union is the Bavarian part of the liberal conservative party formation in Germany; the chairman is Edmund Stoiber
CDU	the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) is a German liberal-conservative party; the chairwoman is Angela Merkel
DDR	German Democratic Republic, the East German state, part of the Warsaw Treaty, controlled by the Soviet Union.
DGB	German Trade Union Confederation, the umbrella association of the German Trade Unions.
Ernst, Klaus	a leading representative of the WASG, member of the German parliament
FDP	The Free Democratic Party is the liberal party in Germany; chairman is Guido

	Westerwelle
Grüne	see: Bündnis 90/Die Grünen
Gysi, Gregor	together with Oskar Lafontaine the head of the parliamentary group of the Left Party.PDS in the parliament, former head of the PDS
Hartz-Reformen	part of the Agenda 2010: measures to reduce payments for unemployed and to enlarge the low-salary sector; named after Peter Hartz, head of a reform commission established by Schröder; Peter Hartz was until 2005 head of the personnel department of Volkswagen, he left after accusations of corruption
IG Metall	the metal worker union, one of the more left trade unions, part of the founding members of the WASG are functionaries of the IGM
Kipping, Katja	deputy chairwoman of the Left Party.PDS, member of the German parliament
Lafontaine, Oskar	former head of the SPD and former finance minister of Germany, broke with the SPD one year after Schröder became chancellor, together with Gysi head of the parliamentary group of the Left Party.PDS
Linkspartei	briefly for: Linkspartei.PDS
Linkspartei.PDS	the Left Party.PDS is the former PDS, which renamed itself in June 2005 to go together in the future with the WASG as one party
Montagsdemonstrationen	the Monday demonstration have their tradition in autumn 1989, when hundreds of thousands of GDR citizens demonstrated against the Communist rule; in summer and autumn 2004 this traditions was renewed against the Agenda 2010 and the Hartz reforms
Ostdeutschland	East Germany, the territory of former GDR and West Berlin
PDS	Party of Democratic Socialism, successor party of the SED, in 2005 renamed in Left Party.PDS
Ramelow, Bodo	head of the electoral campaign of the Left Party.PDS
Schröder, Gerhard	from 1998 until the publication of this book chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany
SED	The Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) was the ruling Communist party of the GDR from 1949 to 1989. It was transformed into the PDS
Sozialforum in Deutschland	part of the worldwide social forum movement which started 2001 in Porte Alegre, Brazil; the first Social Forum in Germany took place in July 2005 in Erfurt
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany; the head is Franz Müntefering
Ver.di	the united trade union of workers in the field of public and private services; the largest German trade union; it has a strong left wing
Wahlalternative	the initiative Electoral Alternative became part of the WASG
WASG	Electoral Alternative and Labour and Social Justice (WASG) was founded in 2003 as an alternative to the SPD, defending the social state against the Agenda 2010

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