

Some short remarks on the interventions of Dr André Pisani and Dr William Kofi Ahadzie

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- I. If we could redraw the map of the earth on a white paper, I think we all would be in favour of free global movement of people. This is exactly where inequality comes into the debate: We have to deal with a majority of people that are forced migrants, not free ones. There is an obvious connection: Credit Suisse data indicates that currently six (6!) individuals own as much wealth as the poorest 50%. The share of the richest has skyrocketed in the last decade. The poorer half has actually lost in relative and absolute share.¹ At the same time the world reaches a historical record in numbers of refugees and displaced people according to UNHCR.²

- II. In Europe the debate around migration normally is about the “burden” and the “threats” that come with migration, as outlined by Dr Pisani. I think as socialists we have to challenge the premises of the debate: Who is threatening whom? Who has to carry which burden? If we look at net international capitals flows – even before we take into account illicit flows³ – we have to draw the conclusion that we are in fact, historically and in present days, dealing with a situation where the global south as a whole and the majority of its economies are net capital exporters, the global north imports capital. Gurtner gathered the information for the years 1995-2006.⁴ In the Swiss case in fact we can break that down very clearly, f.e. if we talk about the banking secrecy, arms trade or commodities. A recent study by the eZine *Jadaliyya* has shown that Switzerland has made a net benefit from arms exports to the Middle east. The authors take all the arms exports between 2011 and 2014 and deduct the “cost” generated by Syrian refugees arriving in Switzerland during the same period.⁵ The same can be shown for gold imports coming from Eritrea (own calculations).⁶

¹ See f.e. <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/02/20/morbid-inequality-now-just-six-men-have-much-wealth-half-worlds-population>

² <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

³ See the Report of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa:

https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/iff_main_report_26feb_en.pdf

⁴ Gurtner, Bruno (2007): Verkehrte Welt: Der Süden finanziert den Norden, in: Schweizerisches Jahrbuch für Entwicklungspolitik 26-2/2007, P. 61-84. Online: <https://siep.revues.org/372>

⁵ <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/25730/what-the-west-owes-syrians-us-and-european-arms-sa>

⁶ See my article here: <http://cedricwermuth.ch/waffen-fuer-syrien-gold-aus-eritrea-zur-oekonomie-von-elend-flucht-und-migration/>

The point here is: The dominant ideology tries to tell that these examples are some kind of accidents on the way to a sustainable integration of a neoliberal-capitalist world market. This is untrue. As a matter of fact, capitalism always has and evermore will depend on what I call the “economics of misery”. The capitalist market in the core countries of the Empire depend on cheap commodities and cheap labour in the periphery. This also means that there have to be parts of the world where human rights, especially social and economic rights, are not applied in the same way.

Dr Pisani quoted Robert Cox: “*from the ways of doing and thinking of the dominant social strata of the dominant state*“. The neoliberal hegemony is organised around the „imperial way of life“ of northern middle and upper classes. Imperial in the double sense as it colonises more and more of our lives internally (economisation of every aspect of life) and externally, sometimes even in brutal ways. The imperial world order is more and more stabilised and translated in legal regimes and treaties – neoliberalism as “new constitutionalism” (Stephen Gill). The Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and African states a good-bad example. These agreements stabilise a deeply asymmetrical relationship by forcing countries like Mozambique to open their markets to European capital (as of October 2016). In exchange Mozambique gets virtually nothing.⁷ In short: Our goal as socialists and social democrats cannot be the integration into the neoliberal world market.

- III. As Dr Ahadzie said, we need a new approach to international migration. First of all I think we have to find a new approach to international governing bodies. One that is less technocratic and less sectorial. We need to bring the debate about economic integration (WTO), migration, security, etc. back together. What we could suggest is a Marshall-Plan for Africa accompanied by the establishment of legal ways of – primarily temporary – migration, f.e. in public-public knowledge-transfer-agreements. This migration policy could be positively influenced by the Swiss experience with the opening of the labour market towards the EU (while not becoming a full member). After quite heavy political fights fought by the left and the trade unions we managed to get an agreement. The introduction of free movement of people between Switzerland and the EU was accompanied by quite substantial increases of labour rights (f.e. collective bargaining) and labour market controls. Therefore Switzerland experiences a considerable rise of low wages (in sharp contrast to Germany for example). Such an approach could be for the benefit of European working people and African migrants at the same time.
- IV. When we talk about migration from Africa to Europe we need to consider the responsibilities on both sides. The neoliberal historical block in Europe is in crisis, if I stick to the Gramscian framework and language used by Dr Pisani. The dominant classes struggle to maintain their leadership in this

⁷ Bambu, Boniface Mabanza (2017): „Option für die Optionen der Armen?“ – Die Handelsbeziehungen zwischen der EU und Afrika auf dem Prüfstand, in: Neue Wege 9/17, P. 8-12.

'time of monsters' – a terminology chosen by Gramsci to describe a moment where the old hegemonial project is broken and the new one is not yet in place. Who wouldn't think of that if we look at the new president in the US? What we see now is the emerging of a new kind of xenophobic-reactionary-national-centred capitalism that tries to find a new compromise with parts of capital and parts of the working class by turning back the wheels of time. They use migration as a tool to rearrange cleavages and loyalties by developing a new cultural racism (and also patriarchy by the way). This understanding is crucial for left wing answers. We absolutely need to understand that weakening the social state in Europe works exactly in this direction of de-solidarisation. Our answer can only be solidarity. Solidarity between working men and woman on the labour market and in the care sector as well as solidarity between the countries when it comes to the question of relocation of refugees in EU-countries. Let me be very clear about this: The sometimes very reluctant attitude towards relocation by politicians especially in Eastern Europe and even comrades is absolutely intolerable.

- V. On the African side Dr Pisani – again – already mentioned the central point: Freedom as well as inequality are multidimensional. Inequality between Europe and Africa does not explain everything. For sure a big part of today's forced migration is rooted in social-economic inequality between the continents. But African leaders share a significant part of responsibility. An "economy of misery" does not only grow on capital from Europe but also on compliant and corrupt elites on the ground. This is also true for a series of other reasons for migration. We need to work together for more inclusive institutions, good governance, against dictatorships, family clans and for open democracies and equal rights for women and LGBTIQ people. The same is actually true for climate change. It is undoubtedly true that consequences of the imperial way of life unfairly hit the south first. But in contrast to the official language used even by the UN, climate change seldom is the root of poverty. The problem usually was already there and lies in an unequal organisation of local societies and economies, thereupon climate change hits in as a catalyst (which is, again, interconnected with the international economic regime). This explains why different societies developed more or less successful responses to climate phenomena despite wealth differences.
- VI. Let me add something in parenthesis: Dr Pisani and Dr Ahadze both spoke of the problem of the "weak" neoliberal state challenged by the international markets. It is obviously true that we see a loss of central state sovereignty towards international financial markets. But I'm not sure if neoliberal states are weak, at least if we look – with Gramsci – at the state apparatus in a larger sense (core state plus civil society). Then the dichotomy of state vs. market is the wrong starting point for our analyses. Both can be tools of the ruling classes and therefore part of the state (in a larger sense). The state in a larger sense is responsible for the reproduction of the dominant culture and ideology and coercion of the "economic citizen". In this sense a neoliberal state can be very strong, in fact even authoritarian. It is very strong because it successfully normalises people's behaviour and coerces the economic citizen if necessary. Consider labour

market activation policy as an example. Or even more impressive: The obvious willingness of the neoliberal state to increase anti-democratic measures if needed, imposing total control on his citizens by information technology violating every liberal ideal of freedom and privacy rights (NSA), impose and hold on to the state of emergency and even ensuring its supply chain and geostrategic interest by military violence.

The point here is: Strengthening the state as such is not a left wing strategy. Especially not after the experience with bureaucratic dictatorships in Eastern Europe. Also a strong state can increase inequalities, f.e. by promoting a new bureaucratic elite. We should start by democratising state institutions and enterprises, processes, decisions making, etc.