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TRANSNATIONAL HIGH-TECH-CAPITALISM AND THE FUTURE(S) OF MARXISM¹

Philosophical reflections on the materiality of the present history

[*Gegenwartsgeschichte*]

If David Harvey is right, the term >Globalisation< derives from *American Express* advertising itself as the >global credit card<. This genealogy would fit well, since a decisive trump card which the world capital centres have played is that of global credit. The >big bang< of globalisation however needed a basic techno-structure in order to occur. To include this dimension which is often treated in a step-motherly way if not simply skipped, is one purpose of the following sketch. Another, to look at some tendencies of the contradictory remoulding of global relations of production as well as at possible consequences for Marxist theory and politics.

1. THE QUESTION: CAPITALISM + COMPUTER = ?

The facts which I shall mention are known to everybody who follows the events. Capital changes the world at high speed. Our task will be to interpret the alterations, to correlate facts, and find words for these correlations. Our starting point can be Marx's famous statement in *The Poverty of Philosophy*:

>Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the

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feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist.< (CW 6, 166)

For us, the question is: Which kind of society does the computer give us? For the computer is the hegemonic technology or better *the crucial force of productivity* of our epoch, the *universal meta-machine*. Basically, the computer allowed the automation of monotonous repetitive physical labour as well as of those intellectual activities which can be transformed into algorithms. Some might object: >Why the computer?< Aren't there many more new technologies such as >bio-tech< or >nano-tech<? Yes, but these and many other micro- and macro-technologies owe their existence to the computer plus the group of technologies which together constitute automation. Indeed, the prehistory of today's high-tech is the history of automation during the second half of 20th century. More than a key technology, the computer is the key to all key technologies, bringing a whole group of 'high' technologies into being: restructuring production and distribution, research, ways of life, including sexuality, training and entertainment, and last but not least: the ways and means of waging war. The role of the information technologies for the totality of social life can be compared to the role of the nervous system for our organism. In a nutshell: the computer provided the techno-basis for globalization itself. To be sure, >computer< represents here all kinds of computer-based or -assisted applications. These, however, are still in a irresistible process of further development. I don't want to cross the border to Science fiction here and shall confine myself to one of the emerging flexibility technologies as an example: During the last two decades we got used to the use of barcodes in retail transactions which had been unimaginable before. Now, the barcode still needs human activity, because it is passive. The marked object has to be moved to the terminals which can >read< the bar codes. Presently, this passive registering technology is supplanted by an interactive one. Script gives way to the chip-transmitter. Another gap in the physical chain of automation is about to be closed, the bell will soon toll for another human stop-gap activity.²

² This emerging technology, similar to the truck toll technology, is called RFID (Radio Frequency

If the productive forces determine the spectrum of technical possibilities, the relations of production decide which of these possibilities will be realized (and how). Therefore, our starting question has to be reformulated: Which kind of society does the computer give us on the basis of capitalism? To bring together the most important distinctive features of the results and further tendencies of this combination and to configure them under the title of *High-Tech-Capitalism* (HTC) is the scope of this paper.³

Denominators like “Information-society” etc. leave out the dominant element. They obey the unwritten law of capital: not to speak of capitalism. Manuel Castells at least insists on referring to >the new techno-economical system, adequately, as >*informational capitalism*< -- though strangely enough he believes the circulation sphere of finance capital to be the source of value.

2. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF HTC

Obviously, the dominant economic HTC-agents are the trans-national corporations. As trans-nationally operating entities they have played their role as agents of the world-market since early capitalism. What is new about them and made them economically dominant, is the high-tech-infrastructure for the circulation of digital goods: The internet has equipped their management with its own adequate productive force and infrastructure. The integrated computing- and satellite-based telecommunication technology which allows the beaming of information from virtually any position on the surface of the globe to any other point not only made it possible to produce the informational matrix of any production process in one of the capitalist centres and more or less immediately put it to work in remote areas – of course only after the installation of the necessary >hard-ware<, and allocation of the needed technical and human requisites. It also equipped the management with a

Identification). A commodity codification standard has already been fixed: EPC – Electronic Product Code.

³ Cf. Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *High-Tech-Kapitalismus. Analysen zu Produktionsweise, Arbeit, Sexualität, Krieg und Hegemonie*, Hamburg: Argument 2003, 2nd ed. 2006.

>cross-section-technology< which puts the organisational differentiation and coordination of the company on a totally new basis. Through its condensation of space and time it allowed the trans-national dispersion of a company's real assets without losing quasi-simultaneous informational coordination.

As a result, the meaning of competition has thoroughly changed. The Internet created a global virtual market-place where, assisted by search machinery, demand and supply meet in a hitherto unknown scale and speed. A permanent comparative screening of prices and other availabilities has become possible. This has given more reality to the classical liberal fiction of full market transparency. The effects of these changes can be described as the redefinition and partly even dismantling of boundaries, corporate as well as national, and as the undermining of political provisions, regulations, and restrictions. Thus, the IMF argued against the quota-system: >Its abolition promises that the orders will now, for the sake of the consumer, go around the globe to the most competitive producer.< (FAZ, 27.5.05, p. 14)

Concerning the boundaries of each trans-national company, one of the effects seems particularly paradoxical in terms of the former mode of production, when a company dreamed of producing all parts by itself: In a sense, the single companies enter into competition with themselves. Their boundaries become in one respect pervious to competing companies: if a certain job is done cheaper by the others, the profit-squeeze will lead to its >outsourcing<. Thus, the single corporation has been dissolved into a plurality of profit centres, while each of these are competing in terms of comparative profitability with different centres within the corporation as well as with their equals in other companies. The limit would be the famous >virtual company< reduced to a computer-based trading centre with all functions of production and delivery outsourced.

Another aspect can be described by the overdetermination of two interlinked processes: The first could be called outsourcing into cheap labour countries; the second consists of course in capital exportation, which can be understood as >in-

sourcing< of labour resources abroad by capital. The effect in both cases consists in a change in the international division of labour along the lines of the logic of capital. This goes along with dramatic changes in the composition of the global total worker, the *Weltgesamtarbeiter*, as Marx would say.

On the world market, different modes of production are competing; the higher technical composition competing with the lower, flexible automation with standardized mass labour at the assembly line. In reducing the need for living labour capital reduces the labour cost or, in Marxian terms, the proportion of variable capital. If the price of the product remains the same, an increase in profit is the consequence. The availability of cheap labour will slow down productivity growth, while expensive labour is an incentive to improve the productive forces. Both tendencies play together in weakening the position of the workers. This effect is intensified by the capacity of the TNCs to shift jobs inside their globally dispersed plants. They thus can >side-step< in cases of strikes which normally stay local, still under the spell of the >spatial fix< (Jessop) which the new archipelago-structure of capital has to a certain extent overcome. We have to acknowledge, therefore, that the high-tech based trans-nationalisation has modified the relations of production, i.e. the relations between wage labour and capital. The still pre-transnationally active capitals and their relation to the labour force have become subordinated to the dominant form. Each local relation is more or less permeated by the global relations.

3. DOES THE MORE DEVELOPED COUNTRY SHOW, TO THE LESS DEVELOPED, THE IMAGE OF ITS OWN FUTURE?

In his foreword to *Capital I* Marx says: >The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.< (C 1, 91) He was wise enough to correct himself and to make clear, in the French translation of *Capital I*, that the reach of what he called now his >historical sketch<

was restricted to West-Europe⁴. Here, he was too modest. But this restriction is an important help to break the spell of a spontaneous euro-centrism or, today, US-centrism. But then, even in West-Europe it could be observed, like in a huge socio-economic experiment, how a more developed country destroyed through its superior productivity the highly developed industry – considered in global terms -- of another country. For this effect, the case of the GDR in 1990 was paradigmatic. The introduction of the West-German currency together with the abolition of all trade barriers led within a few weeks to the complete destruction of what once had been the 11th industrial power of the world. Observers compared this consequence of sudden free trade between unequally developed economies with the result of a nuclear strike. If a relatively small ‘economic lag’ can produce such devastating effects, one understands the effects of global free trade, backed by credit conditions and military interventions. Against the scientific-technical competitiveness of the TNCs the industries of formerly third world countries which were once politically promoted, have no chance to survive. All the more so, since the freetraders tend to be freetraders for the others, protectionists for themselves.⁵ For example a country like Cuba, which depends on sugar exports, meets the subsidized sugar of the European Union on the world market.

Capital’s strength relies on the merciless profit mechanism. The same profit machine that destroys the capital of the less competitive economies draws capital into the countries of the poor. Working poverty together with the law of the big number turned the small into >something big<. The greater the wage gap between the capitalist centres and the target areas of capital export, the greater the energy. If a government is able to guarantee the frame for the capitalist valorisation-process, capital will pour in like a waterfall. And the globe is surrounded by money that wants to become capital.

⁴ Cf. MEGA II.7, 634.

⁵ What the Bush-administration >does appear to promote, is ‘neo-liberalism for them’, but ‘not necessarily for us’, and, in this respect, Bush’s government is little different from previous presidencies from Reagan onwards< (Ray Kiely, *The Clash of Globalisations. Neo-Liberalism, the Third Way and Anti-Globalisation*, Leiden-Boston: Brill 2005, 296).

Things changed in a way which Michel Foucault might have anticipated. The poor made a weapon out of their poverty. Instead of expropriating the exploiters they seduced them to exploit. Repulsion ceded to attraction. Unemployed capital rushed in. Human unemployment rose in those places, where capital came from. Before we may ask whether the more developed country shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future, we have to study the dialectics of their interaction. Here, only a tentative first reflection of actual tendencies is possible.

4. EXCHANGE-EFFECTS BETWEEN HIGH- AND LOW-WAGE-COUNTRIES

It is like looking back into a long past childhood when we read in Marx' *Capital I* about Aristotle's analysis of the value form⁶. His famous example is >5 beds = 1 house< as indistinguishable from >5 beds = a certain amount of money< (cf. C I, 151). For a modern Aristotle the actual example to rack his brain about could be:

$$1 \text{ Airbus} = 20 \text{ million shirts}$$

If I can believe the leading German conservative Newspaper, this is indeed what China has to pay for one Airbus: the proceeds from the sale of 20 million shirts. Of course, the European governments and the involved industries are more than keen to sell their Airbusses. And the same European governments, though together with other industries, complain bitterly about the plethora of cheap shirts which means ruin to so many shirt producing companies and unemployment for thousands and thousands of textile workers, while the State not only loses taxes but has to pay more for the growing number of unemployed.

Hand in hand with the centralization of capital, Marx predicted in *Capital*⁷ not only the national >growth of the co-operative form of the labour process<, and >the

⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book V, cp. 5.

⁷ Marx' *Capital* will be quoted in the translation by Ben Fowkes, Penguin Books, 1976; the quotes will be followed by the indication of the passage in the German edition, Marx-Engels-Werke (MEW), vol. 23.

conscious technical application of science<, but also >the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market, and, with this, the growth of the international character of the capitalist regime< (C I, 929; 23/790). The ways in which this >entanglement in the net< occurs confront us with many problems. One of these problems is a widening gap in appropriation relations: Two complementary logics prevail--at one end of the >chain of value creation< a huge quantity of low price goods appear, while at the other end a disproportionately high percentage of the value created by the whole chain of producers is appropriated.

If this disproportion between creation and appropriation of value hits the masses of the new proletariat, a complementary disproportion is hitting the old proletariat, bringing growing unrest into the advanced capitalist countries, and giving rise to new forms of racism and populism. In the process of the general >entanglement in the net of the world market< which in our days has gained its full force, unequal exchange unleashes equalizing tendencies regarding the conditions of the working classes. Again, the problem is, in general terms, seen by Marx, when he understands capitalism as >a mode of production whose laws can only assert themselves as blindly operating averages between constant irregularities< (C I, 196; MEW 23, 117). Marx quotes a member of the English parliament from 1873:

>'If China', says Mr Stapleton, M.P., to his constituents, 'should become a great manufacturing country, I do not see how the manufacturing population of Europe could sustain the contest without descending to the level of their competitors.'
< (C I, 749; 23/627f)

And Marx adds: >No longer continental wages, oh no, Chinese wages, this is the desired goal of English capital.< (Ibid.; translation changed) Today this is the desired goal of capital in all advanced capitalist countries. In these areas we witness the momentary effects in the form of the vanishing of national mass production, while the national market is invaded by cheap standardized mass products from abroad, rising energy costs, and an irresistibly mounting tide of mass unemployment.

Countries like Germany or France, with their traditions of social welfare state and high standards of wage, regulated labour time and other work conditions, find themselves in a vicious circle: The alternative imposed on them is: lower wages, or jobs will migrate to low wage areas. The interacting effects are: 1. decline in consumer demand, 2. a crisis of social security systems.

Since it would be absolutely impossible to reduce the wages in the highly developed countries to the wage levels of the less or least developed countries, one possibility for capital to continue to produce in comparatively high wage countries is for labour productivity to rise through technological innovation. The result that we have seen in Germany is jobless growth, if not job-loss growth.

Whereas China is transformed into the most important manufacturing centre of the world, a country like Germany is moving into the direction of what was decades ago proclaimed by sociologists to be the >post-industrial society<. With a remarkable difference, which is debated under the heading of >bazaar-economy<: if, in the case of an ice-berg, one sees only the tip, it is the other way round in the case of Germany's foreign trade: an enormous material part of the exported goods is in fact produced in other countries. More often than not >made in Germany< means >assembled in Germany<. It is difficult to get reliable figures. Porsche, for example, producer of luxury cars, has reduced its own manufacturing percentage to about 15 percent, and the outsourced production has migrated from one country of cheap labour to the next country of still cheaper labour. Thus, the industrialization of the less developed country is the flip side of the disindustrialization of the more developed country. The final outcome on both sides is anything but clear.

In countries like Germany or France, the resulting erosion of most of the social compromises -- that were reached under fordism and the then reigning East-West-antagonism -- has reduced the calculability of politics. If a growing number of North Americans feels their country on the verge of a new kind of civil war, this can be seen too as the expression of a destabilizing effect of globalization. This seems all the more strange, as at the same time Americans are inclined to see

globalization as Americanization. They seem to hesitate whether globalization means to engulf – or, one might say, to ‘en-globe’ -- the rest of the globe into a regime of US-supremacy, or whether it means for the vast majority of the Americans (as for the populations of the other so called >rich countries<) to sink slowly down towards world average, while a small minority of really rich people take off into the sphere of an emerging trans-national capitalist class. American households have so far tried to sustain their consumption level by borrowing from the banks. The looming private-consumer-debt crisis in the US could end this illusion abruptly and massively, as it already now does to many families whose houses are repossessed by the banks. In borrowing more than they will be able to pay back, the American people follow the example of their State.

5. THE PARADOX OF KEYNESIAN ANTI-KEYNESIANISM

Compared to the US-position in globalizing trans-national capitalism, Germany and China have in common the fact that they both heavily depend on exports or, in other words, produce more than they consume, while the US consume six percent more than they produce. Within the emerging world system of trans-national high-tech-capitalism, the US actually function at the same time as the world-consumer and as the world-military-force, the latter to uphold the first. This is one of the many paradoxes of the ruling neo-liberalism: it started in the late seventies of the last century, putting an end to Keynesianism which, on the scale of the nation State, no longer worked or, to put it more precisely, had led to stagflation. The politics which then rose are known under the names of Thatcherism in Great Britain and Reaganism in the US. Keynes’ recipe to avoid the accumulation crisis of capital had consisted in strengthening the demand side, mainly by expanding public expenditure, financed by printing money. In this conception the additional money would precede additional product and so, after a while, receive its subsequent coverage.

The social version of Keynesianism being widely abolished, already under Reagan the world historic biggest public debt was piled up, to a large extent for military Keynesianism. Since then, we witness a curious world Keynesianism in which military Keynesianism finds its complementary opposite in consumer centred deficit spending: The US receive money from those countries from which the same US later buy more than they sell. In other words: enabling the US-overconsumption enables Chinese, German, etc. overproduction. Currency reserves are the symptom: Since the 1990ies the reserves in foreign currencies, held by the central banks, quadrupled from 858 million to 3,4 billion US-Dollars. One surprising thing is that 60% of these reserves are held by the BRIC-group (Brazil, Russia, India, China). According to Goldman Sachs these reserves >never before in history were so exorbitantly over the 'normal' level< (FAZ, 10.5.05, 27). Like in classical Keynesianism, the US emit loans to finance their own additional demand, though the real coverage of this demand will be produced abroad. It is as if the USA were saying to the rest of the world: >You owe me my debts.< According to recent figures the US would have to attract on every single day of the year 1.824 Million dollars in order to cover its current deficit⁸.

Let us suppose, for just a moment, the contrafactual fiction, that those 6 percent of overconsumption would represent the whole US-economy. It would be – to say it in Marx' words --, as if a nation >of buyers who do not sell, i.e. [...] of consumers who do not produce< (Marx, C I, 264; 23/177) had successfully inserted itself into the global circulation process. In this case, our fictional US-nation would behave like a class of exploiters towards the rest of the world. The only possibility left to the exploited nations would be to cheat their exploiters as much as possible. Let me once more quote Marx:

>The money with which such a class is constantly making purchases must constantly flow into its coffers without any exchange, *gratis*, whether by might or by right, from the pockets of the commodity-owners themselves. [...] Thus, the towns of Asia Minor paid a yearly money tribute to ancient Rome.

⁸ *El País*, 17. April 2005, 20 Negocios.

With this money Rome bought commodities from them, and bought them too dear. The provincials cheated the Romans, and in this way swindled back from their conquerors a portion of the tribute in the course of trade. Yet, for all that, the provincials remained the ones who had been cheated. Their goods were still paid for with their own money.< (Ibid., 254f; 23/177)

Marx immediately eliminates this case: it has nothing to do with capitalist accumulation processes. Though the US does in certain moments seem to use part of its Asian credits as if they were tributes for financing a military high-tech-apparatus which, though it might not conquer its creditors, would at least subdue them to US-supremacy.

The US-administration finds itself on the horn of a dilemma. In order to diminish Chinese exportation to its country it demands the Yuan being de-linked from the Dollar. But China actually sustains the Dollar. If it stops doing so, >America is threatened by a sharp rise in interests which could considerably damp down the economic conjuncture<⁹. A chain reaction would shake the whole world economy.

6. GENERAL CONTRADICTIONS

On one side HTC today seems to work as a vehicle for industrialization and urbanization of former agrarian societies, as promoting the development of national and international infrastructures of communication and transportation of information, energy, goods, and people. On the other hand, however, Marx is right when he says that under capitalism everything is >pregnant with its opposite<.

The national fix of trans-nationally active companies enters in contradiction with their globally disseminated installations. Or: a global mode of production without a global mode of reproduction and regulation bears the seeds of very dangerous crises and conflicts. To mention only some of those >opposites< with which everything is pregnant under the given conditions:

⁹ Claus Tigges, >Schärfere Töne im Wechselkursstreit<, FAZ, 3.2.05, p. 11.

1. The trans-national mode of production contains the contradiction between the national and its being transcended. National politics are torn apart by the necessity to work simultaneously for trans-national companies and for the national electorate.
2. One and the same trans-national capital being part of many national economies, its turn-over no longer forms an integrated part of one national economy. Only a part of Coca-Cola's turnover enters into the US-GNP. Or, in China's case: Who is exporting, when >more than half of the sales abroad are done by foreign trans-nationals< (*El País*, 21.4.05, p.60)? Volkswagen's sales on the world market are no longer necessarily Germany's exports.
3. The consequences for the State can be harsh if company profits no longer fall under national legislation. They are one important basis for taxation and financing of the State. State finances of the nation States from which the trans-nationals are emanating enter into crisis.
4. Globalization without global institutionalization is a contradiction which will cause many grave problems and crises. A trans-national mode of production needs trans-national institutions of regulation together with a global rule of law. The absence of such institutions opens the door for the >right of the stronger<, for hegemonism and war. As Rosa Luxemburg observed, the growing interdependence of capitalist countries does not prevent them from imperialist confrontation.

7. THE PARTICULAR CONTRADICTION HITTING WESTERN WORKERS AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

World class relations change in a way whose analysis has still to be done. In some Western countries theories of post-industrial society -- even of the 'definitive end of labour' -- have had their fashionable moments, while governments and entrepreneurs now more and more demand the return to longer working-hours and

a forcing up of the retirement age. The redistribution and reevaluating of the labour force on the world market explains these extreme ideological oscillations. De-proletarianization in the rich regions is more than counterbalanced by the proletarianization of poor peasants in the developing regions. Like the oxyhydrogen mixture giving a detonating gas, the meeting of capital, hungry for profit, with cheap labour force, hungry for commodities, on such a huge scale like in China, formed an explosive mixture of a propelling power which has turned China into the main motor of the global economy. While in the export oriented industries of China wages are rising, labour costs here are still about twenty times lower than in West-Europe and other OECD-countries, and social or ecological regulation costs are also lower.

Let us come back to the globalisation-effects for Western workers. Even a country of – compared with Europe -- cheap labour force like Morocco, where 40% of the jobs depend of the textile industry, is hit by a deep crisis. In the centres of transnational capital the former proletarians are turned into a reserve army, most of which will never be needed again. Their alimentation becomes ever more difficult and downsized. >We are moving towards an unsustainable world of unemployed consumers<, complained recently Eurotex-president Filiep Libeert. He discovered a truth, which long ago and far ahead from its time was formulated in Marx' *Manifest of the Communist Party*, when it declares the bourgeoisie to be unable to prevent its proletarian slave from sinking

>into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him<
(cf. MEW 4, 473).

Trans-national chains like Carrefour, Walmart or the German Aldi profit as well as the Western machine-builders and those capitals which produce (and more and more sell) in China. How many European textile companies are producing already in China? This and trades like the Airbus explain why official European protests seem to be rather window dressing for the public at home. Only the Western working classes are losing. The question is: how long will these historically

dismissed sit and watch? Already now their >winter of discontent< makes the German chancellor and his party fall and the French dismiss the European Constitution Treaty. This is already by now undermining liberal democratic ways of government together with the rule of law. Political citizenship, which corresponds to the liberal State of Law, will not be sustainable without socio-economic integration. Maybe the idea of a guaranteed >basic income<, propagated by ATTAC and other groups, will turn out to be the last way out. This would mean a return to the way in which the Ancient Roman Empire had treated his proletariat with >bread and games<, no longer needing it for other than military purposes, while the necessary labour was done by slaves. The Roman Republic did not survive this; military dictatorship with an emperor on top was the form in which these paradoxical relations of productions – which, for the proletariat, were relations of non-production – could be sustained.

The new social antagonisms which still haven't found a political answer¹⁰ threaten to undergo a Freudian 'displacement', to interfere with international relations and to overdetermine them in racist or religious ways. Forms of alienated protest may merge with the old capitalist contest for resources and markets. Potentials for a new world war scenario arise. The preventive US-World-War-against-Terror may well turn out to be deterrence and catalyst accelerant at the same time.

8. COMMAND-ADMINISTRATIVE STATE-SOCIALISM + COMPUTER = ?

Twenty years ago Gorbachev's answer to the question of how the USSR could attain the high-tech level went like this: The command-administrative way of running the economy -- that is, inflexible, directive central planning, fixing production in every detail far away from the realization moment in time and space - - is incompatible with the large scale implantation or mass proliferation of the

¹⁰ In Germany a new formation, >Demokratische Linke< (Democratic Left), is actually forming itself, headed by Oscar Lafontaine, the former president of the SPD, and Gregor Gysi, former head of the PDS. But a concrete political alternative has not yet been found.

computer. To speed up development one had to take into account the unforeseen, the accidental, the synergy effects of millions of cooperating and competing inventive intelligences. Those individuals who are supposed to interact responsibly and creatively with the computer cannot be controlled by force in the old mode of State fordism, based on the assembly line and steep hierarchies. Gorbachev therefore opted for democratic socialism under the rule of law. If this conception has failed it is nonetheless most instructive.

I myself was mistaken, a victim of my hopes, when I believed at the time that this kind of revolutionary transformation might be feasible; and I was twice mistaken, when I believed that a pragmatic economic reform without prior democratization, like in China, would end in catastrophe¹¹.

9. ASKING FOR THE FUTURE(S) OF MARXISM

In dealing with the analysis of HTC the Marxian concepts prove to be incomparably better than any competing theory. In addition, the philosophical views of Marx constitute what one can call with Adorno the >ultimate philosophy<, >indépassable< for the epoch of world capitalism, as Sartre put it. Marxist theory presents itself as dialectic-historical materialist worldview, as philosophy of praxis, and as critical theory of capitalism. In all these respects it is indispensable for any radically serious social scientific work and intellectual self-understanding. However, this multiple theoretical strength goes along with practical weakness: the proletariat of the world is disorganized and lacks adequate political representation.

The notorious forces of flexibilization and dislocation, the interplay of high-tech based abolition of living labour and capital flux towards cheap labour, have dispersed the classical working class and weakened if not shattered its labour

¹¹ Cf. Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Versuch beim Verlieren des Bodens unter den Füßen neuen Grund zu finden – Das Perestrojka-Journal*, Hamburg 1990, 7.

movements. Marx' view on the working class as being >constantly increasing in numbers, and trained, united and organized by the very mechanism of the capitalist process of production< (C I, 929; 23/790f), no longer holds true. The >We<, which once could say: >We are many, they are few<, has lost its hold on reality. The attempts to call for a new historical subject under the name of >Multitude< (Hardt/Negri), defining it as the subject of so called >immaterial labour<, have created more confusion than clarity. Hence, among other reasons, what we could call, borrowing from Hegel, the >unhappy consciousness< of Marxist intellectuals.

One of those other reasons is the ideological role of Marxism under conditions of catching-up-industrialization. Marx und Engels distinguished the Prussian path to capitalism, with the State as the decisive agent, from what they called >the farmers' way<, by which they referred to the United States of America. Obviously, they clearly saw that political superstructures can become agents for economic structure building. However, it was unimaginable for them that their followers one day would become organizers of national development in order to catch up on the far more developed capitalist areas of the world.

It was unconceivable for them that their ideas would become the ideological skeleton of national industrialization and urbanization; that Communist Parties would act as political foster-fathers of the capitalization of social relations; and that, in this role, Marxism would be underpinned by nationalism.

If this was unconceivable for Marx, it clearly *was* conceived by Lenin in his last years, at least in outlines and without the nationalist component, and of course not as a surrender to capitalism as a system. Underdeveloped revolutionary Russia, besieged more or less by the whole capitalist world — with, after the November Revolution, the transitory exception of defeated Germany — had to develop a mixed economy with different types of property in various sectors: petty private commodity production, cooperatives, State property, and, last but not least, private capital. Most important in Lenin's view would be to attract massive capital from abroad to cope with the relative backwardness of the country's peasant majority.

The resulting capitalism was supposed to remain restricted to this sector, not to permeate the whole social system, from the economic structure to the political and ideological superstructures. The contradictions and antagonisms of this mixed accumulation regime would require the tutelage of strong State power. The CP had to retire into the headquarters of this power.

10. CONCLUSION

A great many things have been left out of the narrow frame of this short outline. The purpose of this presentation is to plead for the transformation of concepts like >Post-industrialism<, >Information Society<, etc., and even >Globalization< into an analysis and finally a theory of High-Tech-Capitalism. In Western radical theories, with a few exceptions, the role of the contradictory relations of the high-tech forces of production and the global relations of production is neglected. The influential Regulation School e.g. insists on the dominant role of finance capital. This conception makes sense only if we rely on a conceptual distinction introduced by Althusser, namely, the distinction between domination and determination. The determining elements are then those which put another element into a dominating position. To speak of a finance-driven accumulation regime, as the Regulation-School does, makes sense only if we add the basic determination by the interplay of forces of production and relations of production, or, as Marx, by the mode of production as the contradictory unity of these. In view, then, of the wide-spread lack of understanding of the determining role of the high-tech capitalist mode of production for the present global structural revolutionizing processes we shouldn't hesitate to say: The classical Marxian mode-of-production-approach to analyse such changes is a necessary, even if not sufficient, condition for analytically dealing with the burning questions of the present, even if in many respects it has to be developed further and in certain of its assumptions criticized and corrected.

We, as members of the scientific community of Marxist scholars in the world, have

to try to register, to realize, and to understand. Above all, we have to listen most carefully to the actual movements that have started to emerge from a radically changing social totality. Spoken from the point of view of the social movements of advanced capitalist countries: The forms of socio-political containment of capital that were fought for in class struggles under conditions of Fordism + East-West systemic competition are being dismantled. New forms have not yet been invented. Tendencies, crisis-areas, and conflict lines can be assessed, though with some speculation. Even from the point of view of the internationalized capitalist regime, the necessity for political-institutional interventions on a global level becomes more and more imperative. Transcending the capitalist view, a worldwide movement of a new type has emerged, initiated by the Zapatista upheaval in Mexico in 1994. Since then, the powers of the world are watched world wide by masses of excluded, immiserated, and by a myriad of all kinds of groups, movements and NGOs.

For Marxists of all countries it is vital to bring analysis and praxis together on the basis of the new conditions. To prepare us for this task, we must come to grips with the analysis of the high-tech mode of production, to scrutinize its tendencies, and to explore the new potentials. We cannot, of course, understand everything by examining the mode of production; but if we neglect it, we will understand nothing.