Protosocialism and Late Capitalism: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis Based on Bahro's Analysis

in: International Journal of Politics 10: 2/3, Rudolf Bahro: Critical Responses (Summer - Fall, 1980), pp. 25-48.

Bahro's significance for an analysis of late capitalism

The following text focuses on issues in Bahro's book that have a universal significance extending beyond his analysis of the GDR. This means that concepts articulated by him, which in his framework (that of "actually existing socialism") could not be further developed, can be shown to have relevance to late capitalism as well. The second part of this essay is my contribution to an analysis of those tendencies in late capitalism which correspond to the tendencies noted by Bahro in protosocialism. His book is not merely a critique of "actually existing socialism," it is at the same time a Marxist analysis of the transition period to integral socialism. It is the most important contribution to Marxist theory and practice to appear in several decades.

Bahro's transformation of method

When one says that much of Bahro's critique applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to late capitalism and that, *mutatis mutandis*, the alternative is valid for both social systems, this does not mean that Bahro outlines some sort of convergence theory. Rather, he has demonstrated that unity between progress and destruction, productivity and repression, gratification and want, which is rooted in the structures of both of these (very different) societies. This unity, which in very different forms, is common to both societies (and whose stabilizing potential Marxism has fatally underestimated), can be broken only in a socialism that does not yet actually exist.

Does "not yet" exist: thus the concrete utopia (and its mon-

strous negation in existing society) becomes the guiding thread of the empirical analysis. The empirical analysis itself reveals that the transcendence [*Aufhebung*] of utopia is an already existing, real possibility—indeed a necessity. The conclusive demonstration of this possibility is the result of a revolution in method: socialism shows itself to be a real possibility, and the basis of utopia is revealed in what already exists, only when the most extreme, integral, "utopian" conception of socialism informs the analysis. For it is not the abolition of private ownership of the means of production (though this remains the indispensable precondition of socialism) which as such determines the essential difference between the two systems; it is rather the way in which the material and intellectual forces of production are used.

> . . . the entire perspective under which we have so far seen the transition to communism stands in need of correction, and in no way just with respect to the time factor. The dissolution of private property in the means of production on the one hand, and universal human emancipation on the other, are separated by an entire epoch.[1]

Bahro finally breaks with the distinction (which has long since become a repressive ideology) between socialism and communism. Socialism *is* communism from the very beginning—and vice versa. The essence and goal of a socialist society—the "total individual," the encroachment of the realm of freedom into the realm of necessity—must (and can) already here and now become the project and guideline of communist policy and strategy.

This revolution in method in fact returns Marxism from ideology to theory—and to praxis. What transpires in the course of Bahro's analysis of class relations in the GDR is the recapturing of the concrete, its liberation from ideology. The absence of all jargon, of mere rumination over Marxist concepts (or better, words) testifies to the grounding of the analysis in social reality. Instead of stubbornly hanging onto theses that have long since become historically obsolete, Bahro's analysis develops the Marxian concepts in confrontation with the changed structure of the postcapitalist society of the GDR—and of late capitalism! A decisive result is that historical materialism makes a genuine advance: the relationship between base and superstructure is redefined, the focal point of the social dynamic is shifted from the objectivity of political economy to *subjectivity*, to consciousness as a potential material force for radical change.

> It [the human race—H.M.] must continue its ascent as a "journey inwards." The leap into the realm of freedom is conceivable only on the basis of a balance between the human species and its environment, with its dynamic decisively shifted toward the qualitative and subjective aspect.[2]

In this shift, Bahro sees socialism's "essentially aesthetic motivation, oriented to the totality and to the return of activities to the self."[3]

This marks the retrieval of the element of idealism originally in historical materialism: the liberation from the economy that is the aim of historical materialism. Historical materialism remains intact; it is the dynamic of the base itself, the organization of the ever-increasing productivity of labor, which makes the activity of self-emancipating subjectivity the focal point of change.

As Bahro's analysis proceeds it becomes apparent to what degree the turn toward subjectivity applies to late capitalism as well. Even more than in actually existing socialism, in the highly developed capitalist countries liberation has become contingent on the spread of a form of consciousness that is rooted in yet at the same time transcends the process of material production. Bahro calls this "surplus consciousness" [*überschüssiges Bewusstsein*]. It is "that free human [*psychische*] capacity which is no longer absorbed by the struggle for existence" which is to be translated into practice. The industrial, technological-scientific mode of production, in which intellectual labor becomes an essential factor, engenders in the producers (the "collective worker") qualities, skills, forms of imagination, and capacities for activity and enjoyment that are stifled or perverted in capitalist and repressive noncapitalist societies. These press beyond their inhuman realization toward a truly human one.

In the subjectivity of surplus consciousness, compensatory and emancipatory interests are forced together into a unity. Compensatory interests concern mainly the sphere of material goods: bigger and better consumption, careers, competition, profit, "status symbols," etc. They can (at least for the time being!) be satisfied within the framework of the existing system: they compensate for dehumanization. Thus, they contradict the emancipatory interests. Nonetheless, Bahro insists that compensatory interests cannot simply be reduced and rechanneled in the interest of emancipation; they are a form of the demand for happiness and gratification that is deeply rooted in the psyche. Through them, what exists re-

ceives its legitimation. The revolution cannot be carried through on the backs of the people; but the power of compensatory interests and their satisfaction stifles the realization of emancipatory interests. The revolution presupposes a rupture with this power—a rupture which in turn can only be the result of revolution!

This, then, is the vicious circle that recurs so often and is formulated in so many different ways in Bahro's book. It is the central historical problem of revolutionary theory in our time. Between today and tomorrow, between "unfreedom" and emancipation, lies not only the revolution but also the radical transformation of needs, the rupture with "subaltern" consciousness, the catastrophe of subjectivity. The contradiction between an overwhelming productivity and social wealth on the one hand, and its miserable and destructive uses on the other, is not propelled toward this catastrophe with the necessity of a historical law—not even when it is guided by a Marxist-Leninist strategy. The increase in productivity and the abolition of private ownership of the means of production do not have to lead to socialism: they do not necessarily break the chains of domination, the subjugation of human beings to labor. Bahro suggests that there is a tendency in Marx that implies such a continuity—the idea of ever-growing productivity and ever more efficient (and more egalitarian) production.

At the height of industrial civilization, subordination to labor is demanded by no other reason than the reason of the ruling class and the preservation of its power. In actually existing socialism, subjugation is justified by the lag in the economic, military, and technological competition with capitalism. But once a new form of domination is established, necessity is transformed into virtue: the "first stage" is prolonged into an indefinite future. The qualitative difference of a socialist society is lost, and all the more rapidly the more this socialism adopts the consumption model of the highly developed capitalist countries. Compensatory interests work against emancipation. The vicious circle exists in both societies. How can it be broken?

The economy of time, surplus consciousness, and the role of the intelligentsia

The question takes us back to Bahro's concept of "surplus consciousness" as a transforming power. This consciousness has its

material base in the scientific, technological mode of production, in its "intellectualization." At this stage, it is "embodied" (but not reflected) in the "intellectualized layers of the collective worker."[4] Beyond this, surplus consciousness exists in all strata of the dependent population, in an obstructed and inactive form. There is a dim awareness that there is no longer any need to live the way we do—that an alternative exists. This dim awareness becomes a certainty in the *catalyst* groups (the expression is my own—H.M.) of the opposition: the student movement, women's liberation, citizens' initiatives, concerned scientists, etc.

Wherever the great majority of the working class is integrated into the existing system, class relations tend toward an *elitist* structure in which the intelligentsia plays a leading role as a part of the collective worker. Bahro defends the provocative thesis that the intellectualized layers "set the tone" during the preparatory and transitional period and that they assume a leading role in the reconstruction of society.[5]

The intelligentsia plays a leading role for two reasons:

1. More than ever before, knowledge is power. Information about the scientific and technological, economic and psychological mechanisms that reproduce the developed industrial society gives the possessors of such information knowledge of the objective possibilities for change. Of course, knowledge alone is not enough to realize this potentiality. But the intelligentsia does not function in isolation. It is the process of production itself which becomes "intellectualized," and in it the intellectualized strata play an increasingly important role. In the GDR they are a part of the apparatus that controls the means of production; and among them (according to Bahro) there is a considerable opposition to the dictatorship of the political bureaucracy.

2. For the intelligentsia, the realization of their compensatory interests is no longer a matter of daily concern. They share with the party functionaries the high-level privileges in the material and intellectual culture. In capitalist countries this is the case only to a very limited degree, and then only for a small circle of more or less conformist intelligentsia. The majority of the not-so-privileged strata at least have the privilege of education, which can open the otherwise closed horizon of knowledge that transcends the existing state of things.

The creation of the space and time required for the development

of emancipatory interests beyond the material sphere, which today determines all and everything, is the task of socialist education and a socialist division of labor. Even in its transitional period, socialism is basically a problem of the *economy of time*. The new distribution and organization of labor aims at reversing the proportional amount of time spent in necessary and in emancipatory labor in the interests of the "total individual." Insofar as this redistribution of time on an overall social scale also requires a radical reorganization of *necessary* labor (Bahro gives very concrete suggestions for such a reorganization), the new economy of time would amount to the emergence of the realm of freedom *within* the realm of necessity. And insofar as it would be carried out throughout all strata of the society, it would demolish the privileged position of the intelligentsia by universalizing it.

Domination, state, and antistate

Bahro rejects any conception of the transitional period that purports to be able to dispense with a communist party, a bureaucracy, and the state, as anarchism and adventurist left radicalism. He even speaks of the state as the "taskmaster of society in its technical and social modernization"[6]—modernization meaning the creation of emancipatory institutions. Such a state would be a "taskmaster" in the form of a truly universal educational system, embracing the material as well as the intellectual culture, and having as its goal the liberation of needs from their class-determined psychic base. The absence of initiative among the masses and the absorption of the working class into the prevailing system of compensatory needs rob the idea of the "withering away of the state" of its empirical historical rationale. Socialism must create its own antistate and its own system of administration. "People and functionaries—this is the unavoidable dichotomy of every proto-socialist society."[7] Only the *proto*socialist? That would be a reversion to the two-stages theory.

Bahro's conception seems to imply that universality will still be institutionalized even in a fully developed socialist society: the antistate as state. The state is *anti*state insofar as it contributes to the further unfolding of emancipatory needs and gives wider play to spontaneity and individual autonomy; it is *state* inasmuch as it organizes this process in the interests of society as a whole (in setting priorities, distributing work, education, etc.), and indeed

does so with a binding authority legitimated by the people. In the antistate the dialectic of the autonomy and dependency of needs repeats itself: The socialist state "makes note of" the needs of individuals in the form in which they appear within the prevailing system of needs and "transcends" them [*hebt sie auf*] in new emancipatory forms, which then in turn become the individuals' own needs.

Bahro sees the requisite rational hierarchy still needed even under integral socialism as the counter-image of the established apparatus of domination in actually existing socialism. He envisages a democratically constituted and controlled hierarchy from the base to the top. At the summit, this hierarchy becomes a dual power [*Doppelherrschaft*]: the communist party and a "league of communists." The latter would be independent of the party, recruited from those members of the intelligentsia in all strata of society whose consciousness is most advanced. This league is the brain of the whole: a democratic elite, with a decisive voice in the discussion of plans, education, the redistribution of work, etc.

The inertia and powerlessness of the masses, their dependency, manifested in the dichotomy "ruling class—people" in the capitalist countries, and the dichotomy "bureaucrat—people" in actually existing socialism, gives rise to an almost inevitable tendency for the top level to become autonomous. Bahro examines this tendency where it has already evolved into full-fledged domination: in protosocialist society. He believes that this tendency may be counteracted by the gradual building up of a kind of *council organization* (self-management, cooperatives) whose rudimentary forms already exist within the existing system. He shows convincingly that the traditional concept of social democracy is too exclusively oriented to the sphere of material production and hence remains the representative of particular interests. The situation under protosocialism (and under late capitalism—H.M.) with its expanded working class in which the intelligentsia is a decisive factor in the production process, should make it possible to broaden council democracy. A relatively small number of scientists, technicians, engineers, and indeed even media agents could, if organized, disrupt the reproduction process of the system and perhaps even bring it to a standstill. But "that's not the way things are." It is precisely their integration [*Einordnung*] into the production

process, to say nothing of their privileged income, that works against the radicalization of this group. Nevertheless, the social position of these groups gives them a leading role in the revolution.

During its preparatory and transitional periods, the revolution requires a leadership that can *stand up against* the compensatory interests of the masses as well. It too must face up to the necessity of repression, repression of "subaltern consciousness," unreflected spontaneity, and bourgeois and petit bourgeois egoism.

Obviously, at this central point, Bahro's analysis falls back on a position that has been tabooed by both Marxism and liberalism: Plato's position (an educational dictatorship of the most intelligent) and Rousseau's (people must be forced to be free). In fact, the educational function of the socialist state is inconceivable without a recognized authority; for Bahro that authority is grounded in an elite of intelligence. However consistently Bahro may insist that the league as well as the party leadership must come from all social groups and remain accountable to the people at all levels, the scandal remains and must be sustained.

The question of the subject of the revolution

It is precisely here—where Bahro's interpretation of socialism is so vulnerable to defamation and ridicule—that the full radicalism of his approach, and his fidelity to Marxian theory, stand out clearly. The question of the *subject of the revolution*, which the integration of the working class has put on the agenda, finds its answer here on the level of actual historical development. The fetishism that says that the working class, by virtue of its "ontological position," is predestined by the iron logic of economic and political development to be the subject of the revolution—this stipulated unity between the logical and the historical (according to which "what appears as finished from the logical point of view must immediately be historically finished too"[8])—this fetishism is abolished not by dictum but by the course of history itself. "The fact has since become quite evident enough that the proletariat cannot be a ruling class."[9] In capitalist countries the working class is "too narrow a base for transforming society (do not specifically working class interests often even play a conservative role?)."[10] The radical turn toward emancipatory interests lies beyond the reach of subaltern consciousness; it takes place as part of a process of "internal emancipation," as a condition for external

emancipation. Given the social conditions of the class (alienating "full-time" labor, exclusion from educational privilege, unemployment), only a minority can accomplish this rupture.

No particular class can be the subject of the universal emancipation which has become possible at the present historical stage. The identity between the proletariat and the universal interest has been superseded—if indeed it ever existed at all. Universal emancipation is today no longer a question of "securing the material basis of existence," although this remains the "unalterable presupposition" of emancipation. The problem is rather: what sort of existence? It is a matter of the reconciliation of human beings and nature, of nonalienated labor as creative activity, the creation of human relationships freed from the struggle for existence. It is a matter of rending asunder the beguiling coherence of aggression and destruction. It is a matter of

> the potentially comprehensive appropriation of the essential human powers objectified in other individuals, in objects, modes of behavior and relationships, their transformation into subjectivity, into a possession . . . of the intellectual and ethical individuality, which presses in its turn for more productive transformation.[11]

This is orthodox Marxism: the "universal individual" as the goal of socialism. Bahro's revolutionary method transposes the ultimate goal to the beginning. Inasmuch as he consistently conceives of the revolution as a "cultural revolution," he invests it from the outset with a meaning totally different from the Maoist sense of this concept with regard to subjectivity and its demands for happiness and the possibilities of happiness. Even the very first measures of socialist construction should free human beings from the "extensive dynamic of the economy." The fundamental measures in this direction are: universal participation in simple work; shortening of psychologically unproductive labor time within the necessary labor time; definition of needs, differentiating only with regard to age, sex, and talent.[12] Once again the libertarian idealism which announces the *telos* of historical materialism, finds expression:

> The problem is to drive forward the "overproduction" of consciousness, so as to put the whole historical past "on its head," and make the idea into the *decisive* material force, to guide things to a radical transformation that goes still deeper than the customary transition from one forma-

> tion to another within one and the same civilization. What we are now facing, and what has in fact already begun, is a *cultural revolution* in the truest sense of the term: a *transformation of the entire subjective form of life of the masses*. . . .[13]

Bahro repudiates unequivocally the simplistic argument that a country having to engage in more or less hostile competition with the economically and militarily stronger capitalist countries cannot afford the construction of an integral socialism. This is said to be the situation of actually existing socialism with regard to Western capitalism. Bahro answers with a generally repressed yet nonetheless illuminating hypothesis: The situation could be just the reverse, namely, the construction of a free socialist society could exert a "transforming pressure" on Western countries.[14]

Bahro's analysis implies the provocative thesis that socialist strategy is essentially the same before and after the revolution. The cultural revolution is a total transformation, but even before the revolution, its collective subject is oriented in its consciousness and its behavior toward the final goal. This is what occurs in the praxis of *catalyst groups* in all strata of the population, albeit in forms that are more or less isolated from the society as a whole and hence are precarious and often unauthentic. The work of these groups is essentially to demystify and enlighten—in theory and practice. Here again the focus of revolution is on subjectivity. The goal of giving "*priority* to the all-round development of human beings" and "to the increase in their positive capacities for happiness"[15] already determines the elementary stages of subjective emancipation. Rather than serving as a means of escape and privatization of the political, of pottering about with and mollycoddling the ego, the "journey inwards" serves to politicize surplus consciousness and imagination:

> For much as the "journey inwards," the internalization of individual existence, involves a component of emotional abstraction from everything objective, its fundamental content naturally is and remains the same overcoming of alienation, the same metamorphosis of the civilization created by our species, that Hegel saw as the major work of the subjective spirit.[16]

Political education requires a radical "mental upswing," an "emotional uplift," which "particularly inspires the majority of young people directly at the level of the political and philosophical ideal."[17]

The revolution of subjectivity is the revolution of needs which Bahro sees as the precondition of universal emancipation. The main tendency of such a revolution of needs is clearly indicated: "away from the appropriation of the material means of subsistence and enjoyment that is characterized principally by consumption" and "towards the appropriation of culture"; in other words, the "far-reaching elimination of material incentives."[18] The domination of compensatory interests, which reproduce material incentive over and over again, must be broken: not through a policy of reducing consumption but through a "genuine equalization in the distribution of those consumer goods which determine the standard of living." In all the talk about the insatiability of human needs, Bahro sees only a "reaction to existing conditions."

The reconciliation of material and intellectual culture *within* material culture requires the *abolition* of the performance principle with regard to income distribution, and its *realization* with respect to the development of nonalienated creative work and nonalienated enjoyment. The reduction of necessary labor time and the burden of alienated labor makes possible this reversal; it also heals the rift between subjectivity and objectivity by the "opening up of a general space for freedom for self-realization and growth in personality in the realm of necessity itself,"[19] and through the incorporation of nature into this free space.

Bahro ridicules the anxiety among the New (and Old) Left over reintroducing bourgeois, or even petit bourgeois concepts such as personality, mind, and inwardness into Marxism; indeed, it is within Marxism that these concepts can be authentically transcended. He wastes no words on the reproach of idealistic deviations, etc. He uses these terms, not in order to rescue once again the humanistic young Marx, but in order to develop the transcending content of the categories of political economy. Exploitation, surplus value, profit, abstract labor, are not only categories of inhumanity that have acquired objective form under capitalism; they are also the negation of that inhumanity by that socialism which has now become an objective possibility. The realization of this socialism, which is blocked under capitalism, is the object of the cultural revolution.

The cultural revolution encompasses the ethical and aesthetic dimensions as well. Bahro makes only a suggestive allusion to the ethics of personal relations: Eros, education and marriage are, as

far as possible, to be brought "into harmony with one another."[20] Aesthetic motivation becomes operative in

> . . . a shift of priorities away from the exploitation of nature by material production towards the adaptation of production to the natural cycle, from expanded reproduction to simple reproduction, from the raising of labor productivity to care for the conditions and culture of labor. . . .[21]

Production also "according to the laws of beauty" (Marx). The precondition for this is a science and technology suited to human beings and nature.

It is time to pose the key question: Assuming that Bahro's theory of the foundation of socialism has been conceptually and empirically demonstrated, how can the transition from the existing order be conceived? Revolution remains the precondition: now more than ever before, it is true that a revolution is necessary to obtain reforms. For the countries of actually existing socialism, where private ownership of the means of production has been abolished, the fall of the dictatorship of the political bureaucracy would already be the first revolution. Bahro believes that the opposition within the bureaucracy is widespread enough for such an overthrow to be a real possibility. But what is the situation in the capitalist countries, whose objective "ripeness' for revolution has long since been recognized? Both question and answer lie beyond the bounds of Bahro's analysis, but it provides some important indications.

A summing up of the critique of the Marxist-Leninist model of revolution

Today it is evident to what degree the Marxist-Leninist model for revolution has become historically obsolete. There are two major reasons for this:

1. In countries where the ruling class has at its disposal strong military and paramilitary organizations equipped with the most advanced weaponry, and on whose loyalty it can count, armed rebellions and seizure of power by the revolutionary masses are beyond the realm of real possibility. This is the case in the most highly developed countries.

2. With its tremendous productivity, late capitalism has created a broad material basis for the integration of diverse interests within the dependent population. The very concept of revolutionary masses has become questionable for these countries. This does not

mean that the (expanded) working class has "made its peace" with the system. The policy of economic cooperation and confrontation may very well become political and yet not transcend the system itself in the direction of socialism. The tendency is rather toward a new *populism*; a popular rather than class opposition, for which armed uprising is not on the horizon, to say nothing of the seizure of power.

Toward an analysis of late capitalism and a new concept of revolution

Working class, intelligentsia, the collective worker, and the people

Is it possible to develop another model of revolution on the basis of the current tendencies in class relations?

The construction of such a model requires that we revise the traditional Marxian concept of class, and proceeding from there, that we develop a concept appropriate to late capitalism. This is especially necessary for the concept of the working class. It is sufficient to briefly mention the well-known facts:

1. The nonidentity of the working class and the proletariat. Into the twentieth century, "proletariat" remained the orthodox and official Marxian term for the working class. But integral to the Marxian concept is the misery, the deprivation of rights, the negation of bourgeois society, by virtue of which the proletariat is not a class of this society. For today's working class this is no longer true.

2. According to Marx, the proletariat constitutes the majority of the population in developed capitalism. The category of workers which today most closely corresponds to the proletariat, that is, those directly engaged in the process of material production, no longer comprises the majority.[22]

3. The restriction of the concept of "working class" to "productive" workers, i.e., to those who create surplus value, is untenable. The creation and realization of surplus value are not two separate processes, but rather two phases and stages of the same overall process: the accumulation of capital.

4. In late capitalism the separation between manual and intellectual labor has been diminished by the "intellectualization" of the labor process itself, and by the growing number of intellectuals employed in that process. White-collar workers, salaried employees, even those who are "unproductive," whose incomes are often lower than those of blue-collar workers, belong to the working class insofar as they do not share decision-making power over the means of production. But even the more highly paid white-collar workers in the distribution and administrative processes belong to the working class: they are divorced from the means of production and sell their labor power to capital or its institutions. This *expanded* working class comprises the great majority of the population.

5. Class consciousness? The (expanded) working class is itself split into manifold layers, with very different, and in some cases opposing, interests. The trend is toward a dominance of compensatory interests, which seek satisfaction through active or passive participation in the system. Petit bourgeois rather than radical consciousness prevails.

In fact, late capitalism has expanded the labor necessary for its reproduction through the growth of the sector comprising the middle layers between the small class that actually rules and the industrial workers. The society reproduces itself by generating more and more unproductive work and spreading it throughout the population. The fundamental contradiction between capital and labor continues to exist in all its sharpness, but in this period it has become totalized: almost the entirety of the dependent population is "labor" in opposition to capital. This would also redeem the Marxian concept of a socialist revolution as a transformation carried through by the majority of the population.

This dichotomy characterizes late capitalist society, which is reproduced by the "*collective worker*" and controlled by a small clique. The collective worker becomes the *people*, constituted by the dependent layers of the population. Within this unity contradictions are rife. There is no people's consciousness [*Volksbewusstsein*] which would correspond to a class consciousness. The various compensatory interests extend over the full range of material and intellectual culture, from radicalism to conservatism and fascism, from the will to achieve to the desire to abolish work. Democratic integration allows for such a differentiation within the unity of dependency. Can the interest in a *universal* emancipation burst forth within it?

In all likelihood, social reproduction at the customary level of consumption will become ever more difficult: late capitalism itself gives rise to oversaturation of the market and the increasing difficulty of accumulation. The system will become more repressive and will bring the contradiction between the capitalist mode of production and the real possibilities of liberation ever more explosively into consciousness.

Class consciousness and rebellious subjectivity

Whose consciousness? Not the consciousness of a particular class (the industrial proletariat in late capitalism *is* a particular class within the all-embracing totality of "the people"), but the consciousness of individuals from all strata. Just as universal emancipation, in accordance with its *telos*, aims at the emancipation-in-solidarity [*solidarische Befreiung*] of the individual as individual, so the preparation for that emancipation is also grounded in individuals: individuals from all strata, who, despite all differences, constitute a potential unity by virtue of their common interest. They are the potential subject of an oppositional *praxis*, which is often still concentrated in and limited to unorganized groups and movements. Here, in these groups and movements, exists the "*collective intellectual.*"

Bahro defines the collective intellectual primarily in terms of the otherness of a consciousness and an instinctual structure, which rebel against subjugation and press toward a renunciatory praxis. A quite unacademic definition, but one devoid of that ever popular and cheap ridicule of eggheads, armchair socialists, etc., which has always served to defame the concrete utopia and to sacrifice the idea of revolution to the existing order.

The diffuse, almost organizationless opposition of the collective intellectual has no mass base, and the charge of elitism and voluntarism is all too easy. This is the expression of a fetishism of the masses and stands in direct contradiction to the history of revolutionary movements under capitalism, which have acquired their mass base only in the process of revolution itself. The basis on which the initiative of the masses can become a determining force for socialist emancipation emerges out of an antistate politics which from the very outset implements measures that deprive the traditional mentality and its affirmation of their social foundation, in the first place (as already mentioned) through a radical reorganization of labor (abolition of its hierarchical organization) and a new

"economy of time." But, if the principle of self-determination is otherwise to remain a leading principle, this means that centralization must be abolished; to be reconstituted, however, as the institution of the *plan*, which represents and serves the general interest. This centralization is the nucleus of socialist dictatorship; in it, necessary and surplus repression are forced together.

The intelligentsia can fulfill its preparatory function only if it preserves its own surplus consciousness, in which the existing order is concretely transcended. Its prerevolutionary potential and its ambivalent, often contradictory relationship to the masses is rooted in the structure of society. The privilege of education, the result of the separation between intellectual and manual labor, isolates the intelligentsia from the masses. However, this has also given it the opportunity to think freely, to learn, to understand the facts in their social context, and—to transmit this knowledge. This opportunity must be won in struggle against the institutionalized education system (and on its terrain!). Participation in the privilege of education is today a question not only of income but also of *time*, which the masses, exploited full time, do not have at their disposal. Democratization of the educational system must therefore go hand in hand with a reduction in labor time. Democratization does not require the popularization of learning and knowledge. This has always led to a leveling of the transcendent content of thought, the enervation of surplus consciousness and emancipatory interests, and has served to reproduce the existing order. Rather, the human beings who are imprisoned in their societies, must be brought to the point where they can make unmutilated knowledge and imagination their own—which in turn already presupposes the revolution.

Knowledge and the communication of knowledge have evolved within a horizon of social relations which codetermine the course of research and inquiry. Theoretical and applied science are two phases in the same process; in late capitalism the difference between the two is reduced by the growing role of intellectual labor in the process of material production. Accordingly, it has become necessary to broaden the privilege of education through "general education." Hand in hand with the democratization, however, goes a decline in the emancipatory power of knowledge. A large number of the achievements of science and technology have benefited aggression and destruction, or have served as gadgets, as toys,

and sports for the compensatory interests of the dependent population and their gratification, and have reinforced subaltern consciousness.

Instinctual structure and revolution

The unity of progress and repression facilitates the management of the politico-economic contradictions within the global structure of late capitalism. The question "For how much longer?" cannot be answered rationally: theory is not prophecy. Nonetheless, it remains true (and the facts point in the general direction) that capitalism produces its own gravediggers. However, these are no longer the proletariat, but the collective worker, and the consciousness dammed up within it—rebellious subjectivity. Just as capitalist progress itself creates the objective conditions for its own abolition (structural unemployment, saturation of the market, inflation, intracapitalist conflicts, competition with communism . . .), so it creates the *subjective* conditions as well. "Surplus consciousness" is only one component of subjectivity: its emancipatory interest extends to the knowledge of what is happening now and what must happen, but the domination of compensatory interests prevents the translation of consciousness into practice. The subjective side of the revolution is not only a matter of consciousness, and of action guided by knowledge; it is also a question of the emotions, of instinctual structure, at each of the two levels of change: (a) the radical critique of things as they are; (b) the positive and concrete anticipation of freedom, i.e., the presence of the goal in the here and now of life.

The sociohistorical "ripeness" of subjective conditions includes not only political consciousness, but also the vital, existential *need* for a revolution, anchored in the instinctual structure of individuals; it includes (at least in the twentieth century), not only the will to survive and prosper, but also the cessation of the struggle for existence, of enslaving production, and the endless process of exchange; in short, the desire for a *joyous* freedom, for self-determination.

To say that something is anchored in the instinctual structure (assuming the truth of Freudian theory) is to say that in class society the revolution is "invested" with Eros' drive for emancipation from socially determined surplus repression, for gratification and intensification of the life instincts. (Primary civilizing repres-

sion, such as the incest taboo, toilet training, and certain forms of social intercourse, are no longer obstacles to emancipation.) The essential demands of the revolution—abolition of alienated labor, equal opportunities for self-determination, pacification of nature, solidarity—thus have an *erotic basis* in subjectivity (just as fascism has its roots in the destructive character structure). Society, and emancipation as a sociohistorical process, act through Eros itself—in sharp distinction to sexuality and sexual liberation, which can take place just as well within class society. The unfolding of the life instincts, Eros, requires social change, revolution; the revolution requires the instinctual foundation.

Social change is not merely a change in human nature; it is also a change in external nature. The kind of nature that is suitable to capitalism may very well turn out to be an insurmountable *limit* of the system. To be sure, it is very efficiently subordinated to the interests of capital, but there remains an unmastered residue that could become decisive for further development.

The natural limits of capitalism become visible in those protest movements in which nature becomes a potential force for the transformation of society. Nature becomes such a force as the concrete counter-image of its incorporation into the capitalist production process, and not only in the sense that the organized defense of nature threatens the profits of big industry and the interests of the military. In the rebellion against nuclear energy and the general poisoning of the environment, the struggle for nature is at the same time a struggle against the existing society, while the protection of nature is at the same time a challenge to capital.

But even apart from this, the ecology movement has psychological roots as well. Nature, experienced as the domain of happiness, fulfillment, and gratification, is the environment of Eros—the antithesis of the performance principle applied to nature. This antithesis (for the most part unarticulated, and even repressed) is also alive in the women's movement. The performance principle is the historically developed form of patriarchal domination. To be sure, socialist society will also have its performance principle—the negation of the present one. It would determine precisely that dimension of social life which is devalued or blocked under capitalism: competition in the unfolding and enjoyment of the creative faculties of individuals and the creation of preconditions

for using the scientific-technical achievements of capitalism in the service of the common interest, instead of in the service of the private interests of capital. Under capitalism, the overcoming of the performance principle appears only in false garb, embodied in the contrasts and fantasies that have become stylized as "woman's nature" (receptivity, sensitivity, emotional capacity, closeness to nature, etc.). These images reveal the biopsychological dimension of the women's movement. Latent in women's struggle for true equality and equal rights, for universal emancipation in all domains of culture, is the rebellion of nature which has been made into an object.

The anti-authoritarian movement, the ecology movement, and the women's movement have intrinsic links with one another: they are the manifestation (still very unorganized and diffuse) of an instinctual structure, the ground of a transformed consciousness which is shaking the domination of the performance principle and of alienated productivity.[23] This opposition thus mobilizes the forces of revolution in a dimension which has been neglected by Marxism (and not only by Marxism), a dimension that could halt capitalist progress in the late stage of its development: rebellious human and external nature.

In reestablishing nature as a factor in political praxis these movements distinguish themselves fundamentally from the escapist movements in the New Left, where nature, elevated to absolute status, becomes the criterion of a nonalienated, authentic existence. The escapist movements invoke nature (both inner and external) against intellect, immediacy against reflection. They cultivate the very dichotomy that is supposed to be abolished in the process of emancipation. The cult of immediacy is reactionary: it is a retreat from nature as a force in the social dynamic (as subject-object), and a reversion to nature as pure subjectivity, which as such already represents the true and the good against the false and the evil in society. But in pure immediacy the false and the evil are not overcome, they are only repressed or shifted onto others.

The "theses on the alternative and escapist movements" criticize this ambivalence, which prevails throughout the movement:

> The criterion of political action has long since ceased to be correct theoretical analysis, in particular, a critical analysis of the economy; it has

> been replaced by the subjective experiences of the respective individuals. Thus one wants to experience, preferably in one's own person, that for which one is supposed to act. However, what at one stage had represented an extremely important politicizing and critical factor with regard to orthodoxy and dogmatism, has today been transformed into a problematic cult of needs in many areas. No longer accessible to theoretical analysis and rejecting every irritating element of reflection, experience has been reduced to the average quantum of emotional stimuli. It has thus lost its refractory quality and to a large extent it has become amenable to integration. Thus absolutized, experience has been transformed from a medium of autonomy into a medium of integration and adaptation.[24]

The proposition that capitalist domination and exploitation of nature is *eo ipso* domination and exploitation of human beings as well, can now be put more concretely. Capitalist progress is the transformation of nature under the principle of increased productivity and profitability. Nature becomes mere objectivity: a universe of things and relations among things, whose *telos* is service in the process of production and reproduction (nature as organized re-creation). This requires the suppression of nature as resistance to the performance principle. Since inner and external nature constitute a (historical) totality, the performance principle operates *against* Eros' striving to develop itself in the life-world, against emancipation from the omnipotence of alienated labor. Hence the increasingly internalized repression imposed by society on human beings. Nature must be destroyed, it must be assimilated to the destructive society. That nature which is still whole (although not immune to the possibility of its own destruction), must not be allowed to become a countercultural life-world in which individuals find happiness and fulfillment in opposition to the well-being provided by society. But the more obvious the possibilities created by capitalism for emancipation from the performance principle become, and the more the expanded reproduction of capitalism propels the destruction of nature, the more pressing becomes the overactivation of destructive energies. The "blend" of the two primary drives becomes denser: Eros itself seems to be charged with an aggressivity that individuals often direct against their own bodies (rock and punk music, brutality in sports, drugs . . .).

The anchoring of the opposition in an emancipatory instinctual structure should make possible *qualitative* change, the totality

of the revolution. But the development of an emancipatory instinctual structure is only conceivable as a social process, and it is precisely this process which produces and reproduces the repressive instinctual structure that internalizes capitalism. Again, the vicious circle: How can an emancipatory instinctual structure emerge in and against a repressive society whose rulers (unlike the opposition) have long since learned to mobilize the psyche?

Only personal *experience* [*Erlebnis*], the experience of individuals that breaks through subaltern consciousness, leads or forces the individual to see and feel things and people in a different way, to think other thoughts. Bahro quotes Gorky:

> Everything unusual prevents people from living the way they would wish. Their aspirations, when they have such, are never for fundamental change in their social habits, but always simply for more of the same. The basic theme of all their moans and complaints is: "Don't stop us from living the way we're accustomed!" Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was a man who knew like no one before him how to stop people living their accustomed life.[25]

The development of the instinctual structure is linked throughout to that of consciousness: erotic and destructive energies are realized within already existing social frameworks. The instinctual structure becomes emancipatory only in union with an emancipatory *consciousness* which defines the possibilities and limits of this realization and absorbs that which is merely instinctual into itself.

The social process of revolution begins in those individuals for whom emancipation has become a vital need. However, it is just these individuals who have advanced beyond the Ego. The emancipatory instinctual structure makes *solidarity* the force of the life instincts. Although they are "value free," the primary drives themselves already imply other human beings. This holds true for Eros and for destructive energy alike. They contain the universal: they are drives of the individual, but of the individual as "species being."

The foundational experience [*Erfahrung*] which roots the need to refuse in the psyche of individuals, thus never remains at the level of personal subjective experience [*Erlebnis*], the level of an immediate relation to the self. In the Ego the "journey inwards" encounters others and the Other (society and nature) not as mere limits to the Ego but as powers constitutive of it. The foundational immediate experience, in which relevance for the concrete individ-

ual could serve as the verifying criterion, is such only as *mediated* immediacy, and the behavior that motivates this experience is that of a comprehending subjectivity that goes beyond the Ego. "Politics in the first person" is a contradiction *in adjecto*. The journey inwards is necessary, because the dynamic of Ego and Id is obscured by efficient social control and because individuality itself becomes a commodity under late capitalism.[26] If, however, the journey stops at the unmediated Ego, and the manifestations of that Ego are proclaimed as authentic, the journey falls short of its goal; it succumbs to the fetishism of the commodity world and the counterculture built up on that basis becomes part and parcel of the established culture.

In conclusion, I have emphasized the ambivalence in the turn toward subjectivity. Here too there is the danger of making a virtue of necessity. The necessity resides in the isolation of the radical emancipation movements (especially the socialist ones) from the masses and in the structural weakness of these movements in the face of the material and ideological might of the established apparatus of domination. In the light of this constellation, protest and rebellion beyond (or this side of) the political and economic class struggle appear as *retreat*. This holds even for the militant opposition within the industrial working class (local self-management, factory takeovers, wildcat strikes). Compared with the great mass actions in the history of the labor movement, these seem to be feeble trailings of a revolutionary tradition.

But the appearance is not the whole. Movements such as the worker opposition, citizens' initiatives, communes, student protests, are authentic forms of rebellion determined by the particular social situation, counter-blows against the centralization and totalization of the apparatus of domination. Not being strong enough to oppose this apparatus with an effective centralized force of its own, the rebellion concentrates itself in local and regional bases, where there is still a certain latitude and freedom of movement and room to act. And precisely this retrogression *anticipates* the objective tendencies toward disintegration in the existing society, namely the crumbling away of the system as a result of the formation of economic and social units of autonomous control. Such a development would mean that the concept of "the masses" had indeed been transcended, and hence that one aspect of liberation

had already been achieved: a mode of life in which individuals feel and act in solidarity with one another.

Summary

Bahro's analysis breaks through the fetishism of Marxist pseudo-orthodoxy and the counterculture of immediacy. His dialectical analysis leads to an authentic "internal" advance of Marxist theory, informed by the comprehended reality. The radicalism of its perceptions is primarily revealed in the following key points of theory and praxis:

1) The rejection of the Marxist-Leninist model of proletarian revolution, which has long since been surpassed in advanced industrial society (seizure of power by the revolutionary masses, dictatorship of the proletariat). The elaboration of a new model corresponding to real social trends.

2) A new definition of class relations (both in actually existing socialism and in late capitalism); the expanded working class; the proletariat as a minority in it; the integration and extension of dependency; the transformation of the working class into the "people"; its conservatism.

3) The key role of the intelligentsia in the transitional period, corresponding to its position in the process of production. The fetishism of the masses.

4) The shift of the focal point of the social dynamic onto subjectivity; the "journey inwards" and its ambivalence; consciousness as a revolutionary force.

5) The new formulation (and answer?) of the question of the subject of the revolution—the consequence of point 2.

6) The demonstration that integral socialism is a real possibility if decisive measures are implemented (redistribution of work and income, gradual abolition of the performance principle, a democratic educational system, a council system expanded beyond the factory . . .). The new economy as an economy of time: progressive reduction of socially necessary labor time. The realm of freedom *within* the realm of necessity.

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Translation revised by Erica Sherover Marcuse.

Notes

1. Rudolf Bahro, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* (London: New Left Books, 1978), p. 21.
2. Ibid., p. 266.
3. Ibid., p. 288.
4. Ibid., p. 329.
5. Ibid., pp. 400, 329.
6. Ibid., p. 129.
7. Ibid., p. 241.
8. Ibid., p. 44.
9. Ibid., p. 196.
10. Ibid., p. 258. An alternative rendering of this passage: "do not specific working class interests play, ever more frequently, a basically conservative role?"—E.S.M.
11. Ibid., p. 272.
12. Ibid., p. 415.
13. Ibid., p. 257. An alternative rendering of the first part of this passage: "It is a matter of forcing the 'overproduction' of consciousness so as to stand the historical process 'on its head,' and making the idea into the *decisive* material force. Things are tending toward a radical transformation from one system to another within one and the same civilization."—E.S.M.
14. Ibid., p. 431.
15. Ibid., p. 406.
16. Ibid., p. 267.
17. Ibid., p. 375. An alternative rendering of this passage: "Political education requires a radical 'psychic impetus' [*Aufschwung*], an 'emotional uplifting' [*Erhebung*], which raises the majority of the youth in particular directly onto the plane of the politico-philosophical ideal."—E.S.M.
18. Ibid., pp. 402ff.
19. Ibid., p. 406. An alternative rendering of this passage: by "opening up a general free space for the self realization and growth of personality in the realm of necessity as well."—E.S.M.
20. Ibid., p. 291.
21. Ibid., p. 407.
22. In 1972, 60% of the gainfully employed in the USA were in the services sector. The Congressional Joint Economic Committee estimates a figure of 80% for 1980 (cited in Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, and Al Goodman, in *In These Times*, October 18-24, 1978).
23. See my article "Marxism and Feminism," in *Zeitmessungen*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1975.
24. Wolfgang Kraushaar, in *Autonomie oder Ghetto?* (Neue Kritik Publishers, Frankfurt/M, 1978), pp. 45f.
25. Bahro, p. 100.
26. Kraushaar, pp. 37ff.