

## Communism\*

A: suyü'iyah. - F: communisme. - G: Kommunismus. - R: kommunizm. - S: comunismo. - C: gongchan zhuyi 共产主义

With the end of the Soviet Union it appeared that the fate of C had been sealed with. Stalinist terror and authoritarian stagnation in the phase after **Stalin** was followed by the failure of **Gorbachev's** attempts at reform, and finally the restoration of state capitalism with a different kind of authoritarianism. The dissolution of the socialist bloc and the Soviet Union after 1989 threw Russia back behind borders which are drawn significantly narrower than those under Peter the Great, especially after the secessions of Ukraine and Georgia. For many it seems clear that C in the thinking of **Marx**, and the historical C which refers to him, have turned out to be something that is realised either in a type of totalitarian society or else as an unattainable utopia. From this point of view, its impossibility has been proven in both cases. The conception of an historical movement toward C had been extinguished with one stroke, and it has landed on the dustbin of history. As any bourgeois dictionary would say, C is one of the three ideologies which have shaped the modern world. It attempted to criticize liberalism and go beyond it in the direction of an egalitarian socialisation; and it formed the counterpart to conservative criticism of liberalism, which defended the tradition of the Ancien Régime.

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Liberalism, in its double economic and political-ethical manifestation, remained the main point of reference. As Benedetto **Croce** noted, since the 19th century liberalism has been the central world view in the sense of a secular >religion of liberty< (1932/1963, chapt. 1), and it is that which forces its critics - left and right - to define themselves in relation to it.

**Croce** foresaw a fusing of socialism and C on the one hand, and on the other, the merging of conservatism into liberalism. This was a bold prognosis in view of the crisis of capitalism and the liberal democracies under the pressure of Stalinist C and Nazi fascism. After 1989 it gained relevance inasmuch as liberalism can appear sometimes as social, and then as authoritarian, while conservatism is forced to present itself as liberal conservatism, and socialism as liberal socialism. And yet, one must be aware of the challenge originally written into C by **Marx** and **Engels**, in order to estimate what became of it in the socialist and then, in the ^short 20th Century^^ from 1917 to 1989, in the movement that called itself communist.

During a scant century historical C embodied the success and the failure of the greatest attempt to change the world since Christianity, which initially mobilized the dominated and degraded masses. Born from the disaster of a war that had positioned the largest nations of the so-called civilized world against each other with unparalleled barbarity, C nourished itself from the criticism of the large social-democratic parties, which had capitulated and let themselves be nationalistically-corporatistically assimilated by the capitalist and imperialist elites. In a tragedy which has meanwhile ended, this C allowed the

commitment of a political-ethical idealism, which was ready for enormous sacrifices, to be followed by a cynical politics which legitimized massive crimes. It cannot be charged against **Marx**, who always tied the liberation of the individual and that of society together, and who aimed at a radical democratisation of bourgeois democracy in an >association< of free producers (*The Communist Manifesto*, 1967/2002, 244 [4/482]). Nevertheless, the complexity and the ambiguity of the Marxist critique of modern society permitted contradictory interpretations, and also retained theoretical contradictions within the enlightened enthusiasm which the faith in the synergy between theoretical criticism and the praxis of the workers' movement had generated.

Since the concept and the object of this >C< have disappeared, the relative separation of socialism from C, which led to the fact that C did not develop beyond a nebulous proto-socialism, must be explained. In addition, **Marx's** understanding of C must be sounded out without forgetting **Engels** in the process. Later, the communist idea passes through the socialist collectivism of the II International with its cleavages into revisionists and orthodox, reformists and revolutionaries. It was the October Revolution of 1917 that first put C on the agenda and established its difference from socialism. From now on communist theory becomes involved in the problems of the so-called revolutionary transition, without becoming the subject of comprehensive reflection. With **Lenin** and the building of socialism in one country in preparation for C world-wide, C stands on the test bench, from initial success through Stalinism up to its final defeat. The refusal to equate C with either Bolshevism or Stalinism

finds its expression in utopian criticism from the point of view of the council movement, and in the partisanship for the mass strike from Rosa **Luxemburg** to Karl **Korsch**, Anton **Pannekoek**, as well as Peter **von Oertzen**. This tendency is quickly exhausted in the mainstream of the European workers' movement. **Gramsci** alone tries to reformulate C both realistically and dynamically by bringing councils and party together in the strategy of the hegemonic struggle. This includes both a revised version of **Marxist** theory and an intellectual-moral reform - suggestions, whose political effect remain limited. A window seems to open for them with the popular front strategy, but they are absorbed by the transformism of the parties, which seek to distinguish themselves from the Soviet system and call themselves Eurocommunist without really being able to renew themselves.

The fact that there was an historical C does not justify simply concluding that C is obsolete. Globalised capitalism is nourishing a communist tendency again. Nevertheless, the new face of C still remains relatively formless, dependent on a comprehensive historical self-criticism and a theoretical reinvention of the search for the common good, one that does justice to the diversity of human relationships, and is able to confront its own ideologisation critically and renounce any fantasies of domination.

1. The comparison of three French dictionaries provides a snapshot of the present situation. In the well respected *Lalande* C still generally designates >that economic and social organisation, whose basis is common property in contrast to individual property, as well as the active intervention of society in the life of the individual<

(1988, 152 et sq.). As far as conceptions of **Marx** are mentioned, as is typical for bourgeois dictionaries, they appear to be reduced to the statism, which characterises the >Soviet system<. Two critical notes correct this definition. The first one emphasizes that >the communist ideal according to Marx and **Lenin** is anarchist< (152). It seizes on the classical distinction of the II. International between the two phases of the transition to C, whereby only the first maintains the state apparatus, thereby characterising Socialism as >incomplete C<. The second note, by **Lalande** himself, denies that the communist ideal is a goal which can be aimed at: >**Marx** noted that scientific Socialism, as he understands it, is the establishment of a transformation and the prospect of its next phase, not however the efforts toward an ideal society, and that any speculation about this is a reactionary illusion because it takes its material from the images of earlier forms of society.< (153). Despite being limited to its socio-economic dimension, the concept of C here is still judged worthy to be entered into a dictionary of philosophy. - The change of the historical conjuncture has become apparent since the 1990s. The *Dictionnaire de philosophie politique* (1996) does not contain an entry for >C<. It is completely in line with political and economic liberalism. Francois **Furet**'s final reckoning, published one year earlier, in which it is suggested that for people coming from the >communist world< >not a trace remains of their earlier experiences< (Furet 1995/1999, vii), seems to have accomplished its work well. In the entry >Socialism< by Jean Paul **Thomas**, **Marx** is regarded as a modern socialist, who has much in common primarily with **Fourier** and **Saint Simon**. The texts on the *Critique of Political Economy* are similarly ignored, as are the political

historical writings on the Paris Commune and the criticism of the program of the German labour parties. **Marx's** anti-democratic ambiguities are condemned, nothing is said about the advances in understanding shown by the old **Engels** in his introduction of 1895 to *The Class Struggles in France* (MECW 27/506-524 [22/509-27]). On the other hand, Karl **Kautsky's** polemic against Bolshevism (1922) is met with agreement, because it fits the idea that there is apparently no alternative to the connection between capitalism and parliamentary democracy - as opposed to enthusiasts such as **Marx**, who publicised Socialism as a kingdom of God on earth. - Somewhat similar is the case with the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies* (2004), in which the entry >C< is likewise missing. To be sure, there are entries which treat of **Marx**, for example >praxis< by Étienne **Balibar**, or >civil society< by Philippe **Raynaud**. However, the latter refers exclusively to texts of 1843 in order to support the opinion, **Marx** has >put a radicalisation of the point of view of English political economy into the service of a radical critique of the social divisions of mankind<, which amounts to >a radical negation of the legal and political conditions of civil society< (*Vocabulaire*, 1194) - an assumption, which only functions because the fundamental distinction between bourgeois and civil society is ignored, and Marx's criticism of the former is understood as a negation of the latter. This appeal to the moral order of liberalism doesn't even take the trouble to work out the difference between Socialism and C.

This question was asked when the workers' movement was on the rise. In France, for instance, by Émile **Durkheim**, who located **Marx** without further ado in the current of

Socialism represented by the II. International. The relative interchangeability of both terms in the years 1880-1914 can be attributed in a certain sense to **Engels**, who, in the political section of the *Anti-Dühring*, spoke of Socialism. It was **Lenin** who first brought up again the distinction made by **Marx**, whereby he was supported within the International only by Antonio **Labriola**, who used the term >critical C< (Labriola 1895/1908, 13) to specify the Marxist position. For **Durkheim**, however, it is not a matter of two subgenera of the same species, but the two are >in certain essential ways [...] poles apart< (1896/1962, 67) perspectives and practices. C is not the distant relative of Socialism, which it could rejuvenate: the latter is radically new and modern. C on the other hand is an answer to the >question [which] is eternal<, which in view of the permanent evil, i.e. >economic particularism< (74 et sq.) always presents itself anew. The moral attitude of seeing the evil in private property as a negation of the public interest is unavoidable - therefore the permanence of C from antiquity with **Plato**, and later religious movements in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance (**More** and **Campanella**) and the Enlightenment (**Morelly** and **Mably**), up to the modern workers' movement. It is connected with various social groups, which are all frightened by the power of economic development, and demand of the state that it limit or abolish private property and subordinate it to economic activity. Socialism, however, would surface only at the beginning of the 19th century, with industrial society. In >economic particularism< he sees not >the source of all immorality< (75), but only criticizes the abuse of private property, which he wants to limit through a large sector of common property. The goal of Socialism is the social integration of economic interests, not their suppression.

Whereas C builds in abstraction on timeless demands, Socialism arises bound to a certain type of welfare state; its affiliation with the modern world of large-scale enterprises and the state is taken for granted. It believes it is the form of social organisation most suitable for a modern society, because it corrects its pathologies and cleans it of its anomies.

*2. A discontinuous history.* - **Durkheims** analysis approximates the criticism which the young **Marx** directed at >crude and thoughtless C< which >negates the *personality* of man in every sphere< and promotes a >regression to the *unnatural* simplicity of the *poor* and crude man< (MECW 3/295 [40/534 et sq.]). If Marx understands himself as a communist, then only in the modern sense, as is reserved for Socialism by **Durkheim**. But **Marx** affirms the possibility of a C which is just as modern as Socialism, and is even better suited than it to carry out the reorganisation of society. Otherwise why would he have called his most famous and frequently read text the >communist< and not the >socialist< manifesto?

The discontinuous tradition of communist ideas and practices can be traced back to a common life within communes or communities without social hierarchy, one that does not recognize differences according to (biological or social) sex or age. The lack of differentiation correlates with the absence of a state institution which would justify the domination of man over man, and it is based on the common allocation of the soil and the fruits of labour. Since the 19th century ethnology has studied so-called primitive societies, which are reminiscent of this archaic community without a state. Supported by the work of Lewis **Morgan**, Henry **Maine**, Maxim **Kowalewski**, Edward B. **Tylor**



among others, **Marx** and **Engels** in the 1850s assumed the existence of a primitive communism. The *Grundrisse* treat the development of >Forms preceding capitalist production< (*Grundrisse*, 1973/1993, 471-79 [42/383-421]). This is an analysis of the dissolution of the primordial community, whose C, which was tied to the direct domination of natural conditions of production, **Marx** certainly never glorified. On the contrary, he specifies exactly the conditions under which the release from these relations is accomplished by means of the autonomisation of production and an environment created by humans. Their replacement enables the progress of production and civilisation, with which class rule is also introduced. Here no historical philosophy is imputed, which believes it can already recognize the germ of the future communist society in the primordial community. The development knows interruptions and regressions. Marx examines how the unity breaks open and articulates itself in a plurality of forms. But the general framework of the stage theory and its faith in progress remains: This considers >Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production [...] as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society<, which conclude >the prehistory of human society< (MECW 29/263 et sq. [13/9]). After the dissolution of the primordial community the communist idea emerges only sporadically in social movements, usually in the form of insurgency movements of the subaltern classes, which demand a fairer distribution of wealth and work, but in addition, - within the political area - demand self-government. In Europe these movements are often religiously shaped and invoke the universalism of the Jewish prophets and the Christian gospel. If all men are sons of the same god, they are also brothers. But even if they feel obligated to the

common good, there are nevertheless the dominated and subaltern, the poor and humiliated. The controversy over poverty, that drove the movement of the Franciscan Fraticelli in the 13th century into opposition to bishops and pope, renews the demand for a communal life which renounces the power of money, shares with others and is led in voluntary poverty. Even if they could be integrated quickly by the church again, it is nevertheless not surprising that such communist movements of believers found the attention of **Engels** and after him **Kautsky** and Ernst **Bloch**. The distribution of wealth, not its production is still the intention of Thomas **Müntzer**. These movements are important, because they connect the demand for economic and political communality with class struggle and go beyond the framework of the reforms that are allowed from above.

Modern C begins with the popular movements of the Diggers and Levellers, which radicalized the English revolution, and above all with the French revolution, with the Sansculottes, the radical Jacobinism of **Robespierre** and the conspiracy of equals of **Babeuf**. This C does not want to give up the demands for equality, liberty and fraternity, which the revolutionary natural law set on the agenda. It demands its practice for the advantage of all, by and in a social, republican state, and contends against bourgeois private property. Jacques **Grandjonc** proved that the expression >communist< is used after 1797 again for the first time in 1835 in a legal document >in the sense of a republican, who is a supporter of a community of property< (1989, 143). As a great authority on the French revolution **Marx** values its historical courage, yet criticises, as **Hegel** had already done, its unawareness of the mechanisms of modern bourgeois society. These begin to be discovered

by social theorists in the first third of the 19th century, who consider themselves not as economists, but as critics and socialists, such as **Saint Simon** and **Fourier**, who **Marx** both esteemed and studied. There are circles of English workers (e.g. around Robert **Owen**), French revolutionary groups like the neo-Babouvists, non-violent spiritualists such as **Cabet** and the Icarists, as well as the German workers living in exile in Paris, Brussels and London, who bring the term of C into circulation again in the 1830s, without separating it clearly from that of Socialism. These circles set it on the agenda, in order to criticize a society dominated by private interests and class egoism. They support the struggles of the emerging proletariat, the demands for common property and benefit from the goods, exchange of experiences and control of production. Their independent political struggle should be free from the false solutions of utopian projects, whereby they develop their own forms of association and organisation and practice solidary forms of action, such as demonstrations and strikes. They want to shake off the character of secret societies, which forces them to a sectarian existence, and present themselves as a publicly recognized party in the midst of a genuine republic. In this sense C and republic do not stand opposed to each other.

3. *The Emergence of C.* - Beginning in the 1840s **Marx** and **Engels** take part in the London meetings of the German workers' circle. **Marx** joins the League of the Just in 1847, which will commission him, together with **Engels**, to write the *Communist Manifesto*. But why the reference to C? The League itself had chosen the term on the one hand under organisational criteria, because it had organized itself in basic units called >communes<, in order to express an

appreciation for solidary practices. On the other hand, the term was chosen in order to distinguish themselves from the vague socialist movement, which demanded justice without asking questions about the causes of injustice. The circular of the first congress of the League of June 9, 1847 specifies: >How many there are who want justice, that is, what they call justice, without necessarily being Communists! We are not distinguished by wanting justice in general - anyone can claim that for himself - but by our attack on the existing social order and on private property, by wanting community of property, by being Communists. Hence there is only one suitable name for our League, the name which says what we really are, and this name we have chosen.< (MECW 6/595) Because of the indefinite moralism **Marx** expressed doubts about the reference to justice, accepted it nevertheless as compromise. **Engels**, for his part, clarified the new connection, when he was assigned to write the >Principles of C<. It assigns to the proletariat the universal task to be carriers of C and calls it >that class of society which procures its means of livelihood entirely and solely from the sale of its labour and not from the profit derived from any capital< (MECW 6/341 [4/363]). This text, which emerged shortly before the *Communist Manifesto*, conceptualizes C as the negation of past society up to the point that >the management of production by the whole of society and the resulting new development of production require and also produce quite different people< (MECW 6/353 [376]). Consequently there is no return to the traditional community. The new name designates something new, without rejecting the socialist tradition. In the chapters of the *Manifesto*, which are dedicated to the other forms of Socialism (MECW 6/507 et sqq. [4/482 et sqq.]), **Marx** and

**Engels** position themselves at the side of C in order to avoid the cooptation of the new theory by the competitive forms, which they regard either as conceptionally unsuitable or politically ineffective, as Engels emphasizes in his introduction to the English edition of 1888:

>Whatever portion of the working class had become convinced of the insufficiency of mere political revolutions, and had proclaimed the necessity of a total social change, that portion then called itself communist. It was a crude, rough-hewn, purely instinctive kind of C; still, it touched the cardinal point and was powerful enough amongst the working class to produce the Utopian C, in France, of **Cabet**, and in Germany, of **Weitling**. Thus, socialism was, in 1847, a middle-class movement, communism a working-class movement. Socialism was, on the Continent at least, ^respectable^^; communism was the very opposite. And as our notion, from the very beginning, was that ^the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself^^, there could be no doubt as to which of the two names we must take. Moreover, we have, ever since, been far from repudiating it.< (*Communist Manifesto*, 1967/2002, 202 [21/357]) At a point in time, when only socialist or social-democratic parties exist, since C seems to merge with Socialism, it will be necessarily to confirm a forty year old semantic and theoretical choice. As late as 1852 **Marx** criticizes French social-democracy after the failure of the revolution of 1848. Its >peculiar character< is epitomised in >the fact that democratic-republican institutions are demanded as a means, not of superseding two extremes, capital and wage labour, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony.< (MECW 11/130 [8/141]) However, **Marx** and **Engels** accept subsequently without problems the reference to Socialism,

which generalizes itself with the formation of labour parties in the years 1875-90. It is the claim to scientific character, which constitutes the difference: >to impart to the now oppressed class a full knowledge of the conditions and the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific Socialism.< (MECW 25/270 et sq. [20/265]) Three chapters of that which became the manual of Marxism for thousands of followers were translated into French with the title >Utopian Socialism and Scientific Socialism< (1882), without its founding fathers having any objections to it.

4. *Marx' way to C* - **Marx** works himself into a real historical movement. The decision for C is certain after 1843. The proletarian, who demands the negation of private property, >finds himself possessing the same right as the *German king* in regard to the world which has come into being when he calls the people *his* people as he calls the horse *his* horse.< (MECW 3/187 [1/391])

4.1 Marx encounters C both as the point of conclusion of the modern world, that of emancipation, and as the reality of a universal class, whose basic needs the state and the bourgeois civil society have failed to satisfy. The critique, this form of theory connected to enlightenment, merges with Marx in an anthropology which is shaped by a more strongly **Feuerbachian** than **Hegelian** category of alienation. >The immediate *task of philosophy*, which is at the service of history, once the *holy form* of human self-estrangement has been unmasked, is to unmask self-estrangement in its *unholy forms*. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of law*, and the *criticism of*

*theology* into the *criticism of politics*.< (MECW 3/176 [1/379]) **Marx** insists on politics, because the continuation of the Ancien Régime in Germany makes him angry. But the criticism of politics implies the criticism of the bourgeois civil society, which produces a class excluded from all political rights and means to the satisfaction of its needs. The class of the proletarians is the >class with *radical chains*, a class of civil society, which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates< (MECW 3/186 [1/390]). This class claims >*no particular right*<, >because no *particular wrong*, but *wrong generally* is perpetrated against it<; it is >in a word the *complete loss of man*<. Marx does not use the term of C here, but he makes >the *complete rewinning of man*< (ibid.), universal human emancipation, the anchor point of his criticism. A little later C - now expressly mentioned by name - is at its core the >transcendence of *private property* as *human self estrangement*< (MECW 3/296 [40/536]); the common meal of workers becomes the image of the sublation of the alienation. C, >as fully developed humanism equals naturalism [...], the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and man with man [...], the riddle of history solved and knows itself to be this solution< (MECW 3/296 et sq. [ibid.]). History resolves itself here in the logical movement of the abolition of the alienation, and in the metaphysics of presence. There is a logic underlying history.

Something of this speculative thesis remains in **Marx'** work. It does not disappear in the *German Ideology*, where an initial theory of history based on the idea of from one another originating modes of production is sketched. To be sure, Marx maintains the term of estrangement, >to use a

term which will be comprehensible to the philosophers< (MECW 5/48 [3/34]), yet this functions as a kind of meta-category with a comprehensive hermeneutic function.

Alienation always rules when it comes to >a cleavage [...] between the particular and the common interest<; it exists >as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntary, but naturally, divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him< (MECW 5/47 [33]). Alienation forms a kind of natural state, in which >social power [...], which arises through the co-operation of different individuals as it is caused by the division of labour, appears to these individuals [...] not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant< (MECW 5/48 [34]). Because in the >communist society< each one >can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic<, the >consolidation of what we ourselves produce into a material power above us< is broken (MECW 5/47 [33]). Thus C, tied to the overcoming of alienation, is not simply an >ideal, to which reality [will] have to adjust itself<, but >the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise< (MECW 5/49 [35]). Three conditions are necessary: the completion of the world market, the contradiction between productive forces and the relations of production, the opposition between the masses of workers excluded from property and the ruling class, which has at its disposal



the power of the state, the wealth and education. Only when >the limited bourgeois form is stripped away<, as is written later in the *Grundrisse*, can wealth as >the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc., created through universal exchange<, show itself (1973/1993, 488 [42/395 et sq.]).

C as the dissolution of the antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat is in the *German Ideology* >only possible as the act of the dominant peoples ^all at once^^ and simultaneously< (MECW 5/49 [3/35]). >The Proletariat can [...] exist only *world-historically*, just as communism, its activity, can only have a ^world-historical^^ existence.< (Ibid.) The *Manifesto* tries to connect the general philosophy of the emancipation and the concrete-historical analysis, by grasping C at the same time as the result of capitalist development and its contradictions, and as the means of production adequate to human nature. The ^logical^^ and the historical overlap. Capitalism produces the revolutionary class and class struggle – the political means in order to protect the workers against mutual competition, and to develop a form of association of free producers, who initiate the classless society. C does not refer to the priority of the community; it remains the child of the civil society and its cooperative individualism. Therefore in the new society >the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all< (*Communist Manifesto*, 1967/2002, 244 [4/482]) and not the other way around. Nevertheless there is a tension remaining between the specific analysis and the metaphysical postulate, between C as a possibility written into the historical tendency and C as the phantasm of the absolute mastering of all social interactions.

4.2 The latter idea still resonates in *Capital*, with **Marx'** challenge to imagine >an association of free men< who >with the means of production held in common, and expending their many different forms of labour-power in full self-awareness as one single social labour force. [...] The social relations of the individual producers, both toward their labour and the products of their labour, are here transparent in their simplicity, in production as well as in distribution.< (*Capital*, vol. 1, 1977/1990, 171 et sq. [23/92 et sq.]) C takes the form of a general work contract on an economic level, therefore the producers themselves form a general will and no longer require the mediation of the market, which disappears with the value form. Thus, however, that which marked all social life and each type of relations of production for Marx so far also disappears, namely >definite relations, which are independent of their will< (MECW 29/263 [13/8]). There can be different stages of determination, which permit dependencies between free men and options. Everything depends on these gradations. But Marx confounds the transsubjective consistency of a social relationship with the intersubjective degree of freedom which this relationship permits. Communist society is held to be perfectly intersubjective, and seems thereby determined beyond every relationship of production, therefore relieved of the transsubjectivity which comes to each social relationship. Thus a communist sociality runs the risk of proving to be something beyond any kind of sociality. It is, first of all, a society determined by negations and subtractions. It is >without< - without classes, without state, without law, without religion, without market and without inter-individual contractual relations. However, the question reads: Which form of transsubjective relationship can determine such a society,

without opening itself to the constitutive intersubjectivity of a new kind of social contract? C threatens to become an activist or operaist variant of an absolute knowledge in the sense of the **Hegelian** objective spirit. An united human will now controls the world, which it nevertheless has produced to a large extent unintentionally. The new world which it gives birth to is, from this perspective, absolutely made by it, its common property. C is not a social relationship of production any more, but rather - for **Engels** - technical organisation of the society; it stops being an administration of humans in order, as **Saint Simon** says, to become >an administration of things< (quoted in: Euchner/Grebing 2005, 34). All activities, which until then were shaped by exploitation and domination - politics, law, religion -, will die out as such and dissolve into the unity of a total social production. Production will become the direct embodiment of its subjectivity. C becomes a fantasy of omnipotence. This orientation makes thinking about the revolutionary transition more difficult. Because **Marx** entrusts a political organisation, the labour party, with the task of guaranteeing the historical continuity of the communist movement, he must fall back on the means of politics which is suspected of maintaining the separation between rulers and ruled. The communist association can situate itself only beyond politics. Connected to this question is the political and economic organisation of the phase which follows after the revolutionary conquest of state power. For the reconstruction of social relationships the *Communist Manifesto* relies on the nationalisation of the industrial and financial means of production at one with the planning of the productive activities and the social needs. This is the path the social-democratic parties will

take. He assumes that the capitalist productive forces will >with increasing energy, press forward to the removal of the existing contradiction, to the abolition of their quality as capital, to the practical recognition of their character as social productive forces< (MECW 25/264 [20/258]). After the transfer into state property social appropriation will follow. But the question arises, how can one avoid the prison of state capitalism. How change the capitalist organisation of work in the enterprises? How to overcome the real subsumption of the workers under the means of labour set in motion by capital - briefly, the question of the factory system, in which >the employer is absolute law-giver< (*Capital*, vol. 1, 1977/1990, 550, Fn 9 [23/447, Fn. 190])? **Engels** finally judged that it was the insurmountable fate of large industry. The situation that people are treated in the factory as in the army, threatens to continue. The historically necessary category of organisation pushes the communist association onto the back burner. The transition is obstructed. The distinction between a >first phase of communist society< and of a >higher< (MECW 24/87 [19/21]) was not coincidentally the occasion for the two phases to make them independent of each other. In the first, that of Socialism, social activity is still subject to the organisation by state planning; in the second, >labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want<, functioning according to the motto: >From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!< (Ibid.). C becomes a >Robinsonade of abundance< (**Robelin** 1986, 672).

4.3 In *Capital*, however, there is yet another view of C: that of a historical tendency immanent in the resistance against the real subsumption. Far from nullifying the power

of capital, the crises re-establish the conditions for accumulation by destroying unprofitable capital and produce an >industrial reserve army on a scale corresponding with the progress of social accumulation< (*Capital*, vol. 1, 1977/1990, 789 et sq. [23/666]). Accumulation is a destructive process, it produces in no way the unity of the working class, but splits it and subjects it to internal competition. In the actual economic struggle capital is superior. It requires political action in order to bring opposition to the real subsumption of labour and reverse the splitting. But this struggle proves frequently to be only a means for the regulation of the systemic constraints of capital. Thus the determination of a normal working day, >the result of a centuries of struggle between the capitalist and the worker< (*Capital*, vol. 1, 1977/1990, 382 [23/286]) impedes capital from overexploiting the worker and thereby destroying its own basis of existence. Thus **Marx** questions the continuity, which he sees between capital accumulation, organisation of the labour struggle and C. However, with this the allegedly inherent ability of the proletariat to negate the existing society also becomes questionable, since >with the development of the *real subsumption of labour under capital* [...] not the individual worker but rather a *socially combined labour capacity*< becomes >more and more the *real executor* of the labour process as a whole< (MECW 34/443 [MEGA II.4.1/65]), there takes place a >complete [...] revolution in the mode of production itself< (MECW 34/439 [II.4.1/61]), which removes from the worker any control and makes him an inherent element of capital as a variable part of it. The perspective of the formation of a >general intellect< (*Grundrisse*, 1973/1993, 706 [42/602]) will be constantly undermined by the destruction of the means of production,

which is caused by the permanent crisis accompanying the maintenance of the rate of profit.

Is the communist perspective in **Marx'** main work meaningless and reduced to an utopia? No. Marx opens a further way, which becomes visible in the famous section over the connection of the realm of necessity with the realm of freedom. The latter >begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production.< (MECW 37/807 [25/828]) It has its roots in the resistance of the workers against the real subsumption. According to the quotation freedom begins not beyond labour generally, but beyond labour >determined by necessity<. Only beyond the realm of necessity >begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself< (ibid.). C is a mode of production which guarantees the social reappropriation of labour by putting an end to the capitalist opposition of necessary labour and surplus labour. In class societies surplus labour has two functions: It secures the extended reproduction of production, and going beyond given needs, it produces the elements of an unproductive consumption, which is the basis for the material and mental development, primarily that of the ruling classes. With C the antagonism disappears, yet a difference between the two functions continues to exist. The extended reproduction of production remains and belongs to the realm of necessity; the function of the material and mental development of the human energies strips off the antagonistic form and becomes free labour. This tendency for the production of disposable free time supports the resistance of the workers, just as their dependence on it. The realm of necessity, which satisfies the economic needs,

has its engine in the cultural and intellectual development of the individuals. The realm of freedom, for its part, can unfold only on this basis. C is not only production for the needs, it is a practice which changes the needs at one with the cultural and intellectual capacities of the producers. It is not only the technical administration of production, but a process, which at the same time produces the subject capable of the appropriation of the surplus labour and its administration. Resistance against the real subsumption is the first step on the way to the >self-government of the producers< (MECW 22/332 [17/339]), which as >responsible agents of society< (MECW 22/333 [340]) organizes the community. This communist tendency does not have to be formulated any longer in the general logic of alienation, which still survives in the dialectic of the negation of the negation: >The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter on the mode of production which has flourished alongside and under it. The centralisation of the means of production and the socialisation of labour reach a point at which they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The Expropriators are expropriated. [...] This is the negation of the negation. This does not re-establish private property, but it does indeed establish individual property on the basis of the achievements of the capitalist era: namely co-operation and the possession in common of the land and the means of production produced by labour itself.< (*Capital*, vol. 1, 1977/1990, 929 [23/791]) The dialectic of the negation of the negation has its own persuasive power, which however fades to the extent that the metaphysical subject/object tends to be replaced tendentially by labour force/capital

and by a number of specific terms, which require concrete analyses.

Thus **Marx**, without the security by a predetermined dialectic, develops an experimental approach with great openness for the forms in which the communist tendency could realize itself, so for instance in stock companies and cooperatives. In the first Marx sees an anticipation of social control of production, a phase of the fall of capitalism, a kind of abolition of capital by capital itself. On the other hand, he does not exclude that they could be an answer of capital to the crisis and a means to broaden the borders of capital. Likewise the production cooperatives are examined as historical forms, which contain elements that are >directly social, socialised work or direct co-operation< (MECW 37/105 [25/113]). All functions of the production process tied to capitalist property transform themselves in perspective into simple functions of >associated producers< (MECW 37/807 [828]). Thus co-operation becomes the heart of historical-social existence. Thus for Marx the >great experiments< of the cooperative movement are a >still greater victory of the political economy of labour over the political economy of capital< than the implementation of the ten-hour day (MECW 21/330 [16/11]). The Paris Commune, which intended the >expropriation of the expropriators< wanted >to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land and capital [...] into mere instruments of free and associated labour< (MECW 22/335 [17/342]). How would that be anything different than >C<, writes Marx, >if united cooperative societies are to regulate national production upon a common plan, thus taking it under their own control, and putting an end to the constant anarchy and



periodical convulsions< of capitalist production (MECW 22/335 [343]). But there are also objections. Of course the cooperative factories are >within the old form the first sprouts of the new<, but now the labourers are >as association their own capitalists< and forced >to use the means of production for the employment of their own labour< (MECW 37/438 [25/456]). The most extreme means considered by Marx for the realisation of the communist movement beyond the borders of the stock companies and the cooperatives put under state control is the conquest and transformation of the state apparatus. The experience of the Commune teaches that the insufficient socialisation and the lack of the cooperative system are to be corrected. The State is the organized social power, which must ensure that the social forces link themselves in cooperation and socialisation is carried out in co-operatives. It is incumbent on the State to ensure that the cooperative does not favour private property and does not become an entity overruling society. Thus C would be a synthesis of state property and cooperative action. This synthesis implies the withering away of the State and the conversion of the communities into equally economic and also political units, which are shaped by direct democracy and make possible a republican system of representation permanently controlled by the people.

The communist tendency is not only expressed in the resistance of the worker against real subsumption. Because the capitalist system of production continually transforms disposable social time into surplus labour, however cannot bring it completely to valorisation by capital, it will be possible >to reduce labour time for the whole society to a diminishing minimum and thus to free everyone's time for

their own development< (*Grundrisse*, 1973/1993, 708 [42/604]). If the >mass of workers< themselves appropriates their own surplus labour, >on one side necessary labour time will be measured by the needs of the social individual, and, on the other the development of the power of social production will so rapidly grow that [...] *disposable time* will grow for all. [...] The measure of wealth is then not any longer, in any way, labour time, but rather disposable time.< (Ibid.)

5. *Second International*. - The representatives of the ^Marxist^^ socialist or social-democratic parties could not take into account the complexity of **Marx's** C. Only the socialist left wing maintained the original communist demand, having been satisfied at first with the joint reference to socialism. After the October Revolution in 1917, only **Lenin**, in unison with Rosa **Luxemburg** and Karl **Liebknecht**, will reflect on and push through the reference to C. They will also criticize the surrender of socialism, in which only few - for instance Antonio **Labriola** - preceded them. The contradictory development of the socialist parties is connected with the - as far as known at that time - work of **Marx**, which has become a kind of common property. Marx trusted in the new science of critical C, whose horizon was capable of taking up the analysis of current problems and new historical situations. Whereas in Marx's dialectical thinking science, natural law, political economy, speculative philosophy and revolutionary commitment formed a unity, that which in the II. International called itself >Marxism< was an ensemble of conceptions held together by the faith in the recognisability of history, connected with a political pragmatism without certainty. The common convictions of

>Marxism< after Marx's death can be summarized in seven ideas, which were discussed, or rather questioned by international, especially European socialism, until 1914 (see Salvadori 1991): the idea of progress, which accompanies the faith in an increasing domination of nature and the final end of the domination of man over man; the idea of a political and social revolution which will lead to the realm of freedom; the idea that force plays a necessary role during this process; the idea that the labour party is indispensable, however must not set itself up in place of the educated and educating masses; the idea of the development of a new kind of intellectual; the idea that the new structure is built in the national framework, but in internationalist perspective; the idea of a new fraternity, which crowns the internationalism of the workers and the cosmopolitism of the Enlightenment. In 1895 **Engels** comes - in view of enormous electoral successes of German social-democracy - to the conclusion that >we< prosper far better >on legal methods than on illegal methods< (MECW 27/522 [22/525]). It seemed the >Social-Democratic overthrow< could only be accomplished by their >keeping the law< (MECW 27/523 [ibid.]). Thus within the II. International it becomes normal to talk of Socialism and to identify the transition with peaceful means. Socialism, understood as a relatively autonomous society, is regarded as the endpoint of the socialisation of the productive forces. The program of the socialist parties contains elements such as the nationalisation of banks and industry, the development of trade unions and cooperatives, the establishing of public services, reforms which improve the living conditions of the wage labourers, social security, a parliamentary and secular republic, political liberties and the right to work. The propaganda work and

organisation of these parties and trade unions provides them with contracting power and parliamentary strength, and makes them serious participants in the political and social system.

The ^revisionism crisis^^ initiated by Eduard **Bernstein** makes the consequences of this practice of socialism visible. His book, *The Preconditions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy* (1899), takes into account the reality of a workers' movement which is satisfied with these reforms, and tends to evaporate C into a **Kantian** regulative idea. To be sure, ^orthodox^^ Marxists such as **Kautsky** contradict the idea that the movement is everything and the goal nothing, and hold on to the reference to revolution and the communist final goal. Yet in this way socialism becomes a mode of production, which **Marx** never claimed. It understands itself as an organisation of labour under a regime, which grants the producer administrative rights. Whether this is sufficient to transform class content is not asked, although - as Marc **Angenot** showed - >all great leaders of European socialism< have published works, according to which, with >^the socialisation of the means of production^^ the common wealth and justice should be introduced< (1993, 12). The principle of elite leadership is strengthened on two levels, that of the parliamentary state, which scorns any direct democracy as anarchist, and that of the party, which delegates the exercise of power to >rational< bureaucracies. **Kautsky**, in his texts before the revisionism crisis (*Parliamentarism and Democracy [Parlamentarismus und Demokratie]*, 1892) as in those criticising bolshevism (*The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, 1918), commits himself to the democratic nationalisation of the productive forces. The national

state is in fact the centre of the appropriation within the legal framework of public property. Certainly the legal transfer of property leaves the real subsumption of labour untouched. While **Marx** showed how the movement of capital engenders the revolutionary class, its organisation, the necessity for its practical action and the material conditions for its victory, **Kautsky** tears apart the unity of this process. Capital produces only the objective necessity for the struggle. Victory requires the subjective intervention of the proletariat, which is based on the maturity of the class and on its capacity to set goals and sweep people along. The unity of the process disintegrates into two moments, one objective and one subjective. The objective refers to the socialisation of the productive forces, the subjective to class consciousness, how it concentrates itself in the party with its discipline and hierarchy. The organisation becomes the mediation between the two sides, the operator of its dialectic. It embodies the unity of the working class as representative organ, comparable to the democratic representative state. The proletariat is to submit to its representatives voluntarily - to the conscious class comrades and along with them the progressive intellectuals. The intellectuals bring to the proletariat from outside the elements of its consciousness. The organisation is the carrier of the long-term revolutionary goals, and it alone represents the universality of the class. The party is not, as **Marx** still assumed, the synthesis of the experiences of the workers and the experimental field of their creativity. The organisation, together with the representative democracy, is the condition that the subjective becomes objective. Thus it is a matter of waiting for this subjective maturity to be reached through the utilisation of the seeds of

socialism (cooperatives, communal socialism) developed by capital. Through the introduction of labour representatives political democracy can be expanded to the economic realm, and the State, set under pressure by the workers' organisations, turns automatically to a strategy of gradually increasing influence and the conquest of new liberties. But there is no longer talk of overcoming real subsumption or putting an end to wage labour. Without saying it aloud, the orthodoxy gives up C and joins with the so often criticized - open - revisionism of **Bernstein**. Representation becomes the ruling form of social relationship. The organisation - at first indispensable in order to help the workers' movement to its existence - begins to become a fetish. On this point **Kautsky** is in line with **Stalin**: >A class can rule, but not govern, for a class is a formless mass, while only an organisation can govern.< (**Kautsky** 1918/1920, 31)

6. *Third International*. - Socialism's idealisation of nation and state contributes to the catastrophe of the first inter-imperialist war of 1914. The internationalism of the II. International is just as weak as its liberal pacifism. In the meantime, criticism by the socialist left renews itself with the October Revolution. **Lenin** takes up the question of the transition to C in his interpretation of the political theories of **Marx** and **Engels**. He supports himself with the texts in which they differentiate >between the lower and higher phases< (CW 25/469), and opposing the revisionists who want to use Engels' preface of 1895 for their own purposes, specifies that Engels allowed the >democratic republic< to exist >^for a time^^ solely from an agitational point of view< (CW 25/403). Even the democratic capitalist state apparatus is structurally bound

to the real subsumption of labour, and serves to unify the competing capital fractions by establishing the most appropriate form of politics pursuant to the relations of force. The dictatorship of the capitalist relations of production is structural in kind. Also the democratic-republican form of this dictatorship requires the political will to smash the state apparatus, in order to achieve molecular control of economic production and political life. Even **Lenin**, during a short phase of the October Revolution, considered the peaceful parliamentary way passable. But the attitude of the opponents also decides whether the dictatorship is necessary. Starting in April 1917 Lenin advocates a change in the name of the Social-Democratic Labour Party of Russia (SDAPR), which on the VII. Party Congress on March 8, 1918 was renamed the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). The old designation is >wrong< (CW 25/459), he says, following **Engels**, who accepted the word >Social Democrat< only reluctantly, because it seemed to him >unfitting< for a party, >whose economic programme is not just generally socialist, but directly communist, and whose ultimate political aim is to surpass the entire State, and thus democracy too< (MECW 27/417 [22/418]). The revolution of the Bolsheviks, however, created a new type of democracy in emulation of the Paris Commune. As soon as >all members of society or at least the vast majority have learned to administer the state *themselves*, [...] from this moment the need for government of any kind begins to disappear altogether. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary.< (CW 25/479)

In fact **Lenin** tried to unite two contradictory aspects of the historical movement: on the one hand its strength

resisting against the real subsumption as it was concentrated in the imperialist and military policy of czarism, and on the other hand the cult of the external organisation with its mechanisms of delegating and exappropriation. The first aspect leads at least for a short time to something new: the creation of soldiers', workers' and peasants' councils, that refuse to continue the war, who take power and after the war try to constitute themselves as councils of direct democracy and labour organisations - incidentally the only institution actually invented by the workers' movement. The second aspect is associated with **Kautsky** and the Orthodoxy of the II. International, the question of organisation, the party. One must not forget the efficiency of this apparatus, which accomplished extraordinary things under **Lenin**. But the problem remains that the party seeks to determine the formation of the consciousness of the workers by means of outside intervention. It is held to be custodian of the theory and epitome of the ability to analyse the historical development objectively. The party fails at the contradiction that it is a parliamentary faction of the working class, and at the same time seeks to be the ideal-typical embodiment of their consciousness. It emerges from the class and must nevertheless constantly connect itself with it, because the contact threatens to be lost. It <sup>is</sup> this class and yet exists at a remove from it. On the question of workers' control, the central point of Leninism, the contradiction becomes tangible. The Soviets - this invention of the revolution of 1905, revived in the October Revolution of 1917 -, chosen from their grassroots and accountable to it, controlled economic events and at the same time exercised political power, when after all it was a matter of ensuring the unity of social appropriation.



But the convergence of revolutionary state with council democracy along the lines of the Paris Commune does not succeed in the long run. The rift between rulers and ruled, just as that between workers and means of production, reproduces itself. Left alone, the soviets disintegrate into anarchical units separated from each other. Workers' control of production and trade requires mediation. Everywhere what is missing are >specialists<, who are all too often scared off by the >issuing of orders<, which accumulate on the side of the >Communists< exercising management functions (CW 32/144). In order to make the control of the working process more effective, factory directors are appointed, thus specialists, who can come into conflict with the political commissioners. Work discipline is to be restored by the introduction of Taylorism and the restriction of all direct democracy. The new economic state apparatus is an impossible synthesis, because it wants to keep up the active interference of the workers while preserving the commanding State. The communist elements are at a disadvantage in relation to a kind of state capitalism with which, in a gigantic country plagued by backwardness and illiteracy, a minimum of public and social services is to be ensured at the same time as industrialisation is to be advanced. Lenin tried throughout his life without success to mediate dialectically between the organisational centre and the spontaneity of the people; always the organisation dominates anew. With a keen eye he notices in March 1923 that the missing >elements of knowledge, education, and training< (CW 33/488) cannot be offset by the enthusiasm for socialism. C remains as a goal, but this shifts into an uncertain future. The apparatus - as written in the notes from the end of 1922, designated the >political testament< - we >took over from

tsarism and slightly anointed with Soviet oil< (CW 36/605), so that >the typical Russian bureaucrat<, manifest in **Stalins** >infatuation for pure administration< (CW 36/606), suppressed the fundamentally important >ability to recruit men< (CW 36/600). >There is no doubt that the infinitesimal percentage of Soviet and sovietised workers will drown in that tide of chauvinistic Great-Russian riffraff like a fly in the milk.< (CW 36/606)

Indeed, **Stalins** seizure of power in party and state seals the failure of worker control desired by **Lenin**. Socialisation becomes nationalisation under the dictatorship of the party. The organisation becomes the object of a cult and embodies the General. In this regard historical C does not advance beyond socialism. **Stalin** intensifies the dictatorship by increasing the repression through the Gulag already set up under **Lenin** - forced labour camps as death camps. The Soviet Union nevertheless attains economic successes, which impress the West during the great capitalist crisis in the 1930s. The five-year plans realise a kind of primitive accumulation, accompanied by a great literacy project. The communist idea can be expressed as a distant perspective and sees itself confirmed by the relative successes of ^socialism in one country^^, all the more after the victory over Nazism, which was bought by terrible losses. Even if the five-year plans after the war did not succeed in avoiding the wild forms of the market in which those consumer needs unsatisfied by the official economy broke fresh ground, the Soviet Union exerted a fascination because it represented a real existing alternative to capitalism for the first time in history. The victory of 1945 and the socialist bloc building, which made the wave of the liberation movements

possible, could lead one to believe that this hybrid system preserved the revolutionary communist idea against all denials. The implosion of the system finally destroyed the myth of the Soviet Union as an alternative in the history of emancipation. The analysis of the Soviet experience is still pending; it is not done by a reduction to the problem of two hostile totalitarianisms. First the communist creed and the initial dynamics unique to the new system fell victim to the mixture of authoritarian industrialisation, Russian state absolutism and the speed of this enormous historical change.

*7. The survival of the communist idea in Left Socialism and in Council Communism.* - In addition to **Lenin** and his companions there were also others who carried the communist idea further. It would also be appropriate to mention the Russian opposition to **Stalin** here, especially **Trotsky** and **Bukharin**, yet their specific ways of posing the problems remain within the Marxism of the III. International, and their contributions extends primarily to questions of strategy regarding the rebuilding of the Soviet Union. They discuss political and economic questions in view of what is to be done. Thus the communist idea was not their topic - contrary to the theoreticians of the II. and III. Internationals, which kept the spontaneity of the people and radical democracy in view. This involves left-wing socialists such as Rosa **Luxemburg**, Paul **Levi** and Karl **Liebknecht** and Council Communists such as **Korsch** and **Pannekoek**.

7.1 As a decided opponent of revisionism and the orthodox wait-and-see attitude, **Luxemburg** welcomes the Russian October Revolution, as she had also done with the failed revolution of 1905. She defends the initiative of **Lenin** and

the Bolsheviks against **Kautsky**, who succeeded in giving form to the democratic thrust of Russian society. She sees her criticism of the reformism and opportunism of German social democracy confirmed in the break-through of 1917. After the defeat in 1918 she contributes to the upswing of the left opposition and becomes one of the founders of the Communist Party of Germany. Just as she saw the mass strike in 1905 as the adequate revolutionary means for overcoming mere parliamentary bargaining, she sees in the arising of the councils the germ of both political and social grassroots democracy. Against this backdrop she criticizes very early on the dangers of authoritarian centralism and counter productive dictatorial measures, in particular the forced dissolution of the constituent assembly which emerged from general elections: >To be sure, every democratic institution has its limits and shortcomings [...]. But the remedy that **Trotsky** and **Lenin** have found, the elimination of democracy as such, is worse than the disease it is supposed to cure; for it stops up the very living source from which alone can come the correction of all the innate shortcomings of social institutions. That source is the active, untrammelled, energetic political life of the broadest masses of the people.< (Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, 1918/2006, 210 [GW 4, 355 et sq.]) The organisation threatens to become an end in itself. The conquest of power must not come down to the suppression of democracy. **Lenin's** >ultra-centralism< (*Leninism or Marxism?*, 1904/2006, 87 [GW 1.2, 433]), feared **Luxemburg**, sets up an >air-tight partition between the class-conscious nucleus of the proletariat already in the party and its immediate popular environment< (82 [429]). Endeavouring to prevent any fixation in the relationship between party and movement, for Luxemburg social-democracy is not first an

organisation, which would be only >joined< to the workers' movement, rather >it is itself the proletariat<, the movement of the working class itself (83 [ibid.]). Any >regulated docility< (84 [430]) is condemned to make the autonomous activity of the proletariat fruitless. Of course one can criticize the almost mystifying idealisation of the masses, but Luxemburg has the immense merit of stressing the supporting function of the party which must have an >understanding< for the >inevitable increase of revolutionary tensions as the final goal of class struggle is approached< (86 [433]). The revolution of 1917 confirms the correctness of this analysis. If the Russian revolution intends to keep the promise of restoring Western civilisation destroyed by the war, the >dictatorship< at the moment of taking and securing power must also be >the work of the class and not of a little leading minority in the name of the class< (1918/2006, 220 [GW 4, 363]). Socialism or barbarism – this is the alternative in which Luxemburg conceptualizes the historical situation; but she cannot avoid warning against a Socialism that in the fight against barbarism itself becomes barbarous. In 1921 **Lenin** reacted strongly to these criticisms, which were brought up elsewhere and in the Soviet Union itself by the left-wing communists, these defenders of the council movement. Apart from the intensity of his answer, Lenin raises strategic problems which **Luxemburg** left open. If it is correct that the >force of habit [...] is a most formidable force<, then is it not most important, that >a party of iron that has been tempered in the struggle< (CW 31/44) takes over leadership and >soberly< estimates the >actual state of class consciousness and preparedness [...] of all the *working people*< (CW 31/58)? From a >revolutionary mood alone< no >revolutionary tactics< can be developed (CW 31/63). In

Russia it was >easy< to begin the revolution, but here it is more difficult than it will be >for the European countries to *continue* the revolution and bring it to its consummation< (CW 31/64). The abolishing of freedom of the press and of assembly, which for Luxemburg means that the bases of >healthy public life< will be undermined (1918/2006, 213 [GW 4, 358]), is justified by **Lenin** as the >proletarian democracy<, which only affects >the exploiters<, but >gives the working people *genuine democracy*< (CW 28/108). But what kind of institutions would there have had to be, which in this situation guaranteed plurality and socialism at the same time? How should one approach the question of the peasants, if one did not have resources, which would have allowed making compromises and reaching consensus? The answer of the Bolsheviks and that of **Stalin** are well-known: It consisted in suppressing the question.

7.2 The communist idea in its radical-democratic variant is represented after 1917 by Council Communists, who turn against the force of the state and the dictatorship, thereby getting into a marginalised position. Karl **Korsch** is most worth mentioning as a representative of this tendency. As a member of the Communist Party of Germany he defends grassroots democracy, which must be rooted in the shop floors themselves, in order to make out of >wage slaves fully entitled citizens of labour<, who are actively involved in operations management as the >administration of the affairs of the workers by the workers< (GA 2, 94 et sq.). Sceptical of the progressive bolshevisation of the Communist Party of Germany, the stability of capitalism becomes clear to him, the bond of broad layers of the population to social democracy and the weight of the

opposition against communist projects springing from liberal-democratic traditions. So he proceeds again from the basis - the factory -, in order to develop a political strategy at the level of modern capitalist production. He criticizes any socialisation of the means of production >from above< and assigns priority to class action at the workplace. It alone gives organisation its power and makes the self-education of the producers possible. The plan has a chance for success only if it refers to a net of direct democratic structures in which the workers control each enterprise and each branch of production. The bureaucratic centralism of the Bolsheviks turns the movement on its head by robbing the working class of its independent experiences. The >dictatorship of the proletariat< was turned into one >over the proletariat< (1923/2012, 143). The realisation of C can be undertaken only if the participants are able to reflect on their actions on the basis of a critical interpretation of the changing totality of social relations. The proletariat cannot be the passive object of a knowledge that comes from without - from the party - still less that of a manipulation, which degrades it to the status of a pawn. In view of the consolidation of **Stalin's** dictatorship **Korsch** radicalizes his analysis. In 1930 he presents in his *anti-critique* the opinion that the III. International was a failure, just as was the II., because the >philosophical domination covers all the sciences<, practiced by >Lenin's epigones< it led to an >ideological dictatorship< so that >under the slogan of so-called ^Marxism-Leninism^^ this dictatorship is applied in Russia today to the whole intellectual life [...]< (1923/2012, 138). Where according to **Korsch** it would depend on pursuing >the application of the materialistic conception of history to the materialistic conception of

history itself< (102), **Stalin** and **Kautsky** act as hostile brothers who represent only two variants - a communist, a social-democratic - of the same Marx-orthodoxy. It comes as no surprise that **Korsch** decided in his career after 1945 to give up hope for Marxism, and to regard the masses as incapable of historical initiative. Nor can the Council Communism of the left-wing opposition put down roots in the Soviet Union. Its refusal to enter into an alliance with the peasantry, which seeks primarily the development of private property and confronts the revolution with hostility, leads it to make the unification of the proletariat its principal purpose. Not without cause does **Lenin** accuse it of having no answer to the question of alliances and of reducing culture to a cult of the worker. However, in the Soviet Union the solution of the question involves violent force against Kulaks and worker dissidents. Through its better representatives such as **Pannekoek**, Herman **Gorter** and Paul **Mattick** Council Communism has to its credit that it has kept alive the idea of an anti-state and anti-bureaucratic C for which an organisation is >a body of self-determining people< (**Pannekoek** 1936, 21). It holds to the priority of the mass movement and sees the task of the party as the education of a conscious, non-bureaucratic elite. This movement, rejected by the social democrats and combated by the Bolsheviks, is rapidly marginalised, and its followers advocate finally all the thesis of the state capitalism of the Soviet Union.

8. *C as the intellectual and moral reform of praxis with Gramsci.* - The communist idea had in the 20th century in **Gramsci** her brightest and most self-critical theoretician - theoretician only because his position was hardly really



put into practice, even if it later inspired the politics of the Communist Party of Italy under Palmiro **Togliatti**. This politics, shaped by the experiences of the anti-fascist popular front, converges, after remarkable successes, ever more with classical social-democracy, in order to merge with it finally in >Eurocommunism<. The latter had no future and went under shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Although there is no open mention of C in the *Prison Notebooks* because of the censorship, it is the constant point of reference in the broad attempt to establish Marxism anew under the name Philosophy of Praxis. Soon **Gramsci** finds himself confronted with the difficulties of building Socialism, in whose success in the Soviet Union he would like to believe despite everything, particularly since he is aware of the defeat of the communist movement in Western Europe, above all in a country such as Italy where fascism triumphed. Such strategic problems in east and west have priority for him. Their analysis leads to a critical reconstruction of historical materialism and a reformulation of the communist idea.

8.1 First of all, **Gramsci**'s experience with Turin's council movement, in which he was actively involved and on which he reflected often, is crucial. Because >the traditional institutions of movement have become incapable of containing this great blossoming revolutionary life<, he writes in July 1919, >a new type of institution must begin to be created and developed<, which is suitable, >to guarantee the autonomy of the producer in the factory, on the shop floor< (PPW 112 et sq.). Because in - 1919 - there is no lack of >revolutionary enthusiasm< (AGR 117), it appears to him that >the communist revolution is

essentially a problem of organization and discipline< (AGR 118), the factory council to be >the nucleus< (PPW 117). At the same time >these Councils can bring about the unification of the working class. They can give the masses a cohesion and a shape< (ibid.), it almost becomes the >model of the proletarian State< (PPW 118). The council >creates the mentality of the producer, the maker of history< (PPW 119); it is >the solid foundation for the process, which must culminate in the workers' dictatorship and the conquest of State power< (SPW1 166) - must, because Gramsci, for his part fired with revolutionary enthusiasm, still believes that the communist society will form a >world<, that is organized like >a large engineering plant< (PPW 167) and in the one system the division of labour and the administration will ensure that >the wealth of the whole world in the name of the whole of humanity< is produced and distributed (PPW 167).

The author of the *Prison Notebooks* will not for a moment doubt the communist perspective, yet the development of that >autonomy of the producers< becomes an object of much greater complexity, and all questions present themselves anew: Is it better to >^think^^ [...] in a disjointed and episodic way? [...] [T]o take part in a conception of the world mechanically imposed by the external environment [...]? Or, on the other hand, is it better to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world, and thus, [...] be one's own guide [...]< (SPN 323; N. 11, §12)? The rapid victory of fascism - it's ability to integrate specific social classes in the industrial and agrarian bloc - and the New Economic Policy (NEP) prompt **Gramsci** to reconsider the question of alliances, raised in Italy, split into an industrialized North and an agrarian South,

similar to Russia. The distribution up of the property of the great landed estates is not enough, because >without machinery, [...] without credit to tide him over until harvest-time, without cooperative institutions< (PPW 315), in short, without a revolution of the relations of production and of living altogether, the small peasant is not helped. However, for the proletariat of the North to become >the ruling, the dominant class, it must succeed in creating a system of class alliances< (PPW 316). In this situation the party - the >modern prince<, as it says in the *Prison Notebooks* referring to **Machiavelli** - must take over leadership. It must form >a national-popular collective will, of which the modern Prince is at one and the same time the organiser and the active, operative expression< (SPN 133; N. 13, §1). It has to >dominate antagonistic groups<. >It leads kindred and allied groups< - >when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to ^lead^^ as well.< (SPN 57 et sq.; N. 19, §24). **Gramsci** assimilates here also the experiences of **Lenin**, >the greatest modern theoretician of the philosophy of praxis [...] - on the terrain of political organisation and struggle< (FS 357; N. 10.1, §12), who knew that - regarding the peasantry - the distinction between >antagonistic< and >allied< groups is a question of practical policy - the politics of alliances.

8.2 C, termed by **Gramsci** as >regulated society< (e.g. SPN 263 et sq.; N. 6, §88), refers to the formation of a new >historical bloc<, whose function consists in realising the hegemony of the subaltern masses. In order to control the antagonistic classes, which embody capitalistic rule, the producers must cleanse their individual class interest, in order to generalize it concretely and to transform the

forms of political leadership of civil society and the state. A >cultural reform and the cultural improvement of the position of the depressed strata of society<, i.e. an >intellectual and moral reform< (SPN 133; N. 13, §1), forms the core of the corresponding conception of the world. Thereby it is not a matter of a world view [*Weltanschauung*] in the sense of an ensemble of conceptions, but of a political-theoretical ensemble. By way of education it creates a new human world by promoting the activity of the people, criticising common sense and giving rise to a new >good sense<. By virtue of it the workers understand themselves as producers who are able to administer in the future a Fordized and Taylorized production as citizens of a political-ethical State, which is aware of its international obligations, and as participants of a high culture, which they assimilate. The party must ensure the transition between these moments, which can come about solely by an >organic<, not bureaucratic >centralism<, and it must effectively represent the social plurality, by orienting it in the sense of a hegemony of the citizens as producers. This primacy of the party is to be justified only by the fact that it bears in mind the overcoming of the centuries-old separation between rulers and ruled: >In the formation of leaders, one premiss is fundamental: is it the intention that there should always be rulers and ruled, or is the objective to create the conditions in which this division is no longer necessary?< (SPN 144; N. 15, §4) The political-ethical State de facto contradicts Marx's assumption of a complete withering away of the State.

This renewed conception, a high point of Marxist C of the 20th century, does not neglect the economic moment. >Hegemony here is born in the factory< (SPN 285; N. 1,

§61). It must take the actual >determined market< into account, which reinforces, along with Fordism, the real subsumption of labour >to overcome the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall< (SPN 280; N. 22, §1). On the agenda stands a struggle for the ending of this subsumption while guaranteeing the efficiency of production. C must be established in an era in which the >war of manoeuvre< against capital failed, which in 1917 was won in the East, where >the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous< (SPN 238; N. 7, §16). Now, in a long >war of position< in the West the reorganisation of the modern capitalist society must be defied in its two forms, fascism and American democratic liberalism, which maintain power through a variable combination of coercion and persuasion and bring all organisations of civil society under their influence. It is the promotion of their hegemony in the form of a permanent passive revolution. Hegemony is constituted in the situation of a war of position at the same time from above - originating from State and party - and from below, on the basis of a civil society renewed in the sense of an intellectual and moral reform. The new >historical bloc< can only arise where >the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, between the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion< (SPN 418; N. 11, §67). This task requires the transformation of the intellectuals. It is safe to say >that all members of a political party should be regarded as intellectuals<, because one stresses >the function, which is directive and organisational, i.e. educative, i.e. intellectual< (SPN 16; N. 12, §1). All this is not to be accomplished by a charismatic leader, but >by the collective organism through ^active and conscious co-participation^^, through ^compassionality^^, through

experience of immediate particulars, through a system which one could call ^living philology^^. In this way a close link is formed between great mass, party and leading group; and the whole complex, thus articulated, can move together as ^collective-man^^.< (SPN 429; N. 11, §25)

In defiance of a fascism, which is preparing to conquer the world and an American liberal democracy with its overpowering capitalism and a political system, which makes believe it is the universal and lets its permanent corruption be forgotten, **Gramsci** holds to the idea that his epoch is not one of the renewal of capitalism, but one of communist revolution and the capacity of the subaltern masses for autonomous action. But this C is free from any kind of deterministic conception of necessity, from any historical teleology and any messianism. It is a possibility, dependent on the praxis of the social forces which are to shape it. It is without guarantee, not the subject of a forecast. The tragedy of a contingent and uncertain struggle has the final word to say: >In reality one can ^scientifically^^ foresee only the struggle, but not the concrete moments of the struggle, which cannot but be the results of opposing forces in continuous movement, which are never reducible to fixed quantities since within them quantity is continually becoming quality. In reality one can ^foresee^^ to the extent that one acts, to the extent that one applies a voluntary effort and therefore contributes concretely to creating the result ^foreseen^^.< (SPN 438; N. 11, §15)

9. *Utopia and reshaping of the communist idea?* - Apart from the remarkable historical experience of Chinese C and **Mao** Zedongs revolution in a colonized and agrarian country, the second half of the 20th century has brought no outstanding

innovations of the communist idea. The fall of the Soviet model during the entire century was accompanied by retaining the communist idea, whether as critical utopian ideal, or in the expectation of an historical break. The Jewish-Christian imaginary also resonates here secularly. Both perspectives created a critical distance to the Soviet dictatorship, as well as to triumphant capitalism. The first, that of a critical utopia, had its most outstanding representative in Ernst **Bloch**. Even if >only from the vantage point [...] of a classless society does the goal of freedom itself come clearly into our sights as definite Being-in-possibility< (*The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1, 1938/1986, 210), still in Marxism >coldness and warmth of concrete anticipation< are mediated with one another, the >cool analysis< and the >enthusiasm< (208). The second perspective replaces the idea of a revolution inscribed into the continuity of production and the productive forces with the event, which blasts open >the continuum of history< (**Benjamin**, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 1940/2007, 262) and thus renounces the concept of progress so dear to the II. and III. International, in which the >image of liberated grandchildren< had displaced >the image of enslaved ancestors< (260), which is more important for endurance. Thus Benjamin preserves the communist idea for the times of hopelessness, as the unexpected possibility of a breach in the existing. If >the ^time of the now^^ [...] is shot through with chips of Messianic time< (263), then this simply refers to the >task of liberation< still to be fulfilled in practice. The >oppressed class< becomes thereby the >depository of historical knowledge< as it turns to be >the avenger that completes the task of liberation in the name of generations of the downtrodden< (260). - Both ways of thinking brought no political

>posterity<, however a still living power of asking questions regarding C. A middle position between utopia and criticism was taken by Henri **Lefebvre**, who sought to show, >that the revolution consists not only in a change of the State, of political structures and a replacement of the ruling circle of persons<, but in a change of >life<, a reshaping of >everydayness< (1987, 10).

On the political level Eurocommunism was the last expression of historical C. Despite its will for democratic renewal it merged rapidly with social-democracy, which for its part was in the process of dissolving into social liberalism. It appears that **Croce** was right. Louis **Althusser**, who remained faithful to the communist movement, showed several times that social relations cannot exist without ideological relations, which function as imaginary. C is a possible social existence, but it is in danger of being based on a humanistic illusion which is a phantasm of total domination of reality. Therefore the communist idea cannot be developed further without this function of self critique.

How further? Is the only choice that remains one between various gentle forms of the disappearance of the communist idea and the critical utopia? There is a narrow path out of this dilemma. The brutality and the nihilism of capitalist globalisation, which changes the world >for many into a non-world, into an abyss< (**Tosel** 2008, 11), let the idea of C become conceivable again - beyond the phantasm of complete control and transparency, in that the humanistic thesis of the self production of humankind is taken up self-critically. It is no longer a matter of denying the dependence on nature, or of imagining once and for all to dissolve the opaque unwieldiness of the relations into



contractualism. The thinking that considers itself radical tends meanwhile to replace the perspective of the all too compromised C with a radical democracy based on liberty and equality. It lets itself be inspired by the social republicanism of the French revolution, and submits the great liberalism of **Locke** or **Mill** to a positive re-evaluation. In a time which is determined by neo-capitalist apartheid and imperial hegemonism, in a multi-cultural society, in which nationalistic, sexist, ethnical and racist violence are constants, it is more than useful to emphasize the right of all - >to have rights< - to be treated everywhere as citizens of the world. It is beneficial to rescue the idea of the public and respect for singularity, to parse the affiliation to the same world in the context of a cosmopolitism. But radical democracy always pushes up against its barriers before the gates of the factories and enterprises. Without the perspective of the liberation of labour and an alternative relationship to free time, democracy will lose any kind of radicalness and degenerate into a regime. Radical democracy will have to lead the fight against the real subjection of practice under capital. It can be challenged productively by the C-question of the old and inexhaustible **Marx**. If C implies radical democracy, then in reverse the latter remains incomplete and cannot be completed if it disassociates itself from C. To that extent Claude **Lefort** is right: >C belongs to the past, but the question of C remains central to our time.< (1999/2007, 21)

In the midst of the extreme dangers caused by capitalist globalisation, the communist tendency can be thought of anew. Negatively, it makes itself heard as the demand to stop creating a superfluous mankind through hunger and war,

to waste production and squander the free time potentially available for human development, and finally as the demand to stop ecological devastation. Positively, it appears as a culture of collaborative existence, common property, as a culture of the struggle against the real subsumption of labour and as the search for alternatives. The main theoretical problem lies in the question, how an economics and politics of boundlessness aligned with unlimited profits for capital can be replaced by an economics and politics of positive finiteness. Without giving short shrift to the unlimited transformability of human capacities, without setting apriori barriers, a C of positive >finiteness< (**Tosel** 1996) would have to adjust production to a standard which is determined by the satisfaction of the most urgent needs and the activation of the subalterns. How is this power to be conceived and uncoupled from the blind destruction-production process of capitalism? How to conceive it in the appropriate limits and find the wisdom of proportion in view of the indeterminacy of the future? Hic Rhodus, hic salta.

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-->administrative command system, alienation, apathy in the authoritarian administrative socialism, association, barracks communism, cadre party, civil society, classless society, collective, commune, Communist Manifesto, community, council communism, democratic centralism, democratic socialism, despotic socialism, destructive forces, dictatorship of the proletariat, disposable time, ecology, elements of the new society, equality, eurocommunism, exappropriation, feudal socialism, formal/real subordination, hegemony, historical bloc, immediacy communism, Jugoslavian Socialism, labour movement, left communism, Luxemburgism, national communism, party of a new type, passive revolution, persecution of communists, postcommunism, Pre-Marxian Socialism, primitive communism, Prison Notebooks, reform communism, revisionism, Saint-Simonism, social formation, socialization, socialism, socialism in one country, Stalinism, state, subsumtion, transformation, utopia, war of position/war of manoeuvre, war communism, workers control, workers' self-management, workers' state, world revolution

-->Apathie im befehlsadministrativen Sozialismus, Arbeiterbewegung, Arbeiterkontrolle, Arbeiterselbstverwaltung, Arbeiterstaat, Assoziation, befehlsadministratives System, demokratischer Sozialismus, demokratischer Zentralismus, despotischer Sozialismus,

Destruktivkräfte, Diktatur des Proletariats, disponible  
Zeit, Elemente der neuen Gesellschaft, Entfremdung,  
Eurokommunismus, Exappropriation, feudaler Sozialismus,  
formelle/reelle Subsumtion, Gefängnishefte, Gemeinwesen,  
geschichtlicher Block, Gesellschaftsformation, Gleichheit,  
Hegemonie, jugoslawischer Sozialismus, Kaderpartei,  
Kasernenkommunismus, klassenlose Gesellschaft, Kollektiv,  
Kommune, Kommunistenverfolgung, Kommunistisches Manifest,  
Kriegskommunismus, Linkskommunismus, Luxemburgismus,  
Nationalkommunismus, Ökologie, Partei neuen Typs, passive  
Revolution, Postkommunismus, Rätekommunismus,  
Reformkommunismus, Revisionismus, Saint-Simonismus,  
Sozialismus, Sozialismus in einem Land, Staat, Stalinismus,  
Stellungskrieg/Bewegungskrieg, Subsumtion, Transformismus,  
Unmittelbarkeitskommunismus, Urkommunismus, Utopie,  
Vergesellschaftung, vormarxistischer Sozialismus,  
Weltrevolution, Zivilgesellschaft