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**The renewed German Left will be European or it won't be. A social Europe or no Europe at all. That is the question, that is the answer**

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“The ‘European social model’ still has its future ahead of itself. The European Left could turn it into its hall-mark, into its common project if it only dared to do so.” (Michael Krätke)

1)

In the following, two convictions will be defended. First: A renewed German Left has a great political chance, but only if it fulfils a number of important prerequisites. One of them is to be a European Left and to actively and concretely support continued European integration and unification. The renewed German Left will be European or it won't be. Second: There won't be a unified Europe if there is no social Europe. The deep crisis of European integration can be traced back mainly to the lack of this decisive orientation. No political force could possibly more pro-European than the Left if it picked up this challenge... and only dared to.

For the Left in many countries of the European Union, in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, but also in numerous new member states, there results the urgent question, whether it wants future integration, what kind of integration it wants, what answers it has to the pressing challenges. Explicitly or tacitly, there also exist in the German anti-European Left anti-European positions that are defended with arguments partly to be taken seriously. I share the criticism of EU-European reality; of the dominance of market radicalism for the whole developmental direction of the EU (the Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice; the Constitutional Treaty; the service directive, to name only a few important phenomena); of the closing off against the South of the globe; of the restriction of human and citizens' rights; of the acute deficit in democracy; of the power-political and military ambitions in international relations and the very underdeveloped readiness to orient European foreign policies towards the strengthening of the UN, international law and multilateralism as well as towards a fact-oriented and effective civil conflict prevention. Resistance of the Left against this policy is urgently required and must become clearly more forceful, effective in the public and lasting. That must apply, however, not only to the Constitutional Treaty, but in the same way also to the valid Treaty of Nice that is anything else but a positive alternative, all the more so, since it offers no more legal space for additional entries of countries to the European Union as they are supported by large parts of the European Left.

The three above evaluations in my opinion are valid without restriction for the Left in Germany and a few other European countries. However, it may not be schematically transferred to the Left of all other European countries which, like for instance in Denmark, Sweden or Norway encounter other conditions and are fighting for social standards that lie clearly above those in many other EU countries. However, they as well need to examine whether the “Scandinavian model” could survive a disintegration of the EU.

2)

The European Union had delivered a historic contribution: after decades of horrible capitalist wars it had secured the peace among the participating states. This was a decisive element of their acceptance among the people and it remains a lasting task for the inclusion of additional states in particular so as to erode the burning conflicts on the Western Balkan and dissolve them by the positive perspective of intensive European cooperation and integration.

For decades, integration moreover has contributed to welfare, economic growth and strengthened demand on the interior market. Moreover, it has encouraged to an essential degree the human and cultural contacts and encounters on a large part of the continent. Despite its grave deficits and continued crises, European integration, therefore, for the Left is a positive reference point for their policies. The justified criticism of the current orientation of European integration and policy must, therefore, on principle exclude an attitude hostile to Europe. Moreover, this all the more so, since the continued European integration offers the indispensable chance to supplement the struggles at the level of the nation-state for the overcoming of neoliberal ideology and its fundamental imposition on a European scale and to extend them in the spirit of the times.

The national states remain an essential political space for the required democratic and social changes. Under today’s conditions, however, they are no longer sufficient by themselves. Just as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the national political institutions were turned by the workers’ movement and other political and social forces into the battle field for the damming of Manchester capitalism and for alternatives pointing beyond it, the Left must and can next to the nation’s state possibilities today use the European framework.

Of course, at present forty or even fifty percent of gross social products are realised by EU member states by way of international trade, of these however, for instance in the German case, often up to four fifth within the EU. The EU is a huge economic space certainly capable of an interior market that could also be used as the political space for warding off the return of laissez-faire capitalism by way of neoliberal globalisation. for maintaining the different

transformation of present, capitalist relations. We are striving for a society that goes beyond the capitalist, patriarchal logic. Our objective is the emancipation of men, liberation of women and men from oppression, exploitation and exclusion... For this reason, the European Union and beyond that, the whole European continent – next to the traditional political level of the nation states, regions, local communities and not secluded from national (?) developments – increasingly becomes an important realm for alternative politics.”<sup>1</sup> Still there are for such a policy more or less strong points of contact. Despite the already completed destruction of significant social and democratic achievements in Germany, Austria, France and other countries, the influential US economist Jeremy Rifkin is basically right, when – in answer to the question by a journalist: “How is the ‘European dream’ to be paid? Europe takes its orientation after all from the US economic model – for instance as far as the Lisbon goals are concerned?” – he answers: “That is a mistake. In Europe, I hear again and again: A strong economy and the social state stand in contrast to one another. In statistics on growth-oriented economies, however, the Nordic countries in Europe always lead. Their secret? They successfully reformed their social state...” One more thing is worthy of reflection in Rifkin’s comparison between the USA and Europe: “You now discuss rights that we don’t even know: pensions, motherhood rights for instance. Human rights and sustainability play a major role in political discourse. The European dream relies on cooperation. Therefore, it also fits into the ‘globalised’ world – in contrast to the individualistic, American dream.”<sup>2</sup>

Rifkin will be reproached with ignoring European realities; after all, this is not the reality of European politics, hardly also the reality of prevailing European discourses. That is correct, however, it changes nothing to the fact that the Left might find a more sustainable place in a social and democratic change of the European discourses and realities than in sole resistance. In the above-mentioned European survey, there shows itself that there is for this certainly also a basis – even if still rather abstract – among the populations. Central challenges for European integration in the coming years are considered: First of all, the modernisation and the democratisation of society, their institutions and mechanisms and in connection to that the constitutional process; second, the treatment of applicants to EU membership; as well as possibilities and limits of enlargement, and third, the social dimension of Europe which includes aspects such as fight against unemployment and poverty or also the overcoming of the “Lisbon strategy”.

4)

The current crisis of European integration and unification is more serious and deeper than that of its numerous predecessors. It bears a structural character. Disintegration, re-nationalisation, the development backward towards a mere European free trade zone despite the far-advanced supranational moments of the integration process are no longer an impossibility. On the

European integration in a fundamentally different way than this was done up to now. We should found the Organisation of European States (OES) whose members are the individual states – not the citizens of the states directly, as it is proposed in the European constitution... Membership in the OES should only be motivated ... by a common belief in the capacities of the member states to cooperate in some areas, this in the common interest and to mutual advantage. The mechanism of decision-making must be unanimity, at least in all important areas.”<sup>3</sup>

5)

European integration is threatened from three different, but mutually interlinked directions: On the one hand, from continued and re-emerging nationalism that determines in particular the current European policy of Great Britain and Poland, yet despite verbal demarcation also the concept of Vaclav Klaus. In the Nice Treaty of 2000, this policy has been able to celebrate an official governmental success. One of the instruments openly declared by right-wing nationalist forces is by the way a geographical enlargement of the EU without principles and pre-conditions with the goal of loosening the inner coherence of the EU as well as to block the political and supra-national character of integration.

On the other hand, the governments in the valid treaties as well as in the failed constitutional treaty have responded in such a criminally inadequate fashion to the real contradictions and the necessary unity of geographical enlargement and deepening of integration that enlargement has already become a real threat to the existence, let alone the deepening of integration. That should not be an argument against further entries by countries who desire this; moreover, stability and peace on the Western Balkan seem hardly conceivable without such a perspective. It is counter-productive and useless to ask the question for the geographical borders of the European Union or to stop additional entries; we must ultimately ask the question for the political “finality” of European integration and its substantial, contractual and institutional consequences (even if this finality might present itself in a new way in a more distant past). That holds especially and also for the Left. Only in this way, the geographical borders become visible as well and can be determined by the concerned people and states themselves.

Finally, and that is actually the most powerful threat, it is the neoliberal market and competitive radicalism advanced to be the basis of the contract (Unified European Act 1987; Maastricht Treaty 1992) that threatens the European integration in its fundamental substance. Although the governments have declared this treaty to be a step towards deepened integration and partly also intend this, in the course of its realisation and continuation up to the Lisbon strategy of 2000 and the Constitutional Treaty, it as a matter of fact puts European unification into question. The Left correctly rejects it as an attack against the European social model (the

If the economic spread in the EU-15 (measured by purchasing power) between the most highly developed region (for instance, Inner London) and those lowest developed (for instance, Mecklenburg Western Pomerania) was 2 to 1, it has already worsened in the EU-25 to 10 to 1 (Inner London vs. Lubelskie in Poland). Some regions in Bulgaria and Rumania lie still below that.<sup>4</sup>

The economic spread between the countries (GNP per inhabitant) is similarly high. Abstracting for a moment from Luxemburg whose per capita GNP lies more than twice above the EU average, there remains between the economically strongest countries (in this ranking: Ireland, Denmark, Austria, Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Great Britain, Finland, France and Germany) and the economically weakest countries (Latvia, Rumania, Bulgaria) a spread of 5 to 1 as well.

European cohesion policy may well be committed to the goal of reducing these differences, but in the light of the Lisbon strategy of radical competition, the inadequate financial means allocated to the EU and similar neoliberal national policies, the EU commissioner Michel Barnier of that time in the third report on economic and social cohesion within the EU had to admit that “the gap between poor and rich will grow further”.<sup>5</sup> Especially, regional polarisation increases further. The primary answer by the EU Commission and by the member states is competition among the states, the competition for lower corporate taxes (Cyprus: 9.7 percent; Lithuania: 12.8 percent; Latvia: 14.4%; in comparison: the EU average amounts to 23.7%), the competition for lower wages (legal minimal wage in Latvia: 116 Euro, Bulgaria, 77 Euro, Rumania: 72 Euro), the competition for other low costs for the companies. In this way, on the one hand, Europe is not unified, but people are set up against each other economically, from the point of view of taxes and in particular socially, on the other hand, this becomes the engine for social demolition in the member states: “The merciless ‘locational’ competition in the furthest developed national economies leads to a massive pressure on the wages, social standards, but also tax systems. At the same time, the permanent threat with locational competition such as also the mass unemployment present also in Central and Eastern Europe prevents these countries from reaching a higher social state level.”<sup>6</sup>

7)

If the Left wants to oppose the destruction of social security and justice in the member countries in an effective way, it must step in at the same time for social cohesion and solidarity in the EU. for a European interior market policv. for the reform of the Maastricht

The struggles for a social alternative and for a united Europe are in this respect inseparably linked. The deepest crisis of European integration is at the same time the chance of its basic renewal. In the final analysis, continued European integration is only conceivable if it is continued up until an employment and social union. It was impossible to love the interior market, said Jacques Delors, Europe as a social union, however, could be the project that might win the women and men citizens back for European integration. Concrete and practical efforts to limit prevailing neoliberalism also in the small things, to roll it back and to overcome it belonged to it just as the basic alternatives of European politics and integration, its contractual and constitutional bases included.

Who wants that, however, may not satisfy him- or herself with left-wing “concept making” (Rosa Luxemburg) and – necessary – visions, but must move on to the long-term successful, intellectual, political and practical and organisational struggle, to politics (as the drilling of thick planks with measure as well as passion) for a new spiritual and political climate in Europe, directed against economic liberalism, for a European social state consensus, be passionate for the goals as well as for the unfortunately hard way. In that context, there also belongs that precisely a European constitution may not be founded on maximal demands, but requires a European historical compromise.

8)

The French and the Dutch “No” to the Constitutional Treaty did not unleash the crisis of European integration, but made it finally apparent. Following “Eurobarometer”, support for EU membership among the populations no longer amounts to more than 55%. Abstention at the European elections, disinterests, prejudice and ignorance are huge; nationalist sentiments are on the rise in most EU countries. The political and social consequences of the enlargement of 2004 are not mastered. The Lisbon strategy that was supposed to turn the EU until 2010 into the most “dynamic” economic region in the world has failed in this respect and on the contrary is mainly used as effective vehicle for the destruction of the European social state models. The “Common Foreign and Security Policy” is solemnly invoked in every document and in any speech and translated into effective means towards militarisation of the international politics of the EU; yet, from the readiness and capability for a common foreign policy, the governments are far away in almost all decisive questions.

The European Union has lost the identification of the women and men citizens with its development, politics and perspective. European integration as a peace project remains an indispensable and highly topical element of winning it back. Yet only the goal of a European social union could trigger a fundamental and sustainable re-identification. The central committee of German Catholics in its contribution to the discussion ignored by the public and

The rejection of the Constitutional Treaty as submitted in my opinion is justified and well-founded. To me, however, it is also undisputable that the European Union needs a constitution, a “Basic Law” that stands in the tradition of the American constitution of 1787 – the oldest still valid written constitution of the world - and the constitution of the French revolution. As a matter of fact, far-reaching rights of sovereignty and other rights have been handed over to the EU without the women and men citizens having received individual rights that could be sued for before court against EU institutions and effective possibilities for democratic participation. A reform of the governmental treaties, therefore, is not sufficient.

The European Union must really be derived – as is asserted in the Constitutional Treaty, but not realised – from the will and from the rights of the women and men citizens. Eighty percent of the decisions of the German Federal Parliament and sixty percent of the decisions in German local councils rely on treaties or directives from Brussels or are decisively influenced by them. Without a constitution, Europe is threatened by disintegration and anarchical re-nationalisation. It should, however, not be solely a question of eradicating the weaknesses of the Nice Treaty. A European Constitution must secure the rights of the women and men citizens just as much as a radical democratisation of the EU. It must form the basis on which Europe can support a more peaceful, more social and more environment-friendly world policy. The diversity of nations and cultures, of political experiences and religious views, last but not least of the constitutional traditions must be reflected in a European constitution. And it must convey to integration a lasting, renewed identity and fascination and contribute to overcoming the growing gap between “European citizens” and European politics. To that end, anyway, only a much shorter text would be appropriate, to be written in an easier language and freed from the dead weight of elements alien to a constitution (and in a democratic respect, anti-constitutional elements).

For the commitment of the EU to an economic order (“open market economy with free competition” in Part III), the commitment to rearmament by the states, namely “to gradually improve their military capabilities” (Part I), the limitation of the objectives of monetary policy to price stability alone (Part III) or the inclusion of the monetarism of the Maastricht Treaty into the protocols of the constitutional treaty finds its equivalent in no other democratic constitution on this world. These are irreconcilable with all valid written and unwritten constitutional orders of the member countries, stand in stark contrast to the objectives of the EU formulated in Article I-3 and in the Charta of Basic Rights and infringe clearly against the active and passive democratic right to vote of the women and men citizens formulated in Article I-10, because – independently of the will of voters - they commit European policy one-sidedly to economic liberalism, monetarism and to militarism.

For the perspective of European integration and from a left-wing point of view, the social obligation of the European Union, however, remains a key problem. The basic points formulated on that issue in the “Objectives of the Union” (Article I-3) are inadequate even if the Union explicitly commits itself: “It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among Member States.”<sup>9</sup> It is mainly the orientation towards “a social market economy competitive to the highest degree” that reveals the social deficit of the Union, even if the notion of “social market economy” finds itself for the first time in a treaty of the European Union. Apart from its basic mollification by the addition quoted, the social market economy is completely inadequate for the required development of the European Union towards an employment and social union. It would, however, in any event be rather a political, not a constitutional decision.

A policy of real overcoming of the social deficits of the European Union would go far beyond the ideas of a social orientation and political correction of the market and would basically mean a turn away from the Lisbon strategy and a social-state policy of the European Union, at least in the sense of the former proposals by Jacques Delors. Officially, the Lisbon strategy emphasises the connection between growth and employment and social cohesion.

The “social reforms” demanded and currently being implemented in the whole EU, however, aim at refashioning the social state following the principle of “individual responsibility”. That means for instance in old-age insurance the limitation of the public pension system to anything else but a basic security immunising against poverty, all the more so since the priority orientation at capital-covered private and company pension provision is supposed to serve mainly the creation of a European financial market. In the health system, orientation is being taken towards “medically necessary” basic services only as well as higher co-payments. Although the Lisbon strategy was still reasserted on the spring summit of 2006, the employment policy goals have largely been abandoned in reality.

On the whole, no switch towards durably resistant systems can be recognised in the “reforms” in the social area, but rather the Europe-wide retreat of the state from collective care. What many national governments did not dare in this openness – the US American social system became the guiding image, and by way of EU policy was also being pushed through in the national states: denunciation of the social state as an obstacle to business and competition, the privatisation and the capital market orientation of social prevention, deregulation of the labour market. In one decisive point, however, we distinguish ourselves from the United States: while Washington orients its financial and economic policy towards its own domestic market, the EU Commission and the European governments wage on the

described the European social model as one to whom “there serves as a basis a view of men that accords to all men the same dignity and the same inalienable rights. The individual in his personal dignity is the goal as well as the carrier of the social processes. The freedom and citizens’ rights that follow from this human image require necessarily the complementation by social rights, because freedom only exists where it can really be used. Social rights should make this possible. Following their inner logic, they aim at the participation of each and all in political and social life.”<sup>11</sup> Socio-political reality in the European states and in the Union is a completely different, however: it is at best ex post correction and secondary complementation of capitalist economic policy. That is also the essence of the “social market economy”. An orientation towards the social state, by contrast, does not simply mean the equality of social and economic policy, but a different approach in principle: By way of its whole policy, including economic and currency policy, the state and the European Union would be obligated to pursue a (new, modern and sustainable) full employment, social cohesion, social justice, social equality and social security and a solidary development of the European Union. In the final analysis, this would also imply a much stronger orientation of the EU towards the interior market that would be much more promising than the Lisbon strategy.

12)

That way – to me - the circle closes: Who in Germany or France struggles for the renewed conquest of the social state must respect and accept European integration as the decisive territory of this struggle. Who does not want to give up the project of European integration must and can only find it in the perspective of a European social union. Without fundamental changes in European economic policy instead of the “New Economy” of the Lisbon Process, this won’t be feasible. The democratisation of the European Union (which I can’t dwell on here), social coherence, social security and ecologically durable development must be its social policy goals and their integral component at the same time. The basic features of the complex approach, the policy mix required for that are obvious:

- economic policy cooperation between the European Central Bank, the economic and fiscal policy of the member states and wage policy,
- a more relaxed monetary policy,
- a productivity-oriented wage policy,
- a strategy oriented towards the domestic economy for sustainability and socio-ecological structural reforms that would be aimed at “a far-reaching dematerialisation of the European economy”<sup>12</sup>,
- a budgetary policy that strengthens public investments, research and education as well as the development of human resources,
- a consequent equality and affirmative action policy.

national average wage), for the overcoming of homelessness or of illiteracy.” (Klaus Dräger)

13)

In December 2001, the heads of state and government of the EU instated the Convent for the elaboration of the Constitution with the declaration: “In brief, the citizen requires a clear, transparent, effective, democratically determined common concept – a concept that will turn Europe into a beacon that can be determining for the future of the world, a concept that shows concrete result in the form of more jobs, more life quality, less criminality, a more effective educational system and a better health protection; it is clear beyond any doubt that Europe must regenerate and reform to that end.” That means after all in a way they know it already. Then I can only say with my Korean colleague in grad school, when a professor had again delivered a lecture of incomprehensible nonsense: “Come again, sir!”

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