

German President Looks To Eurasian Development

by Rainer Apel

When German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder reaffirmed Germany's opposition to war against Iraq, in an address to the national parliament on March 14, he also said that disarming Iraq by non-military means implied "that sanctions can finally be lifted," so that Iraq can be rebuilt. Although he did not elaborate, some government circles are thinking about reconstruction and development as being crucial for a lasting peace.

President Johannes Rau's visit to India, March 1-6, provided some insight into such deliberations. At a New Delhi luncheon hosted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Confederation of Indian Industry on March 3, Rau said: "Our position is, like that of any country, influenced by our history. In the 20th Century, we learned most painfully that stability and prosperity are not gained through war, violence, and hegemonic ambitions, but through cooperation, dialogue, and arms control." The peaceful integration of the formerly divided Europe is one of the greatest success stories of the last 50 years, Rau added.

The potential of economic cooperation between Europe and Asia is "far from exhausted," Rau said, and in that, India will play a crucial role in Asia—which is home to almost 50% of the world's population. "One important foundation of economic success is scientific research," he declared.

Rau also said that "Asia and Europe are two continents that are part of one geographical whole. . . . The big clashes of history, like the Greek-Persian wars, [or] Alexander the Great's progress to the Indus, are familiar to everyone. But few people know that the ashes of Pompeii also concealed a statue of an Indian goddess," which indicates there was cooperation between Europe and Asia about 2,000 years ago.

"Europe owes much to India, right up to the present day," Rau said. "Not just in philosophy, but also in other sciences, above all astronomy and mathematics. India gave us the zero, a number of virtually infinite significance." And he added, with a dose of irony: "Indeed, how could governments around the world present their budget deficits if it weren't for the zero?"

"We have long known that the existing cooperation between Europe and Asia, between European and Asian countries, cannot be a one-way street," Rau said.

In another speech at the state dinner hosted by Indian President Abdul Kalam, also on March 3, the German President quoted from a writing by the German cleric Rhabanus

Maurus, dating from 1,200 years ago: "India possesses an abundant amount of the gold of wisdom, the silver of eloquence, and the gems of all virtues." Dialogue between different cultures, Rau said, must be based on mutual respect for the genuine achievements of either side. "The collective memory of the German people is marked by its experiences in two world wars that amounted to a catastrophe for Europeans. Our bitter experience is that wars develop their own dynamics and often enough bring only suffering and ruin. After the Second World War, we saw that stability and security—and not least also prosperity—can only be achieved through peaceful cooperation. . . . We can, therefore, only encourage all countries to engage in dialogue with their neighbors in order to find peaceful, political solutions—very much in keeping with the sentiments expressed by Mahatma Gandhi, who said: "What is obtained by hatred proves a burden in reality, for it increases hatred."

Scientific Cooperation

Of particular interest were Rau's remarks on scientific cooperation, in his speech at the University of Hyderabad on March 5—where he also visited India's Space Research Center. "I am convinced that the sciences will play a key role in our planet's future. The sciences will map out the course for our journey into the near and distant future."

Defining research in aerospace as a leading area on the agenda of cooperation between German and Indian scientists, Rau said: "When I hear that the Indian INSAT satellite enables television stations to reach about 85% of the Indian population, even in remote parts of the country, I realize that satellite technology has become a backbone of information and education policy—not only in India, of course. In addition, there are the important means of reconnaissance which can aid weather forecasts and help monitor crops and natural resources. Many people in Germany are not aware of how developed India's space program is. Germany and the European Space Agency, ESA, are among the customers of the Indian Space Research Organization, ISRO."

Bio-technology is another pioneer area of joint research by German and Indian scientists, Rau said: "Genetic defects can possibly be rectified. New varieties of plants are said to be able to overcome famine in entire regions. People all over the world have, therefore, placed great hopes in these advances."

If what Rau discussed in India is to become a real alternative to the Clash of Civilizations strategy of the confrontationists in the Bush Administration, Germany will be able to contribute a lot to world development. But it will have to drop the policies of monetarist budget-balancing that prevent it from carrying out what Rau described. The LaRouche movement in Germany has long insisted that Eurasian, science-driver economic cooperation is the best approach to build a world of peace. Rau's remarks in India indicate that Germany's elites have begun to acknowledge that.