

REVOLUTION TODAY THREE REFLECTIONS

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For Eva

Preliminary remarks

Today, on the threshold of the 1990s, rethinking the very idea of revolution has turned into an urgent task.

There is double urgency about it – an urgency of re-thinking of our conceptions of revolution, some of which have become outdated, and an urgency of the 'thing itself, of revolution as a real process.

Our current ideas on 'revolution' have been first fashioned by the great divide of the late 18th century, i.e. by the French Revolution, the 'political revolution' against late feudalism, with its popular uprising against the established powers, as well as by the British 'Industrial Revolution', the economic revolution that brought about the world-wide dominance of capitalism, which caused deep structural transformations of society, comparable only, it seems, to the 'neolithic revolution' that ended nomadic modes of production. The series of defeated proletarian uprisings since the early 19th century that culminated in the victorious Russian October of 1917 has radicalized our thinking on Revolution by bringing those two aspects much more closely together, but has not altered the basic formula which could be resumed as 'Jacobinism plus structural transformation'.¹ The Stalinist deformation of the post-revolutionary Soviet Union – and the ensuing deformations of the Communist movement – has, then, oddly blurred our perspectives: by claiming its monopoly on the very idea of revolution, while turning it into an ideological tool in the service of another system of domination. Less spectacularly, although probably still more profoundly, our thinking on revolution has been influenced by the historical destiny of the competing 'evolutionary' approaches to social transformation – from Austro-marxism via Sweden's 'middle way' to the post-war 'welfare state': their 'failure in success' has been in fact the vital factor to put the idea of revolution on the agenda of history again, in the centres of a world-wide system of capitalist domination, in a new beginning of revolutionary politics in the 1960s.² Still less visible, however, but maybe still more effective, has been the impact of the 'passive revolutions', which have shaped the last hundred years far more deeply than

the active ones, the – sometimes rather radical³ – changes by which ruling classes or dominant, imperialist states have prevented real revolutions from effectively sapping their domination, reaching from the political 'reforms' of Louis Bonaparte via Bismarckian social reforms to the 'New Deal', and to the post-war blends of 'Fordism' and 'Labourism' in Western Europe or to the Bretton Woods system of international economic relations, with the neocolonialism it helped to bring about.

This has been a century, so far, that has been more deeply shaped – if not traumatized – by active and passive revolutions than any other century before. And yet, the implications of this simple truth for the future of humankind are far from clear. It has become difficult to write about revolution. Not just because it is suspected, in the eyes of so many new anti-totalitarians (who have come out of the rebel generations of the 1960s) of lapsing into the cardinal crime of a 'will for **power**'.⁴ And not at all, because it is, in fact, offensive to a dominant common sense of 'published opinion' in our Western capitalist countries⁵ which excludes even the possibility of a revolution. The real difficulty lies in a – quite justified – popular diffidence which forms a subterranean counterpart to the claims of the ruling classes of having achieved, as a result of their past active and ensuing passive revolutions, a final state of history, where the main task at hand is 'to end the revolution'. Not only the peasants or the housewives, even large strata of the **working** classes have made a historical experience that makes it a real question for them, whether another revolution could do them any good. And without the exploited and dominated classes and categories of our societies a revolution is not even thinkable.⁶

At the same time, within the process of real human history, those contradictions have been exacerbated, that have served as a foundation for the plea, as well as for the hope, for a revolutionary transformation since it first came into being: and it is not just the unaccounted, almost uncountable past and present victims of the **kinds** of modern imperialist regimes' that have been surpassing everything that came before them in terms of genocide, of civil and military destructions – it is even more their growing capacity of mortgaging the future for their present expansion. This is achieved via an expanding, increasingly flexible system of credit money that helps gigantic re-allocations of capital; and via 'economies of constant **capital**'⁹ which serve as a central condition for an industrializing upsurge without precedent. This second aspect has been taking different forms, the most important certainly being a type of economic growth that has not only squandered the larger part of the energetic and mineral resources of humankind within the **lifespan** of two generations – and that has not only destroyed an entire heritage of 'informal' traditions that had been handed down mostly on the female side of humankind in the process of the 'Sonyization' and '**MacDonaldization**' of every-day life, but that has doubly put the very survival of humankind in jeopardy; by provoking a global ecological crisis that has begun to sap the

natural conditions of human civilization and survival, and by executing the biggest military build-up of history that makes a 'total war' on a planetary scale a real possibility. Humankind is, already, paying most dearly for not having succeeded in ending these dialectics of destruction a long time ago, when they became first apparent in the second half of the 19th Century, by a thorough-going socialist **revolution**.¹⁰ As a result of this development, the urgency of a social revolution has merged with the urgency of simply guaranteeing the very survival of mankind: The newly discovered 'common interests of mankind' do, therefore, in no way divert us from the true class interests of the dominated classes – they just have to be understood in their radical implications, which are no less than a revolution ('perestrojka') in the East and a radical break with the logic of imperialist destructiveness, i.e. decisive steps towards a real socialist transition, in the **West**.¹¹ This new urgency of revolution does not, however, invalidate the apparently opposed consideration that the situation had developed into presenting such a serious threat to the survival of humankind that there is no more time for experimentation – and has not the slogan 'no experiments!' always served to argue 'no revolution'? Can we afford to spend our time in a revolutionary process that may turn out to be as long-winded as the passage from feudalism to bourgeois class dominance which took, roughly, five centuries? And what, if there are any, are the alternatives to such a revolutionary process?

*First reflection:
revolution as a millenary task*

We do think, hence we are revolutionaries

(L.M. Batkin, in: Afanassyev, Y., ed., *There is no alternative to perestrojka*, Moscow 1988, German edition, p. 217)

Nobody else but a person, a subject, her-or himself can judge what she or he thinks to be true, what he or she feels to be right. She or he may rely on others, trust their authority, but it is always her-or himself who has to be the ultimate judge of this authority, revoking it without any warning, if she or he feels like it. Domination, as any authority over others that is *not* based on their **consent**¹² nor revocable¹³ in this way, is seen as *ab initio* illegitimate in the light of this evidence – however good, well-meaning or superior it may be in other respects.

Historically, the spelling out of this basic evidence by the poets, comedians and tragedians of the Greek Fifth century B.C., has been the prelude of the central philosophical thesis of the **Sophists**¹⁴ that there is no other way of judging, what is true, right, or beautiful, except through every person's own judgement, as well as of the stance of **Socrates** to prefer capital punishment to conformist subordination to the mores and views of his fellow citizens.

These elementary claims against all kinds of domination that were directly

derived from this elementary evidence – although they had an indirect historical occasion in the crisis of ancient society that was at the basis of the short flowering of the Greek democratic city state – were soon silenced and perverted by a metaphysical philosophy that made the justification of 'order' and, quite explicitly, of 'domination' its pivotal task. It is true that these early, philosophical claims of 'enlightenment' against any kind of domination had the major weakness of not yet being capable of linking themselves to a 'science of history',¹⁵ and, therefore, were quite unable even to approach the problem of defining the conditions of their realization within the real history of humankind. The development of modern economic, social, and political theory, from Renaissance political prudence to Enlightenment political economy, however, and its scientific reformulation in the critical outlines elaborated by Marx, have accompanied a profound change in the real historical situation – in which the old claim of liberation from domination, of emancipation, began to be incorporated by a real social movement, by the class struggles of the exploited class the bourgeoisie was constituting in its very rise. The elementary evidence that any domination of humans over humans is basically illegitimate did not, by this new incorporation lose its force. Quite to the contrary: by being able to indicate the conditions of its historical realization in combining philosophical critique with scientific discovery and the practical experience of real revolutionary movements, it gained additional force: effecting its metamorphosis from a philosophical anticipation to a real historical project, and, thereby, finally overcoming the subaltern position to which 'materialist', anti-domination philosophy had been relegated since early Hellenism by the effects of dominating ideology.¹⁶

In our type of society, because of its elementary structures, an economy regulated by a market **mechanism**,¹⁷ and a state constituted as a representative **democracy**¹⁸ with its perpetual changes of government by general elections, makes 'revolutionizing' a permanent feature of these societies as they are, these structures themselves bringing an end to the very idea of a revolution: why should anybody ask for a revolution, let alone practically participate in one, in a state of affairs where revolutions have become commonplace or, better still, where orderly social innovation and orderly political changes have, once and for all, made any revolution superfluous?

These contemporary objections can be dealt with by carefully reexamining the arsenal of traditional **marxist** analysis and **argument**.¹⁹ *First*, the market as the basic economic regulatory mechanism of a society, and not as a simple distributive device, is necessarily linked to generalised commodity production. This is, in turn, inseparable from the capitalist mode of production – with its characteristic combination of the exploitation of wage labour and material expansion.²⁰ As **the market** mechanism, therefore, is, as a basic regulatory mechanism of social **production**,²¹ a structure of class domination (as even the most methodically individualist analytical **marxists** will have to agree), there are structural limits to its 'revolutionizing': as a

basic structure of capitalist domination it is revolutionizing anything but this domination itself. Second, the state as a political form of concentrating power, especially by monopolizing the use of violence over and above society²² and by reproducing and articulating the material institutions and procedures effecting the hegemony of dominant ideology over all its 'subjects', is essentially a structure of domination. This is also true for modern representative democracy, although domination does take here the outward appearance of a rule of the dominated themselves. In fact, there can be no radical grass-roots democracy, where 'representation' does not include concrete control, implying, at least, instant and simple revocability. The same is true, however, where the capitalist class is still, if only economically, dominant – which means, under the structures established by the capitalist economic revolution, that central areas of decision on the development of society are 'out of reach' of the democratic political **process**.²³

A project of revolution which is at the same time 'radically contemporaneous', and uncompromisingly radical, taking up the old dream of humanity by meeting the **pressing current** needs for **structural** transformation in a way that takes them to their full emancipatory consequences, will have to find answers to the elementary questions of why people need to get rid of the effects of capitalist domination once and for all, by getting rid of the capitalist mode of production itself, and how they can go about achieving this, without at the same time simply reinforcing the political power of a state they are themselves unable to control. These questions lead us to the double problematic of the necessary depth of the transformation process required to overcome the capitalist mode of production, in a society bearing its direct or indirect imprint in every single **fibre**,²⁴ and of the restructuring of the process of reproduction of society, including its regulating institutions, that will allow the empowering of concrete individuals and collectives in a development towards direct democratic **regulation**.²⁵

What is still being sought is nothing less than a 'social revolution' which goes beyond the double, political and economical, revolution of the bourgeoisie. And that goes beyond it in a peculiar way: without reproducing its characteristic 'blind spots' and illusions, and yet without neglecting the deeper reasons that underlay their ideological appeal even to the dominated masses, i.e. without neglecting their (false) promise of ending all domination of humans over humans. **What** is needed is a political **project** of real historical change that takes up the task of concretely²⁶ abolishing all structures of such a domination – in the words of the young Karl Marx: 'hence with the categorical imperative that all relations in which man is an debased, enslaved, left alone or despicable being have to be overthrown.' (Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx-Engels, Werke, vol. 1,385). This again must not be read as promising a future society that is liberated from the material need of reproducing (and, eventually, safe-guarding) its own conditions of existence, i.e. of economical (and ecological) considerations. Nor

is it to advance to a specifically post-political, 'anarchist'²⁷ or 'technocratic' state of history, where everybody would simply decide for himself, or where 'scientific authority' would settle any questions that may arise, deciding in the place of everybody, without any need to engage with others into a collective, political process of perpetually defining and redefining the needs that may be fulfilled, and those that must be postponed, or even neglected, as well as the cost in terms of human effort and ecological change that a given society should allocate to **them**.²⁸

*Second reflection:
revolution after the crisis of statism and technolatr^y*²⁹

The causes for the defeat of the working class are to be sought for much deeper than in the tactics of its parties, evidently deeper than in single tactical mistakes.

(Otto Bauer (1934), in *Werke*, vol. 3, p. 990)

Today, in a historical situation, where the post-war achievements of Western European social democracy have not only shown their severe limitations, but also have almost generally given way to a renewal of quite un-socialized forms of capitalist regulation, and where the crisis of Eastern European regimes has become so deep, that a revolutionary transformation from above seems to be the only possibility of re-opening a process of socialist transition that is left to them, it is, certainly, more pertinent than ever to observe that it is by analyzing its *errors* that historical, human projects may arrive at correcting their available knowledge. The historical project of revolution that is to be actualized in the present situation is that of *proletarian* revolution – at least, where ever³⁰ the aims and effects of bourgeois revolution have been institutionalized in their characteristic, rather peculiar **way**.³¹ Actualizing the project of revolution begins, therefore, by identifying and analyzing the deeper causes of that generalized defeat of the working class movement Bauer was farsighted enough to see in 1934, before it has been doubly compounded first by the rise of fascism, and then by the rise of the Fordist USA to world-wide hegemony after the Second World War.

The theoretical and philosophical debate around the deeper causes of this defeat had been vivid and brilliant in the time of its very beginnings, the Soviet Union functioning as a 'laboratory' for a creative and critical Marxist debate, and new, independent theoretical initiatives springing up among the various traditions of the working class movement, in its social-democratic tradition as well as in its newly forming Communist branch, (from the Italian *consigli* to Austro-Marxism), while at the same time an autonomous theoretical and philosophical practice of Marxism came into being with the first beginnings of what was later to become 'Western Marxism'.³² With the Stalinization of the Communist movement, however, and with the

marginalization of social democracy in the remaining parliamentary democratic Western countries, together with the exile and the persecution of the European left intelligentsia, the debate became muted, exactly when its urgency was greatest. For a long period, relatively isolated figures like Trotsky, Thalheimer or Otto Bauer represented a potential of self-criticism of the working class movement outside of its mainstream, while Gramsci (as rendered by Togliatti), or Mao stood for theoretical innovation from within the Stalinized Communist mainstream, and the philosophical despair of the Frankfurt School in its US exile, or the open renegation of authors like Arthur Koestler, represented a potential of intellectual criticism the working class movement itself had lost.³³ The road to a self-critical and productive marxist debate had to be reopened again, with great difficulty, in a rather devious way, reaching from the ambiguity of the philosophical project of 'de-dogmatizing' marxism (Lefebvre, Goldman, Kosik, the early Budapest school) to the apparent dogmatism of Althusser's philosophical theses, which led up, in the late 1970s, to a violent diagnosis of the crisis of the Communist movement. Twenty years of debate only to arrive at a full-fledged diagnosis of the crisis of marxism, that had been repressed by official marxism since the 1930s?

Today, a decade later, the balance of this development may be drawn in a more positive way: once the liberating step of acknowledging the repressed crisis had been taken, not only new philosophical and theoretical work became possible,³⁴ it also was increasingly seen that the scattered, marginalized or muffled self-critical labour of Marxists since the 1930s had become open to a new reading, as it were, to a re-appropriation within a suddenly widened horizon. In this double process two new axes of marxist theoretical self-criticism emerged and gained theoretical consistency: the diagnosis of the 'state trap', in which preceding marxism had been caught, led to a new understanding of the political tasks to be mastered within a revolutionary process, and the diagnosis of the neglect of the determination of the productive powers themselves by the capitalist accumulation process and its imperialist modes of regulation³⁵ brought marxist analysis to a meeting ground with the 'new social movements' that had begun to develop in the meantime, by opening a much more radical perspective on the necessities of material transformation involved in any sustainable revolutionary process.

Both axes of marxist self-criticism have immediate implications for the conception of 'social revolution': first, the diagnosis of the 'state trap' has likewise refuted all conceptions of simply using the existing state, with its complex networks of institutions, to 'implement' a revolutionary process, *and* all conceptions of doing so by means of a 'new state', to be constructed after smashing the present, bourgeois one. Revolutionary processes, in order to be politically and socially sustainable, have to reach into the very 'molecular' fibres of the social reproduction process as a whole, in all their variety – and this cannot be done via the two elementary media of constraint

which characterize the action of any state as such, via commands backed by violence, or via promises of compensation backed by tax **money**.³⁶ It can only be achieved through appealing to the individual and collective subjects concerned, i.e. regarding subjects themselves constituted under the dominant ideology, by inducing and reinforcing anti-ideological, anti-domination effects of resistance, rebellion and revolt *within* the network of ideological practice, determined in the first instance by dominating ideology. This result of theoretical analysis, in turn, precludes, at the same time, any relapse into the ideology of the 'sovereign **subject**',³⁷ underlying the seeming evidence of 'spontaneist' or 'movementist' alternative conceptions of a revolutionary process. In the field of ideology this means to be sensitive to the real resistances and rebellions that happen³⁸ among concerned subjects, being able to respond to them in articulating demands and struggles, constructing social and political movements and powers that challenge the efficacy of dominant ideology. This cannot be done by using the means of the state machinery, be it the existing one, or embryonic (or full-fledged) future ones. Only the self-activity of the concerned subjects is able to provide such a process with a sustainable basis that is able to grow, until it can, more partially, or more globally,³⁹ challenge the efficacy of the dominating ideology.

Second, to take a point of departure in a central piece of **marxist** theory that has been somewhat neglected within the **marxist** tradition: the transformation of 'labour power as a commodity' into 'labour potential' of 'associated free individuals' is a historical process that does not only go beyond mere property relations, but also involves two distinct processes of transformation – the conversion of the 'objective' productive forces, of the entire 'machinery' of economic and extra-economic production, produced by the capitalist mode of production, by capitalist accumulation, into material instruments and conditions of a conscious regulation of the material exchange of humankind with nature; and it also involves the collective and individual appropriation of the 'subjective' productive forces, of the capacities the exploited classes already and still possess⁴⁰ to re-shape and to re-use these objective instruments of the material reproduction of society in a way corresponding to their self-defined **needs**,⁴¹ in order to make them the instruments of their own full and sustainable development, individually and collectively, as well as of the capacities that have been separated for them, relegated to the exclusive control of scientific **experts**.⁴²

These efforts of theoretical criticism have been accompanied by the development of new practical sensitivities and initiatives, by the emergence of new practices of opposition on a mass scale, as those of the 'civil rights movement' in the USA of the late 1950s and early 60s, or of the 'anti-colonial movements' that emerged in Western Europe at the same time – or, later, the student and youth revolt of the 1960s, and the 'new social movements' of the 1970s. This practical movement of **criticism**,⁴³ which has begun with the emergence of a new left since the 1960s, has, since then, taken the shape of definite grassroots

political projects. Some of them influenced the appearance of new parliamentary **parties**⁴⁴ within specific national **situations**:⁴⁵ like the People's Socialist Party in Denmark, the 'rainbow coalition' in the USA, the 'women's party' in Iceland, or the Greens in West Germany. These four examples **represent**, as it were, specimens for different types of development that have been taking place: a former Euro-communist party transformed by the impact of new mass movements, a political project mainly based on the struggle against race discrimination, and operating within a two-party system of low social efficacy, a social movement which was invigorated by new impulses to the point of developing something like a parliamentary branch, or a new party formed by a difficult convergence of new social movement and self-critical new left activists under the pressure of an exclusive electoral device – which could not legitimately be changed after having been overcome.⁴⁶

In a different way, however, this movement of criticism has also affected some of the larger organizations coming out of the political tradition of the working class movement: the **PCI's** move towards '**eurosocialism**'⁴⁷ is one example of this, the recent struggles for a renewal of the British Labour Party is, certainly, a second one, and the SPD itself, with its attempts at programmatic renewal (cf. the so-called Irsee programme draft, 1988), in order to halt the rise of the Greens, may be cited as a third one.

What I think paramount in these developments is neither a return of the working class movement to a revolutionary purity it never possessed, nor an advance towards a **kind** of political unity it will never achieve. It will rather be a painful process of recomposition which will define new cleavages cutting across old ones, making **e.g.** the ex-Stalinist whose self-criticism has brought him to a position of grassroots democracy and political control of the development of the productive forces side with the ex-hippie, the ex-trotskyite, and the ex-social-democrat against people coming from the very same origins, but having drawn opposite conclusions, **i.e.** defending centralized state control and the latest 'technological revolution'. And the diversity of political conjunctures and party systems will certainly lead to the necessity of a new kind of 'poly-centrism' – while the transnational strategies of leading capitalist groups and imperialist state alliances will rapidly force these organisations and movements to develop a new kind of internationalist practice. What will certainly emerge more clearly in coming years is the obsolescence of some traditional dividing lines concerning tactical differences – while the new cleavages and alliances will be organizing around the strategic problematics of a radical transformation as such and not around the question of the adequate means of building a social movement and counter-power that will be able to start and to sustain such a process of transformation. This is not to say that 'social revolution' or 'reforming capitalism', **i.e.** active revolution, from below, or passive revolution, from **above**, have ceased to be alternatives. It has, however, become far more difficult to distinguish the respective practices and forces within a concrete conjuncture – and the possession of traditional

ideological *shibboleths* has ceased to be of any use in such a critical ideological and political process.

*Third reflection:
revolution on the brink of human self-destruction*

Is there any science that seems less apt. by virtue of its innocent approach. to fill the world with apprehension? Those young men and women. . . who are. . . inventing counting traps for prairie mice. . . – they do not resemble at all those exiles who had been preparing, in Zurich. Vienna. and Munich. . . . the downfall of a world. And yet, suddenly. the mice counters transgress a boundary.
(Carl Amery. *Natur als Politik*. Reinbek 1978, p. 43)

So far. I have been discussing the contemporary problematics of revolution in a perspective of continuity, however broken. This would be insufficient, because today's conjuncture is also determined by a number of new factors which are not contained within this continuity, nor to be derived from it in some way. Schematically speaking, I can see three such new elements of today's global situation, presenting us with corresponding new, real challenges in rethinking the idea of revolution for our own times:

First, the *ecological crisis*, with the new urgencies and responsibilities it is imposing;

second, the current *crisis of traditional military strategies*, which urges us to call into question the traditional link between revolution and war;

third, the ongoing *struggle for democratic rights* to new nations, and to new social categories – defined by gender, race, and age – and the challenge this is presenting to the 'digestive' capacities of the dominant ideologies, as well as to working class organizations patently under their influence.

With regard to these elements, two aspects have to be considered [here](#):⁴⁸ On the one hand, it will be necessary to grasp the specificity of their novelty, on the other, to draw out the consequences they entail for an actualized conception of a revolutionary process. As to the first aspect, one property can be underlined which the three elements seem to share: being, all of them, although in different ways, irreducible to the specific objects of the emancipatory class struggle of the working class, they pose a new problematic of alliances. which is qualitatively different even from a rectified version of the alliance between the proletariat and the peasant class: the alliance to be articulated does not only concern individual and collective subjects that are objectively included within the exploited working class: it is also necessarily of a long-term character, without a tangible perspective of the different categories to be articulated in it vanishing in a process of social change or with no realistic perspective of being overcome by such a process in the short or medium term. For instance, those concerned with an ecological alteration will necessarily be, at least in part, other working class subjects, their immediate interests standing against the interests of those committed to a certain branch

of production,⁴⁹ and there is not the slightest perspective that this difference of approach will wither away by virtue of some future social process. Even though the militarist deformation of our societies, certainly will be effectively engaged before the turn of the century⁵⁰ – it will probably be with us for some considerable time, and a comparable opposition holds between those within and those without the 'military – industrial complex'.⁵¹ And as long as international relations of dependency and discriminatory structures based on gender, race, or age will persist or will still be perceived as a possible danger – which, given the deep material roots of such practices within the global reproduction processes of contemporary capitalist societies, will be for a long period – the same holds true for differences and oppositions resulting from them.⁵²

Moreover, the risk, and the urgency, involved in all three of these elements do entail a number of constraints on responsible revolutionary tactics – and, to some degree, even on revolutionary strategy: certain types of industrial disruption, like e.g. nuclear power plants or certain chemical plants getting out of control, cannot be accepted as an inevitable side-product of class conflicts, and even the amount of ignorance we have, e.g. concerning the climatic and ecological consequences of large-scale deforestation, has to serve as an indication of avoiding types of action that may accelerate such processes.⁵³ Certain types of military conflicts, not only nuclear war, but also chemical and biological warfare, or 'conventional' war in densely industrialized areas, will also have to be excluded from the options of a revolutionary political practice⁶⁰ – as will be the recourse, in socialist transition processes, to violent and/or industrializing ways of birth control and 'demographical politics', not just because of the destruction of possible alliances across the gender division they entail, but also because of the risks to which they, maybe unintentionally, expose the very biological process of human reproduction.

Finally, the very difference of these issues and problems, which are irreducible to each other in theory as in practice, imposes a structure of internal plurality on any realistic, adequate revolutionary strategy and tactics if the specific contradictions which concern ecological, peace, or woman's liberation movements are not and cannot be addressed in an autonomous way, derived from the specific theory and practice they develop in their struggle; and if, on the other hand, the specific tasks of industrial workers fighting capitalist exploitation cannot be addressed quite as specifically, then the whole movement risks failure. If they are not able to present the practical credentials of concrete, specific emancipatory struggles, resistances, and rebellions, opposition movements will always be weaker than the reproduction mechanisms of dominant ideology – which simply cannot be confronted effectively on the level of general ideological discourse.

As will easily be seen from these short remarks, the 'overdetermination' of anti-capitalist, revolutionary struggle, serves to reinforce the effects of the critique of the 'state-trap' and of a too simple, technocratic conception of the material transformations involved in a revolutionary transition. I would go as

far in this direction as to maintain that, indeed, the 'new social movements' concerned with these specific contradictions have a tendential 'liberating effect' on a working class movement, that has been caught in many ways by the 'passive revolutionary' mechanism and processes of the last hundred years of capitalist history.

Concluding remarks.

The project of a contemporary revolution that has overcome the ambiguities of statism and technolatriy will have to take shape concretely in the project of an ecological, feminist, and socialist revolutionary process. The construction of such a project on sound foundations, and yet in an imaginative way, adequate to the real tasks it faces, and attractive to the minds of many who still are under the influence of dominant ideology, can be helped by theoretical analysis, and may be furthered by philosophical interventions that succeed in addressing the right, sensitive problems. When the continuing attractiveness of the latest *aggiornamento* of dominant ideology – in the form of neo-liberal ideology and politics – fades in the 1990s, all those who have begun to see the real urgency of such a revolution will need such theoretical analysis and philosophical intervention.⁶¹ But it is as will not be forget that the inventiveness of masses in revolt has been and will continue to be beyond the imagination of the most sensitive philosopher.

NOTES

1. Molina (*L'Etat du Monde*, Paris 1986) has shown that even this idea of revolution, dated though it certainly is, is not nearly as dead, as established French ideology has it since the late 1970s.
2. Subsequent defeats, as well as later parochialism, have somewhat blurred the fact that this began – although with rather shaky connections – as an international, world-wide process, stretching from Shanghai via Berkeley to Berlin-West, Paris, and Turin shaking the latter-day strongholds of fascism in Europe on its way round the globe: Lisbon, Madrid and Athens.
3. Out of the ten revolutionary demands of the Communist Manifesto (M a d Engels, Werke, vol. 4, p. 481s.) only three – the expropriation of landed property, the abolition of the law of inheritance, and the creation of an equal constraint to work for all – have not been at least partially tackled – in however perverted ways – by such initiatives as a preventive restructuring from above.
4. It would be wrong to treat anti-totalitarianism as a pseudo-issue. After the 'night of the century' (Mandel) it is a real pertinent question to ask for the conditions of the rise of such absolute, and lethal, however different forms of state power as that of the Nazis or that of Stalinism. This is, however, no reason at all to accept the theoretical and political distortions present in much anti-totalitarian theory (cf. e.g. the international committee that led Polish defenders of Solidarnosc to demonstrate alongside with upholders of Somozist nostalgia in Nicaragua). Nor is it any reason for neglecting the differences between e.g. the French 'antitotalitarians' like Glucksmann who have come to side with reactionary conformism and their German counterparts like Cohn-Bendit who have turned

ordinary 'reformists', constituting the spearhead of the 'Realist' wing within the West German Greens.

5. As it had been *de facto* under the Stalinist system of domination in the East, until Gorbachev proclaimed his 'revolution from above', calling to be relieved by a 'revolution from below' (Gorbachev 1986) – while maintaining at least some of the ambiguity of an 'official' use of revolution by the holders of state power with regard to any revolution that is not effectively controlled by themselves, and therefore, in the last instance, a passive one, as Gorbachev himself is aware.
 6. This real difficulty has led a number of more imaginative thinkers to look for substitute 'historical subjects' of another revolution in the psycho-socially deprived marginals or in the 'world-village' of an imperialist periphery. These attempts, while in fact helping to understand new – or neglected – contradictions within contemporary social formations, could never offer a satisfactory solution to the question of how any sizable transfer of power from its present centres to revolutionary counter-powers could ever be brought about without actively involving masses of those exploited and dominated **social** classes and categories.
- It seems to me necessary to maintain – and even to stress – the basic conceptual linkage between the capitalist mode of production and historical imperialism as well as its successors that has been established by **Hobson**, **Hilferding** and **Lenin**, and which has often been neglected in 'phase models' of the development of capitalism. This has the theoretical implication, which I accept, that we cannot analyse the crimes of Stalinism under the category of imperialism. We rather have to analyse it under a new category for processes of socialist transition that went wrong in some radical way. Even Soviet authors are now beginning to discuss the category of counter-revolution for what happened in the Soviet Union with the implementation of Stalinist politics.
8. To indicate this context is not to trivialize the uniqueness in terms of human destruction of German fascism – it rather is a first step of grasping its multiple determination by concrete historical situations as well as by more general, structural effects.
 9. Using resources – like air, soil, water, or wild animals – that on a societal or global level have to be reproduced or substituted at considerable cost, constituting 'external costs' of production, (if they can be substituted at all) as 'free goods' for capitalist production.
 10. This is not to say that the problems of ecological sustainability or of women's liberation would not have arisen, as it is sometimes implied – they simply would have arisen under far more propitious conditions, without having to counter the double, civil and military impact of capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination structures.

Of course they are enunciated in an ambiguous way, putting 'humankind' against 'class emancipation'. But this false, 'humanist' wording should not deceive us about the substantive content of these claims of 'new thinking' – which has to begin, in fact, by putting aside false definitions of class interest in order to become able again to pose the real problems of class struggle of our times, which are no less than struggles with the survival of humankind at stake.

This has to be more than the traditional categories of 'tacit consent' or of 'trust' the subtle John Locke introduced to justify the domination of the modern bourgeois state; something like 'potential active consent' – which may be measured by the potential of active and effective dissent that is in the hands of any individual – may serve as a provisional formula.

13. It has not been by accident that the **problematics** of the 'imperative mandate' has been central to every practical experience of grass-roots democracy – from the Paris Commune to the 'citizen's initiatives' of the 1970s.

14. Who started from making their own the task of educating good citizens only to arrive at the radical demand of the equality of all human beings.
15. Cf. however the important advances made into that direction by e.g. Thucydides, Ibn Khaldoun, or, opening on a new development, Machiavelli.
16. What the effect is of this new situation for the ulterior development of philosophy is one of the less clear issues within the marxist tradition. The only element that seems to be established by now, is the important fact that the 'theoretical counter-revolution' of the Stalinist 'emendation of marxist reason' (as DIAMAT) is certainly no legitimate part of it.
17. What a market mechanism is – and could be – comes out most clearly in the recent controversy between Mandel, Nove, and others.
18. Norberto Bobbio has been foremost in posing the problem of representative, constitutionally institutionalized democracy within the marxist debate again, where it had been neglected as it were by common consent between statism and movementism. Which is, however, not to say that the underlying assumption of Bobbio and his followers – i.e. that marxists should give up their criticism of the state as a separate political form of domination resting upon a real autonomization of the rulers against the ruled – and their plea for the specific institutional forms of representative democracy are themselves above criticism.
19. Such reexaminations are now beginning to be available, in French, in George Labica's and Gerard Bensussan's 'Dictionnaire Critique du Marxisme', Paris 1982, 2nd. rev. ed. 1986 (German ed., **Berling**, Argument, 1984ff.), and in German, in W.F. Haug's and others' 'Neues Wörterbuch des Marxismus', which will begin to be published in 1989.
20. Capitalist modes of production have to accumulate, which necessarily entails intensive and extensive forms of material expansion – even if the individual interests of capital owners as human beings dependent on certain natural resources would go against it.
21. This qualification is important – there is nothing that precludes an *accessory* use of a market mechanism even under fairly advanced socialist relations of production, as long as it is certain that it will not get out of the conscious control by the political choices of society.
22. This is not to be misunderstood as maintaining that there is no more social violence outside the state – as there certainly is, e.g. in modern gender relations or in organised crime –, nor as the contention that in pre-capitalist societies there were no 'separate' concentrations of power, in the hands of the ruling classes. I think it is the most adequate way of stating the implications of the separation of 'economy' and 'politics' characteristic of capitalism for its 'political form' itself.
23. The catch-word 'self-production of society' seems to be the best available formula for politics in a class-less society, which has abolished capitalist domination and exploitation, when attention is given to the three simple facts (a) that 'society' is never a real historical agent, nor (b) ever producing its own conditions of existence, nor, finally, (c) the society that produces is ever really identical to the society that is produced. To use it for societal processes under capitalist domination, however, seems to be at least preparing oneself for falling victim to the mystifications of capitalist ideology.
24. It is not just shyness to talk about revolution which has made the metaphor of 'reconstruction-conversion' – as in the 'Umbau' – programme of the German Greens, or as in the debate on 'perestrojka' – so popular in referring to this problematic – it certainly also is an expression of an awareness of the complexity of the task involved.
25. Such a restructuring certainly includes a significant element of 'regionalization' – not because of any romantic attachment to the narrow traditions of backward,

- closed regions, dominated by local 'notables', but because of the necessity to bring real power of decision making back into the hands of those immediately concerned. It also implies, in other respects, the overcoming of still existing regional and national boundaries, like e.g. in finding a peaceful and ecological way of living around the Mediterranean. The attitude of the regionalist parties of the 'European Free Alliance' who aim at some kind of independence within a larger, European framework seem to reflect this necessity – although with the limitation of not clearly confronting the dangers of an EC-centred imperialism and chauvinism.
26. Which implies that there can be no short-cuts, no 'domino theory' of revolution: there is no automatic sequence between e.g. overcoming capitalism, and overcoming patriarchy – although the two have become increasingly linked to each other.
27. In the historical sense that expression has taken by the interventions of Stirner, Bakunin, and Kropotkin – which should not keep contemporary revolutionaries from carefully examining the always extremely instructive experiences of historical anarchist practice, especially if it was the practice of a mass movement.
28. Such a basically Saint-Simonian illusion has been inherent in some of the classical marxist formulations on class-less society, as well as on the 'withering away of the state'.
29. The term 'technolatry' seems to be the least inadequate designation for an attitude which did not only project the development of the (technologically defined) productive forces into the position of an (automatic) 'subject of history', neglecting class struggle as the elementary form of human historical practice, but which has also tended to define the material societal process of reproduction exclusively in economic terms ('economism') and the economic categories of wealth, need, and cost as exclusively in terms of produced goods ('productivism'). As the critique of 'economism' and 'productivism' have, however, sometimes been used to argue in favour of abandoning such elementary insights of marxist theory as the 'determination in the last instance' or the theoretical primacy of production (in its full sense, including the production of children or of discourse) in, e.g. a materialist theory of needs, I prefer a designation which does not lend itself so easily to misunderstanding.
30. This is not only to be interpreted geographically, but also referring to areas of the social reproduction process, like the area of gender relations, which have remained on this side of bourgeois constitutionalism – and where, accordingly, demands for guaranteed individual rights and enforceable norms and procedures, i.e. demands for an egalitarian state intervention, are still a central point.
31. Care should be taken not to confuse typical situations of bourgeois post-revolutionary structures of domination – like e.g. the existence of a legally unfettered capitalist despotism within the process of production, a generalized venality of politicians, or the existence of uncontrollable secret services, as being situations of a non-realisation of bourgeois revolution: exactly these are the situations by which it is realised as such, bringing and maintaining the bourgeoisie in the position of the ruling class.
32. Perry Anderson's later critique of it does not only start from false hopes of a return to revolutionary purity – and therefore misrepresents a good deal of the real links these thinkers had with the class struggles of their times – , he fails to understand that an autonomous existence of a marxist theoretical and philosophical debate, without an institutionalized subordination to working class organizations (and, therefore, necessarily a subordination to tactical concerns) is, indeed, a key condition for any living marxism, as it is for any kind of living theoretical and philosophical activity.

The later intellectual fate of Karl Korsch may be taken as an instructive example

of this regressive development.

34. In which approaches that had fought or ignored each other in preceding phases began to recognize the need for reformulating their basic assumptions in learning from each other, while discovering new, more interesting, but also graver differences within their own tradition.
35. There is more than one such mode of regulation, consecutive in time (like colonialism and neocolonialism) or competing for world hegemony, like the New Deal 'fordism' and German fascism, or like, contemporarily, an emerging neoliberal mode of regulation in the USA, under growing competition from a Western European and a Japanese variant of bargaining corporatism.
36. Of course, the situation is, in reality, more complex, due to the existence of the state as a complex of ideological institutions alongside its networks of coercion and bribery. This does not, however, change the situation, I am trying to focus: either the struggle within this network of institutions is taken up in statist terms – then the issue is getting to the central positions of control which try to run these institutions via these more elementary 'media' of statist action – , or it is granted that the point is, with regard to this network, to win consent, against the dominating ideology, which cannot be done by occupying any 'posts of command', but requires a different strategy, involving necessarily the critical 'self-activity' of the individuals and concrete collectives concerned.
37. Which is itself an effect of bourgeois juridical ideology.
38. Against a certain voluntarism (and corresponding determinism) within the marxist tradition the aleatory aspect of such elementary ideological events is to be stressed.
39. In this protracted process, which is decisive for the fate of any revolutionary development, there is no final victorious battle, although there may be defeats which may break the dynamics of a revolutionary process for a given period – especially, when concerned subjects become convinced that their struggle will only lead to an exchange of the persons **ruling** over them.
40. Experiences like the 'popular planning' of the Greater London Council have shown the impressive nature of this capacity.
41. Which always, under conditions of a socialised way of production, include a consideration of proportionality between expenditure – in terms of human effort or natural resources – and the satisfaction to be gained.
42. The real tendencies to a proletarianization also of scientific wage labourers have not yet abolished this still quite real separation – and it is doubtful that they ever will: new elitist mechanisms of separating theoretical from practical knowledge seem to be invented by the dominating class any time the two get 'too close' to each other.
43. I do not want to imply in any way that this has been something like 'an implementation' of the theoretical and philosophical developments I have alluded to in the preceding paragraph. It sprang up, rather, in unexpected ways, at least for the traditional left, from very concrete practical occasions of rebellion, or, simply, of concern, like the early anti-nuclear movement in Western Europe, or the resistance to the draft in situations of colonial wars.
44. It is to be noted that the concept of a party as inherited from the Marxist tradition is not immediately applicable to such parliamentary parties: they neither are simply 'partisan movements' as the 'communist party' of the manifesto, nor strongly cohesive, disciplined political organisations of activists, as in Lenin's conception of a revolutionary party. They are a political phenomenon specific to a historical conjuncture in which, on the one hand, the social efficacy of the ideological system of dominating politics is so strong – which is rather simply verified by low ratios of abstentionism – , that there is no space for political organisation without it, and where, on the other hand, alternative political organizations which do not, or not

- entirely, conform to some main mechanisms of this dominating ideological system of politics and of the mass media linked to it, are not excluded from participating, by electoral devices (as in the UK) or by political interdictions (as in the case of KPD in the FRG).
45. Although their concrete social composition differs, none of these parties is, in a significant sense, except, maybe, ideologically, 'middle class'. All of them represent, in their activists as in their voters, rather certain strata or sectors of the working class the 'old' working class parties failed to organize in a significant way.
 46. After the FRG Greens had overcome the 5%-clause of electoral law, there was some discussion in right wing or conservative circles about how to eliminate them again – by opting for a first-past-the-post electoral system (which was unacceptable to the small liberal party, in government since 1969), or even by illegalizing the Greens, which would have made representative democracy a rather thinly disguised farce. Instead, the mass media mounted a continuous campaign against this radical opposition party, trying to block its message from passing, and putting all types of pressure on it to 'grow up', to 'accept the rules of the game'. So far, they have not prevailed.
 47. An institutional expression of this is the recent decision of the PCI to leave the Communist group of which it has so far been a member within the 'European Parliament', in order to join the socialist group, with the West-German SPD.
 48. I have tried to outline a theoretical approach to the links between capitalist accumulation and the ecological crisis in 'Actuel Marx', No. 3, Paris 1988.
 49. Even, when taking away the spurious argument from job (=income) security, which could be made irrelevant under non-capitalist social relations, those who are interested in producing some concrete 'use-values' will tend to underrate the cost in terms of risks and alterations this production may socially or ecologically imply. And this tendency will have to be counter-balanced by giving voice and influence to those concerned by these effects in such decisions on production.
 50. To be furthered by unilateral initiatives, as those asked for by the more radical peace movements, and, recently, tentatively put into practice by the Gorbachev administration.
 51. Of course, there is no reason to suppose that this opposition will not be overcome by a sufficiently radical social transformation. However, it may be presumed that a tension between those who support more expeditious ways of solving social conflicts, and those who defend a more radically non-violent way of acting them out will be a long-term constant of future human history – even after the institutionalized violence of the state as a form of social regulation has one day been overcome.
 52. Differences between ethnical traditions, however, between gender practices, and age-bound forms of life will certainly continue to be a constant of human social life – they only will have ceased to take the form of a struggle for elementary democratic rights, while 'race', which is itself an ideological category produced by racism, will in fact vanish from human history.
 53. I.e., basically, that any revolutionary action has to answer to the same standards of social rationality as any other action of human production, making allowance, of course, for its specific urgency.
 60. Non-violence, which had been a pacifist utopian idea in the past, therefore becomes, in a specific interpretation that does not close its eyes before the necessity of effectively countering state violence, a real issue even for revolutionary strategy and tactics.
 61. And if they do not rise to the occasions, others will try to make use of it, radicalizing the anti-democratic tendencies contained within dominating ideology itself in the direction of the new right that has begun to take shape over the last decade.