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Escape into ambiguity

Intereconomics

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For this reason the Federal Government does not believe in uniform patent solutions for all raw material problems. But it is willing to conclude, after careful examination, commodity agreements in which the specific problems in the particular case are given consideration.

Many developing countries regard the authorization of producers' communities as a suitable measure for the stabilizing or raising of the export earnings from basic commodities and demand that the industrial countries should abstain from all countervailing measures. They have left open the question for what purpose these communities

are to be formed (as confrontation cartels, for the exchange of information and experience, for cooperation in production and marketing). Apart from mineral oil however, the basic commodities seem hardly to be suitable objects for cartelization.

The Federal Government, in common with other industrial countries, has come out against commodity cartels.

The Federal Government has examined the arguments for and against price indexation with great care and, like the majority of other industrial countries, adopted a negative attitude to it because of the great technical

difficulties and the hazards for the world economy. The developing countries also seem to evolve gradually more differentiated attitudes.

The Federal Government recognizes the right of the developing countries to unrestricted sovereignty over their resources but rejects expropriatory acts negating international law.

It is in the interest of the developing countries that foreign investments should receive adequate legal protection because a propitious investment climate remains a prerequisite to the investments which they urgently need.

Escape into Ambiguity

Interview with Dr Jürgen Todenhöfer, Bonn

IE: In remarks to the press and in the first of the 25 Theses on Development Policy Minister Bahr has put on record that the principle of "continuity and concentration" enunciated by Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in the Government Declaration of May 17, 1974 is of validity also for the development policy. Do you think that this principle has taken effect in the mentioned Theses?

TODENHÖFER: This is one of the many multi-purpose formulae running through all Bahr's Theses on Development Policy. There are basically only two explanations for this escape into ambiguity: Either Bahr has no concept or he has a concept which he does not want to disclose. Neither explanation is very reassuring.

IE: You have been quoted for the view that Herr Bahr has failed to light in these Theses upon

a line that is free of contradictions. What are the contradictions?

TODENHÖFER: The fundamental contradiction is to be found in his attempt to satisfy both the Left and the Right, at least in the short term, by telling the Left that Eppler's concept retains validity while stressing the national self-interest to the Right. None of the 25 Theses resolves this fundamental contradiction.

IE: What basic differences are there between these Theses and your party's guidelines on development policy?

TODENHÖFER: It is impossible to answer this question comprehensively until Bahr lifts the veil of ambiguity from his development policy and musters the courage for an honest exposition of his concept. At present differences are coming into

sight, mainly on the issue of a new order for the world economy. Bahr seems to be ready to make concessions in this context which would alter the system while we take the view that to be of real help in the long term concessions to the developing countries must be compatible with the system.

IE: The press has reported your saying that Herr Bahr has stuck "black feathers" to his "red hat". What "black feathers" did he use?

TODENHÖFER: An example is the differentiation of interest rates which had its origin in a public suggestion by the opposition a fortnight after Bahr came into office.

The adoption of such individual demands is explicitly welcomed by us. The criterion for our attitude to Bahr however will be whether he also adopts our

concept on the basic issues, and that not only verbally but in the political practice.

IE: Minister Eppler never omitted to point out that a development policy with a long-term orientation is a peace policy for the world of tomorrow and could not be subordinated to short-term foreign-political considerations. His successor Bahr on the other hand is laying the stress unequivocally on the Federal Republic's own interest in development policy and on its importance for foreign policy. What view do you take of the relationship between foreign policy and development policy?

TODENHÖFER: The development policy must be coordinat-

ed more closely with the foreign policy. It must be integrated with the overall policy. I believe that Bahr sees these things in exactly the same way. If the development policy is integrated with the overall policy, the decisive question however is what objectives are pursued by this overall policy towards the developing countries. We have every reason to suppose that Bahr has entirely different aims in view than, say, Genscher, Friderichs or the CDU/CSU.

IE: The Federal Government wants to play an increasingly active role in eliminating the conflicts between industrial and developing countries. Herr Bahr has however refused to make a statement on the demands of

the developing countries for a "new order for the world economy". What position do you think should the Federal Republic adopt on these issues?

TODENHÖFER: The alternative to the so-called new order for the world economy is a comprehensive programme of liberalization by the industrial countries. Bahr apparently believes that it would be more difficult to obtain domestic political support for such a programme of liberalization than for concessions on the world economic order which would alter the system. But this is being flexible in the wrong place. The problems of the developing and industrial countries can be solved only with a free economic world order.

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