

Rede von Klaus Rose am 27. Mai 2010 auf einer Demokratie-Konferenz im Hause des Europarats in Straßburg

The diversity of pro-democracy movements - support of the democratization in China and Asia

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends of democracy,

If we look, due to recent events, at the development in **Thailand** we could be tempted to condemn democracy. For many years “the land of the free” has been considered to be a well-organized democracy with an admired royal family. And now? It is apparently no good democracy, perhaps no real democracy. Are people in the streets, the so-called Redshirts, part of a new democratic movement? Or are they wheeled by black channels that have no democracy in mind but riots and civil war? In times like these it is difficult to talk about movements that want to propagate democracy. Notwithstanding the present situation in Thailand, all of us know of the values of democracy. And, not to forget, democracy is combined with responsibility.

Today we once again focus our **attention on Asia and especially on China** in order to achieve progress in the democratization in this part of the world. I was lucky to attend the meetings in Berlin, Brussels and Tokyo and I am glad to stand here in the famous democratic city of Strasbourg in the middle of Europe to work again for democracy and human rights. Even the so-called occident of the world had to struggle for freedom and democracy. In some countries it took decades or even centuries before people could live under tolerable conditions and could enjoy the democratic values of liberté, égalité and fraternité. Some nations suffered from Nationalism and Fascism. For our fellow citizens in Middle East Europe the additional challenge was to fight against and defeat

communism and its brutal suppression. Europe is now a united continent and no country, no nation suffers from autocratic regimes any more.

What can we learn from this? It sometimes takes much time to obtain progress. This historical comparison is only mentioned here to emphasize the significance of human activities when it comes to getting a more civilized life. It is our duty not to abate in our struggle for human rights and democracy. Though the People's Republic of China and other communist countries seem to be invincible at the present time their system will not last forever. As I said some years ago, democracy is not so much the way how a state is organized but the way how civilized people live together. Permit me a question to the audience: Do we all have in mind the same democracy? Of course a so-called Westminster democracy could be our final aim. But a democratic behavior should be the first goal to arrive at. Then we can take profit from parliamentary democracies, from federal democracies, from centralist democracies or even from parliamentary monarchies.

An important part and a symbol of progress within democratic states are the non-governmental organizations. All groupings of the people can engage in **NGOs** as well as in citizen initiatives. The right to pass laws is confined to parliaments but the right to press influence upon people and members of parliament is not to be underestimated. NGOs, however, are not restricted to democracies. They are, in many cases, forerunners of democracy in totalitarian states. So we are always pleased to have representatives of NGOs amidst our conferences.

The development in Europe presents hope for Asia. In **the Council of Europe** there have been discussed many topics of violations of human rights in various European countries – and later these violations could be stopped. Even questions concerning Russia were formerly openly discussed in spite of sharp protests from Moscow. Today Russia is a welcome member of the council of Europe. Moreover, **the European**

Parliament is still a place of discussing international violations of human rights. Members there do not shrink back from threats of mighty dictators. They put human questions on the agenda, they debate them and they seek for solutions. The media nearly always cover such events. So even the Taiwan or Tibet questions are freely discussed here. The Dalai Lama has been welcomed. I think this an important way to promote democratization. If we have as many parliaments as possible that freely discuss human problems, a solution will appear at the horizon.

Coming back to the word “diversity” I therefore can add another suggestion. The **national parliaments** in Europe as well as in Northern America and Australia - and of course all the others in between - are also obliged to put international questions on their agenda. When I was chairman of the Parliamentary friendship group Berlin – Taipei some years ago I was engaged in parliamentary discussions about, for example, the European weapons embargo towards China or the question of admitting Taiwan to international organizations. You can imagine that Beijing was not amused, nor was the German Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder pleased with his own parliament. WTO was a success for Taiwan, WHO so far was not. But the Republic of China got the chance to be presented as a symbol of democratic developments, and that this is possible even in a country with Chinese cultural roots. There are, I have to admit, quite a few politicians and publishers in Germany who doubt the capability of China to be led by a democratic government. Taipei shows the exact contrary. By the way, the recent death sentences that were executed in Taiwan are no good sign of human rights there. The Kuomintang government should not take the United States as its good example nor should it follow the so-called will of the people. Even in Germany people would present majorities if asked and allowed to hang criminals. It is a question of humanity to send criminals into prison and not up to the gallows.

A third way to support democratization is to visit as often as possible foreign countries and speak there about new ways of **establishing partnerships** between industry companies, local authorities, universities or schools of vocational training. Germany or various German federal states are eager to meet their Chinese or Vietnamese counterparts. The various German political foundations work in China on programs of modernization of agriculture, the banking system or workers corporations. They speak with many inhabitants and appear as proof of the contrary to the propaganda of the class enemy. Towards the Warsaw pact this was the “policy of short steps”. All of it took time but all of it was worthwhile.

As a matter of fact, we need **more seminars** in democratic countries which deal with all topics of China, North Korea or Vietnam. The more knowledge the more engagement. I regret that the German political foundations rarely give lessons about ways in which they support the process of democratization. I asked for some examples and I got no answer, with the exception of a liberal foundation. Are all the others afraid of being thrown out from China?

Democratic movements in Europe think of further chances to support democratization in China. **Tourism** is an important part of bringing people together. **Scholarships** of Universities or military academies could help to widen the horizon. The **study of language and culture** leads to contacts, the **broadcasting** of news or cultural programs provide information. In our time of **internet** there are many chances for “the other side” to be presented. Of course I know about the big blocks of stones the Beijing government throws into international lines. But before my eyes I always see the breakdown of all socialist regimes in the eastern part of Europe. As I had my constituency directly at the Iron Curtain, near Czechoslovakia, I know what I am talking about. Of course, China is China. But all people in the world belong to mankind which strives for more happiness. Are Chinese people living on a different planet? No! They like to be called

members of an empire “in the middle of all nations”. So the leaders there should behave like members of mankind.

What can the **Chinese community** throughout the world do in favor of their relatives in mainland China? Are many of them engaged in the different pro-democratic movements? Do they support the above-mentioned partnerships or pay for scholarships? What happens to the Democratic Party of China which was founded in 1998? Of course it is not acknowledged by the Communist Party in Beijing but it has advocates in China and outside. How widespread can it work in democratic countries?

Authors, writers, journalists or scientists of Chinese tongue have much influence. Many of them are not afraid of Big Brother but their network is not strong enough. Of course, the heavy burden cannot rest on the shoulders of individuals. If these shoulders are very small and weak like Sheng Xue’s than they need help and support.

Recently the president of the Federal Republic of Germany paid a visit to China’s President and Party Chief. He was welcomed as an “old friend of China”. This sounds good. An agreement which was signed in the presence of Horst Koehler and Hu Jintao promises **more exchange** of high-ranking business people, political, cultural and media leaders of both countries and the everlasting task of finding new ways of intensifying relations. We have an old saying in Bavaria: “If people meet each other there is no chance of war”. Our international conference here in Strasbourg is a challenge for us and through us for the international community not to desist from our task, which is **the support of democratization** in as many countries in the world as possible and, above all, in Asia. If China is going to be a global partner it will not only be a competitor or rival of the United States of America or the European Union but also of the biggest democracy in the world, India. A democratic society has its own problems, of course, but it is acknowledged and even admired by the majority of mankind. Beijing will feel this reality, sooner or later. At present it shows its power and glamour

through military parades, Olympic Games or Expos. In Germany we had the same development in 1936 when Adolf Hitler was dictator. But displaying the largest army of the world is no symbol of greatness. No military dream of being a super-power does any good to mankind. The new threats of Chinese military leaders that in some ten or twenty years there will be war between America and China will lead to desperation.

My task was, I suppose, to talk about diversity. A further session will try to connect the different overseas democratic movements and present them as a strong unity. Let us support all people who endeavor to achieve as much democracy as possible all over the world. Our conference is an **example for worldwide democracy** and free discussion. But to my mind democracy is also the public confession, the mobilizing of the masses and the challenging of the more or less mighty people in power. Nobody should be afraid of these mighty autocrats or dictators. Take the history of Strasbourg as a good example for freedom and democracy.

Thank you.