

## Political Parties Finished - What comes Next?

By Wolfgang Fischer

Reflections induced by the SPD's Publicity Poster: 'Effects of Information Society on Labour Market' (in 'Der Spiegel' of 13th March 00, pp.142-143)



"He travelled many years to discover the world. On the Internet it takes our students just half a day"

Poster based on copperplate-engraving by Theodor de Bry (1528-1598), First Landing of Columbus (Guanahani, 12.Oktobre 1492)

The presentation on the SPD's (Social Democrate Party, Germany) publicity poster of indigenous tribes-men trustingly approaching their future rulers and murderers may be ever so colourful. Yet the message it conveys can only be called thoughtless and in poor taste, linked as it is to the publicity text in which the SPD compares the start of the Internet Age with the discovery of the New World by Columbus, thus reminding of an event that marked the beginning of 500 years of suffering for the indigenous people of all continents.

History - not merely that of the last 5 centuries - has been founded upon torture, rape, racism - on open or subtly disguised force; and this has had a different and harsher effect especially upon women. For one main objective of colonial terrorism was, inducing women to identify with motherhood forced upon them through rape.

Against the background of an admission of historical misdemeanours in the course of human history slowly gaining acceptance - with even the Pope joining in - such a picture ought not to be serving as a symbolical advertising poster for the entering into a new era. What is required here is a great deal more sensitivity as well as more awareness in dealing with historical facts.

In the face of the topicality of recently published details exposing the colonial cruelty in Africa of the Belgian Crown (1) - which used to be praised as being exceptionally "humane" - , we Europeans in particular ought to be able to develop an awareness of the universal historical blunder and its fatal effect upon the subdued peoples.

The large industrialised nations should gradually come to acknowledge that a large part of their development towards industrial wealth and technological advance was enabled solely on the basis of stolen gold treasures, exploited people and plundered resources. Only such recognition would facilitate an actual, sensitive understanding of the guilt accrued in the course of history.

Today still the tradition of this development - also called civilisation - is being maintained mainly at the expense of the women and their children from the lower classes of peripheral countries. This is shown more clearly than ever before by the feminisation of poverty or, respectively, of social responsibility throughout the world.

If this kind of picture today is meant to serve as an enticement for entering a new age, we may indeed expect nothing positive to come from this. As long as such a picture is not perceived as sym-

bolising the beginning of cruelties and mistaken historical developments, there is obviously a lack of responsible preparedness or ability to admit guilt and make amends.

This means that the path towards developing a comprehensive justice system remains blocked while areas of potential conflict continue to exist. In Germany they are even being reinforced by the fact that the SPD, in its attempt to ingratiate itself with Capital, has jumped upon the band-wagon of Neo-Liberalism.

Blinded by imagined successes of his British counter-part, the German Chancellor Schroeder has so far failed to notice that for the majority of people this is a train that's moving backwards. For day by day on this journey certain social achievements gained in the last 100 years by difficult struggle are being ignored, sold or quite simply thrown overboard - achievements which for the most part were meant and gained for the benefit of wage-earners. Whenever females gained the benefit of such achievements, it was mostly as dependants of liberal citizens or socialist proletarians.

For the sake of political expediency social and ecological intactness is being sacrificed upon the altar of Capital's profit maximisation. This involves blatant genocide as the majority of the global population through hunger and deprivation is drifting towards slow but certain death.

Such a perverse development, - in which, to top it all, social-democratic governments are playing a vital part - proves the political lies of those who pretend to lead people into a better future.

No less reprehensible seems the betrayal of their own programme by the German Green Alliance. Being solely motivated by a desire to retain perks and positions, it is downright outrageous.

Recent history, involving moreover the scandal about party contributions, seems to be clearly teaching us the one lesson that political parties may no longer be regarded as the torch-bearers of progressive policies.

Their overriding interest is an increase of their own power at the expense of a democratic system which is dying as the autonomy of the individual, be they liberal citizens or social-democrat wage-earners, is being eroded. This shows them to have failed to fulfil their historic mission. The people affected by this, in particular the women, will thus have no choice but to develop their own alternative forms of political organisation and articulation.

That is why we need new ideas for organising civil society. Governments of all kinds hardly take an interest any longer in protecting the people, but on the contrary are these days specialising in how to remove, for the benefit of Capital, those hindrances which were meant to protect mostly the male citizenry as well as the public interest - how ever defined - from the insatiability of mammon.

Thanks to the mass media, wars are nowadays enacted like theater plays. Moreover, they are called "humanitarian" and said to be contributing to the saving of civilisation. Truth is twisted in the service of private property. Lying, manipulation and deception is carried out quite openly: every day of the war vast sums are readily sent up in smoke. The huge industrial arms complex is beside itself with happiness. The so-called reconstruction fits in with the logic of profit maximisation; it appears to be an integral part of the strategy of private property.

Our task today is, to develop a philosophy of life against these politics of death and destruction! Every aware and life-affirming individual is called upon to offer resistance to a political system which, as is quite evident and very easy to verify, is placing the interest of Capital above the necessities of peaceful social co-existence.

In view of this fact the attitude advocated by the feminist political scientist Claudia von Werlhof e.g. seems of paramount importance. It is a dissenting attitude within an active political system which, in rejecting any kind of patriarchate, knows no rulers. It will overcome the divisions maintained by traditional politics ('divide et impera!': divide and rule!), as well as by religion and tradition, in favour of a wholistic system that is truly humane.

In this context the internet may be seen as a rather positive development, in that it facilitates the speedy and wide-spread dissemination of information beyond the mainstream that is ruled by financial considerations.

This kind of information, normally withheld by the daily media machines, can in the long run support the emergence of a state of mind that rejects government by the few; and in this way it will foster a comprehensive awareness of responsibility for our fellow-humans, the environment and the future.

Through a horizontal network of information the civilisation of the future will be able to create a social climate in which alternative solutions, alternatives to the presently rather desolate future prospects, will begin to blossom.

On the basis of such a network an attitude of togetherness and mutual support spanning all continents will emerge which, merely through conscious refusal of supportive participation, will put an end to the globally destructive gamble "Turn yourself into Money".

Nature's gifts will be utilised by us (who are after all, Nature's children) in a way which will also consider the well-being of future generations.

Just as Nature is using her own laws, for example when pumping water from the depth of the subsoil right up into the tops of huge trees, so in the same way human global society can use its technological potential and achievements for the benefit of all.

This will be possible once this society is liberated from its present potential of destruction through being ruled no longer by a compulsive urge for profit maximisation but by a spirit of mutual assistance and universal cooperation.

(1) King Leopold's Ghost, A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa, by Adam Hochschild, Houghton Mifflin Co (Trd) 1999; ISBN: 0618001905 - Editorial Reviews -

Emanzipation Humanum, version 6.2000, translation from German to English by Rainer Täni. Criticism, suggestions as to form and content, dialogue, translation into other languages are all desired