is that everything else is subordinated to it. Even after 1945 the real front in the East-West conflict wasn’t in Europe. MacArthur was right when he said that the real front was against communism in Asia, in other words against Korea and Vietnam. We have now reached the point where this European expansionism will become a living nightmare.

The question of wage-labour and capital in the centre is the same as the question of centre and periphery on a world scale. Both must be overcome in their totality. The problems of history need a new type of resolution, and we are offering a new, untried perspective for the way-out from capitalism. The other way was tried here in the centre and it failed. Capitalism is a world system articulating metropolis and periphery, and it is at this level that the solution must be found.

8

From Red to Green: Industrialism and Cultural Revolution
What you have been saying raises a number of questions concerning relations between the developed and underdeveloped countries. Your critique of industrialism may sound plausible in Germany or some other rich country, but not in a poor country. For the underdeveloped countries the only way out of poverty is more trade with the richer nations, more industry. But your programme is against this. Isn’t it undemocratic in as much as it condemns the poorer countries to continued poverty?

An African writer has written a book whose title I like very much: Poverty: the Wealth of the People. He draws a distinction between poverty and misery (Armut and Elend). All the things you have raised, the model you have described for overcoming poverty, would send the peoples of the Third World into a tunnel without an exit, because the living standard they are aiming for is no longer achievable. In 1800 or 1830, the period about which Engels wrote, the working classes of Europe still had the prospect of a bourgeois way of life—indeed, they were able to achieve something of that order because of the existence of the periphery. But for the present periphery there is no further periphery to be exploited, no way of attaining the good life of London, Paris or Washington.

As long as this model still exists at the centre, my argument can only be an ideology for the people of the underdeveloped countries. In a sense, the commune perspective I advocate for the developed countries would involve us in becoming something like the Third World. Otherwise, the imposition of our model on the Third World will just lead to the kind of situation I saw in Mexico—first, people
move to the shanty-town on the edge of the city, then the next
generation can buy a run-down car, trying to reproduce what exists
in the metropolis. For its part, Eastern Europe is nothing but third-
class industrialization. Czechoslovakia and the GDR are second-class
because they were half-capitalist before, but the Soviet Union is
definitely third-class from the point of view of its success for the
masses. This is a hopeless perspective: it won't work because the
limits have already been reached.

Do you mean the physical limits of nature, or moral and political
limits?

These belong together more than the 'or' in your question would imply.

I'm not convinced that it is impossible for the four and a half billion
people in the world to reach the living standard of West Germany.
Whether that's desirable is another matter, but I don't see that it's
impossible.

It is possible for a historical minute, but then ten billion humans are
dependent on it. They will become part of the industrial mill and be
unable to turn back. I believe that human evolution began to go
wrong with the English industrial revolution.

In what way?

I see exterminism as rooted in industrialism.

You say that in the past two thousand years nothing good has been
achieved?

I didn't say that and I wouldn't say it.

So you concede that there has been progress?

I don't think of it in this way. If in the whole historical process of
civilization, especially of European civilization, the destructive
tendency clearly wins the upper hand, if we're heading for self-
destruction, then we are dealing with a sickness of the totality. It is
clearly wrong to try to divide it up between the good achievements
and the bad. They are part of the same totality which has to be ques-
tioned, not in the sense that I don't want the most modern medicine,
but in the sense that none of the achievements removes the need to
question the whole structure. On the whole the European culture of
the past two or three thousand years, which announced its birth in the
Iliad, has been exterminist in its most inner dispositions, modelling
itself on individual competition and the Olympiad principle of
'more, higher, faster, better'. These dispositions have in the recent
period led to capitalism; they were its precondition.

Are you not harking back to the Stone Age? It may sound pro-
vocative, but that's how your position will be understood.

Take the microchip. Its benefits are easy enough to imagine, but as
long as this whole system is constituted as it is—and I don't mean
merely its more recent capitalist characteristics—then the microchip
will only serve big brother.

I haven't noticed in history that non-Europeans have been all that
pacifist. Aggression and the use of force are to be found everywhere
in history. I agree that industrialism has increased the possibilities
of destruction, but from a moral or psychological or anthropological
point of view, aggression in history has been a world-wide
phenomenon.

I have also looked into the anthropological basis for all this and tried
to determine whether the European way is an accidental specializa-
tion in the human species or whether it is a specialization which, as so
often happens in evolution, will lead to the destruction of the species
if it continues unbroken. We must see whether in the nature of the
species there is the possibility of a more favourable specialization,
one which gives the species a future. If this happens, or to express it
perhaps more succinctly, if a community such as that which Francis
of Assisi wanted to establish were to use the microchip, I wouldn't
see any problem in that.
The concept of 'exterminism' which you have developed in your work is very complex and seems to have four different senses. The first, initially proposed by E.P. Thompson and others, has to do with the arms race and the tendency to nuclear war. The second is concerned with mass starvation in the Third World—the daily exterminism lived now by hundreds of millions. The third refers to the destruction of nature as a result of the continuation of industrialism, which could, ecologists argue, destroy our natural habitat. These are three historically specific aspects, peculiar to the contemporary epoch. But there is also a fourth meaning, and this is the psychological and anthropological element of power in the human psychology which, you argue, is exterminist and which, if it has a history, is thousands of years old. The use of 'exterminism' in your writings seems to confuse these four ideas, each of which is questionable in itself. But one can also ask if a campaign against exterminism in the first three senses can be combined with a campaign against exterminism in the fourth sense. A strategy for the psychological transformation of humanity, for a complete moral transformation, for psychological therapy, is perhaps compatible at the level of analysis with a campaign against the bomb. But when you come to the level of politics, isn't there a danger that the campaign against the bomb and mass starvation will lose itself in the campaign for 'new birth', for mass therapy, and so on? Are you not engaged in an utopian dilution of the historically specific drive against the bomb?

I could put a different question to you. Doesn't the struggle against militarism since the eighties of the last century teach us that campaigns against the bomb, as campaigns against the bomb, are not winnable? It seems to me that without a cultural revolution we have no chance against the arms race. We may have a temporary success against a single weapons system, but the foundations deep in the European soil are warlike, especially in North west Europe, and then comes the additional fact that we can't maintain our living standard without a Rapid Deployment Force. This Rapid Deployment Force is part of the consensus. Popular support for the intervention in Iran was so easily obtained because people felt threatened in their cultural identity. That's the psychology we're dealing with. People voted Kohl because they wanted to keep up their living standard. They were well aware that he would also bring the missiles, but that was a third-rate question for them. They don't basically question the defence of the free West.

You see exterminism as something anchored in human psychology?

Yes. In fact I would fault Marx for not having been materialist enough, in that he undervalued three levels of reality which have their weight in a monistic conception. Marx took the level of objectification and on this basis built up a historical materialism. But this presupposes the level of reality which is objective spirit, at the summit of which is the fact that the human being possesses consciousness. Marx said himself that everything goes through the head. Beneath this is the level of human nature as a whole, and beneath this again is nature, from which we originate and which Marx regarded as somehow passive. In other words, his static model did not take sufficiently into account the impulses which brought forth the human being in the first place. I believe that the truth lies somewhere between this static model and the Aristotelian entelechy.

Now, when I speak of psychology, I am speaking of the quintessence of this process of development. This is where the psychodynamic, the sociodynamic begins. History is primarily psychodynamic. The theory of Engels in The Role of Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man is wrong because it places the accent in the wrong place.

In this context you speak of a Conversion, a Transformation or a Rebirth of humanity which has a spiritual or a religious aspect. You use the term 'conversion' in a secular sense to suggest a change of outlook. What exactly do you mean by that?

I see exterminism as a multidimensional phenomenon. The three things you mentioned are appearance only and explain nothing in themselves. Beneath those I see the industrial system with its techostructure and its science; beneath this the driving mechanism of capitalism; beneath this European cosmology, and beneath this the more general anthropological factors. In our campaign strategy we must begin from both poles. We need a defensive strategy which
deals with the surface phenomena of extermination more than with intermediate layers such as industrialism. This political strategy must win us space and time. But at the same time, we must begin at the other pole with a critique of human need, of human nature. The anthropologist Portman says that homo sapiens is born a year too soon and has an extra-uterine gestation year of total dependence on the mother. Then come another two or three years of complete social dependence, followed by quite a few years of being tied to the socialization process. In other words, there is a surplus of external determination against which a psychological revolution is bound to occur, in which knowledge is power-oriented both towards nature and towards the parents and community. Here I would share Wilhelm Reich's view of our character structure and knowledge structure as competitive and conflict-oriented, and of our expansion as a fleeting forwards. In my eyes, exemplary figures like Christ or Buddha sought the new man not by looking forwards, but by looking backwards or inwards—in other words, they divested themselves of the conditions which society imposed on them from birth. We have to find a way for all humans to make the breakthrough that Christ and Buddha made. The existence of Christ, or Buddha or Francis of Assisi, demonstrates that it is possible for humans to deal with the aggressive warlike quality they have as humans. Must it always be minorities that achieve this? Or is it possible for us to organize consciously towards this end? Without conscious organization, without institutionalization, it is not possible to achieve this.

A part of this transformation must deal with patriarchy, the inequality between man and woman. The women's movement has a place at both poles of your strategy, as an opponent of the bomb and of the deep structure of human domination. You have spoken of patriarchy as a ten-thousand-year-old substratum. What do you think are the possibilities for a transformation of patriarchy? And what is the role of women's emancipation in your perspective?

This concerns the oldest social conflict (along with the antagonism between different generations) and the deepest level of social transformation. The women's movement very strongly reflects the polarity we have talked about. There is a very counter-aggressive and combative political strategy which, though quite understandable, appears to be counter-productive. But the main contribution which the women's movement can make is at the other pole—that is, in the peaceful dissolution of this earliest crystallization of the power structure.

In a sense the transformation I envisage is also a reconstruction of God. The function of God in the Old Testament was always that of regulator. Marx called it the intellectualized species-being. Christ and Buddha never broke out of the framework of this patriarchal structure. Indeed, I see the Christian and Buddhist hostility to sensuality as a tribute to patriarchy. The logos is male.

Feminism, in one aspect, is the final consequence of bourgeois emancipation. This element, dating from the French Revolution, is justified but still lies within the logic of the civilization which has to be overcome. From the other pole, however, it is different. If the concept of a world-historical mission of the proletariat is not in fact true, then it is entirely possible that women have something like a general mission in this respect.

*Although many of your ideas have changed since you wrote The Alternative, and you are working now in a different society, is there not a basic consistency in your concept of emancipation as something cultural and psychological? There are similarities between your current idea of emancipation and the concept you developed in the final section of The Alternative.*

I still make use of the model of emancipation that I developed in chapters 10 and 11 of *The Alternative*. But although my commune perspective is somehow contained in the association model of that final section, there is an important difference. In essence my concept of emancipation was then still located within the framework of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on the communal appropriation of the totality for the full development of individuality. Another element of continuity is the fact that in the highly non-pluralist society of the GDR, where my critical orientation was not rooted in some particular interest group, my experience and the deepest structures of my thinking led me to question the society as a whole, to dispute the totality, to conceptualize a new hegemony. I couldn’t have thought
otherwise. That was certainly an advantage when I came to the West, because I could never be satisfied with just a protest or opposition movement. The problem is not to create a space for minorities but to create a new solution for the whole of society. The runways are there for us in popular consciousness but they are, so to speak, blocked with rubbish. Our task is to clear away this rubbish. I had a conversation recently with Jorschke Fischer, a parliamentary delegate from Frankfurt, and our deepest disagreement was on the question of whether all people should have the capacity to communicate with God. He doesn't believe that. So in the final analysis one is left with manipulation, republicanism from above, Jacobinism. It may well be that plebiscitary politics is dangerous now because of the concrete relation of forces, but for them this is always the case.

How has your attitude to Marx changed since The Alternative? You no longer appear to be a Marxist in any recognizable sense.

From the standpoint of personal identity, it is completely different to be a Marxist in the West and in Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe it's like being a Christian in the Middle Ages: Marxism is the intellectual universe to which everything else relates. When I saw, for instance, that certain parts of Freud were not compatible with Marxism, my attitude was to regard that simply as a question of a subjective limitation of Marx which didn't alter the capacity of the Marxist conception to integrate whatever was correct in Freud. Marxism is not a distinctive position over there: what is distinctive is to be a heretical Marxist, Luther against the Pope. A particular identity is created in the East which is in fact minoritarian, unrepresentative of the whole. It is a party-limited universe since the majority of the population is not Marxist. The Party is to a certain extent an alien body. This was an important experience for me, and it gave me the impetus to break from it. How could I have an orientation towards the social whole and at the same time have the people against me?

As far as my reception here was concerned, Ernest Mandel, the main claimant to continuity with classical Marxism, saw The Alternative as an inadequate and half-successful attempt to reconstruct Marxism. But that was not my purpose. You will certainly find places in The Alternative where I claim to have correctly reconstructed Marx. But you misunderstand this if you don't see the difference between the position of Marxism in the East and in the West. The issue was not the development of theory but the reconstruction of the Gospel. I experienced no problem and didn't feel myself heretical when, in one of the middle chapters, I gave up the concept of the centrality of the working class. I acted exactly as I had done in the case of Freud. Reality had changed, Marx couldn't have seen it, Marxism had to be further developed to integrate this, and so on. But here in the West I find myself forced more and more often to say that I am no longer a Marxist. To be a Marxist here means to assent to the fact that a definite political-theoretical conception has been firmly established and still requires firm adherence. It is true that Marxism is a very specific conceptualization—if, that is, we take it to involve the centrality of the proletariat, the belief that the solution to the world's problems is to be found by means of the class struggle in the richer nations, the view that internal contradictions are more important than external ones, internal class struggles more central than the contradiction between culture and civilization. To the extent that those elements are essential to the conceptualization, I would say that I have left Marxism behind.

Part of the problem here is that the personal identity of so many on the Left is tied to a particular conception of what it means to be Marxist. This is not the case for me. I have no loyalty to a concept. I do not regard it as productive, for example, to enter into arguments with Trotskyists who say that here I deviate, there I deviate. Already in the GDR, where Marxism was the centre of my development for over twenty years, the dynamic of Marx's ideas had led me to new conclusions. There are many particular elements in Marx that I still find useful, but the structure itself I have abandoned. For me Marxism is a quarry. After the fall of the Roman Empire ordinary people used the stones of the fallen temples to build their homes and their churches. This is productive use of material. There are also structural elements that I use, even if I now refer to the formation as extermination. My whole Marxist background has, of course, gone into this restructuring. In a certain respect you could characterize my thinking as a regression, not for reasons that are subjective, but because that is the determination of the objective situation itself. The class struggle is not the solution. The problem is the dissolution of the entire
formation itself. From scientific socialism I have returned to utopian socialism, and politically I have moved from a class-dimensional to a populist orientation. My exemplar would be Thomas Münzer. There is a difference between Jesus and Christ. Jesus is human, Christ is the elevation to concept, and Münzer is on the level of Christ for me, the ideal type. Justice for him meant liberation for the peasantry to enable it to attain the freedom of the Christian, to communicate directly with God. The resolution of a social problem was not Münzer's ultimate intention. He wanted to resolve the problem of the liberation of the peasantry because equality before God was not achievable under its existing conditions. That's why I like the rainbow banner of the peasants, the peasants not as a class but as the people.

The 'Eternal Council' was set up in Mühlhausen. The political reality, however, was not at the abstract level of opposing class interests. It encompassed, as Thompson describes it in the case of the English working class in the eighteenth century, the whole of society. Marxist historians later drew out the class differences, but that was not the logic of the peasant war. Those factors may assume some importance now when we look back and try to discover the reasons for its failure. But the figure of Thomas Münzer represents for me the incarnation of the Ordine Nuovo.

The relation between Prophet and Politician is a problem for the Greens and for yourself. Of course a politician can have a vision, but the divide is always there when compromises have to be made, concrete programmes drawn up and so on. It is a real danger for you that the Greens could remain a minority, organized in separatist communes, withdrawn and marginalized from society. But you see that differently. You want to bring about change by engaging in politics on the one hand and starting to create a new society on the other. Yet your concept of 'liberated zones' in industrialized society is a profoundly ambivalent one.

I want to see the emphasis shifted from politics and the question of power towards the cultural level. It is the greatest merit of Gramsci that he managed to focus attention on the problematic of hegemony, although still ultimately with a view to power. With Gramsci it was still too direct. Not by accident was he in favour of Fordism. He saw the task, at the cultural level, as the transformation of everyone into workers and engineers within, of course, a wider horizon.

I believe that at the cultural-political level, the strategy of non-violence will win through, developing out of subjective necessity and providing a new foundation for politics. I'm not interested simply in parliamentary politics, and I want to shift the emphasis to the prophetic level in order to have a new determining influence on politics. For this problem of politics and prophecy Münzer is again the model. In a concrete situation politics can dominate, but our problem is to decide whether we want to invest ninety-nine per cent of our energy in the carousel of politics or only fifty per cent. Of course the Greens themselves, as a political party, are the arm of the movement, and I can't go to the parliamentary fraction and argue for less than fifty per cent politics. But my specific contribution is to try to shift the emphasis towards the other pole. I want to begin with the transformation of subjectivity, but directed towards a political goal. The task is not just to heal ourselves but to be aware that the movement has a healing mission.

What is your vision of the alternative society, of your utopia?

The logic and the tempo of expansionism, as it has existed up to now, have prevented the emergence of a natural order because they have always necessitated the encroachment of overriding regulation. The biological domain allows for no substitute for the equilibrium of the natural world. As long as we have this expansion, we will continue to have disproportionality, the encroachment of regulation and a competitive drive impelling the whole thing forward. In the absence of natural order communes have never survived. The American commumars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were the pioneers of this homo occidentalis simplicissimus.

I believe we have now reached the point where humanity has to find a new stable life-form in which its forward development is an inward journey rather than an external expansion. The problem is not the abolition of technology but its subordination. Our aim has to be the 'reconstruction of God'—in other words, the kind of regulation which can only come from the re-creation of spiritual equilibrium,
within those levels of nature neglected by Marx where human consciousness comes into contact with the external world. This is the goal, then: a reproduction of social being in which the economy, and the technological component of the economy, are integrated elements. We must eat, dress, have free time and try to overcome the rigid division between economic reproduction and social communication. Utopia is the optimal satisfaction of basic human needs, not just physical but social. Human development requires a basic security, a sense of being sheltered by a community, where you don’t have to think of your old-age pension at the age of twenty, where individuality can be expressed and enjoyed in communication with others, where self-realization can take place in a different sense from that of European individualism. This communication with the totality therefore points towards a social being compatible with human nature and with the limits set by the external world. The individual elements of this conception are not new and have been described by utopian socialists and communists for hundreds of years. Certain things are obvious: that a solution to problems is best found in small groups, that human companionship for the satisfaction of mutual need requires a certain minimum number, and that some access to the wider world must be possible. In the rules of the Benedictines, for instance, there is a section which deals with travelling for monks.

So you are not opposed to travelling? In your utopian world of ecological villages trade may not be important, but travel and communication will remain possibilities. Travel, you concede, is a cultural need.

Yes. But if it means that we have to see all the countries in the UN and to fly around the world twenty-seven times, then this is obviously not possible. I don’t imagine the appropriation of our world in this way. There are natural limits. Perhaps it will be adequate if we travel to Italy twice, as Goethe did.

As I said earlier, we should also have informational communication around the whole world; only the material transport system must be massively reduced. Our problem now in Europe is not to go into detail about particular concepts of self-reliance that might work for the whole world. A great deal has already been written about that. What is needed is to take the initiative, so that people can come together and attempt communal life, with enough commitment not to run back to a job after a few weeks or so. If twenty people are sufficiently committed to a project, they can draw in two hundred more. This is big enough for a self-managing, self-caring social community. Here lies the key to institutional security for the experience of the self, what the Buddhists call Karma.

You have, in some of your previous works, written about the role of culture and in particular about Beethoven. What is the relation of this to your overall view?

The way in which the French Revolution formulated the problem of emancipation still stood within the context of individualist European culture. Rolland, for example, speaks of the time when one Christopher Columbus after another went out to conquer the world. In practice bourgeois emancipation has meant this republic of kings. There’s a poem by Hölderlin, The Oak, in which at the top of every mountain stands god-like man. This republic of kings is actually a society of Indo-Germanic petty princes.

My Beethoven book, which I wrote between 1967 and 1969, was still entirely within this tradition. Even in The Alternative my concept of emancipation was not free from what, in the final analysis, is an expansionist image of self-realization. But in my final years in the GDR I already came to favour Mozart and Schubert. I was more open to their non-antagonist relation with the world, so distinct from the combative, overpowering orientation of Beethoven.

In an earlier discussion, you spoke about Solidarnosc and about whether this historical experience refuted the theses of The Alternative on the role of the proletariat. Now, one and a half years after the military takeover, how do you see the situation in Poland with respect to the perspective contained in The Alternative?

I am even more certain now that developments in Poland can only be understood within a populist political framework. Of course the situation in the factories did play an important role, but the political constellation there is not analogous to the conflict of labour and
capital. Poland was on the brink of a struggle for power. What the society there needs is a new crystallization of its entire institutional system—a development which the Soviet Union must stop at any price. There is also an international aspect in Western Europe because of the relationship with America, but the European and American structures are so similar that this is not experienced as a foreign or alien imposition. The situations here and in Poland are similar only to the extent that people's interests in both cases require a radically new organization of social life and social institutions. That was the essence of what happened in Poland, and all forces outside the apparatus cooperated to bring this action together. That it crystallized around the trade union had to do with the fact that in Poland the dominant process has been one of industrialization. But although there is a working class in the broadest sense, this concept only confuses the real nature of the system.

The 'anti-Soviet' political element was decisive in Poland because the new institutionalization which the nation needed was against Soviet interests, as these are determined by the logic of bloc confrontation. The entire political question centred on the issue of national identity, and it was predetermined that the main protagonist had to be the institution which is the main guarantor of Polish national identity, the Church. You could almost say that Solidarnosc was an outpost of the Church, certainly at the level of ideology or hegemony. No conspiracy was involved. This is how it was in Poland. Industrialization is still relatively new and the cultural identity which stems from the peasant tradition is still unbroken. Even in the period in which Solidarnosc occupied the foreground, the perspective was not socialist in any traditional sense. It was typical that when Walesa visited Japan, he came back proclaiming the need to Japanize Poland. At the decisive level Walesa was no alternative to Gierek. Gierek wanted to build a new Poland—hence his investment programme. And when Walesa wanted to Japanize Poland, he had in mind that peculiar constellation of absolute subordination, that corporatist patriarchal model which fits so easily with Catholicism. Walesa was actually very representative of the popular movement, including what went on in the factories. I don't want to exclude the KOR or other factors, but Walesa and his advisers from the Episcopate constituted the mainstream of this process in Poland.

The Church, not the Party, is the only force in Poland with ideological control.

I doubt very much that there was any similarity with the West. I agree that the movement was not socialist in its ideology, programme or structure, but nor was it a movement against industrialism. On the contrary, it demanded more consumer goods and higher wages. In addition, there was a whole series of democratic and political problems. One could say that both the eco-pacifist movement in the West and Solidarnosc in Poland were protest movements against the political structure, but the reasons are rather different in the two cases. You cannot assimilate the Polish struggle to the ecological movement in the West.

In both cases, the structure is one of popular resistance and not of a class-against-class formation. We are dealing with a populist political construction, and it is at this level that I wanted to establish their similarity. When you take the GDR, the movements are in fact identical.

How do you see the perspectives for resistance in Eastern Europe in general? Which forces or tendencies could weaken Soviet domination? Are there tendencies with an effective emancipatory perspective?

The Polish movement was, and still is, very effective in as much as it was able to block any initiative by Moscow or the system in Eastern Europe. I don't see any chance of a solution favourable to the Soviet Union. The relation of forces in the country is such that the General could only gain some popular support as the Adjutant of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland.

It is an important point for us in the peace movement that even at the military level Solidarnosc paralysed the Soviet Union. Poland was a defeat for the Warsaw Pact, and we now have greater credibility here when we say the Russians are not about to march over Western Europe when they can't even deal with Poland. Moreover, any disarmament initiative here would clearly undermine the legitimacy of Russia's military hegemony over Eastern Europe and
open up a perspective for a return of sovereignty to Eastern Europe on, let us say, the model of Finland. Poland means for me that Stalin’s victory is historically finished, that the Soviet Union has already lost Eastern Europe, and that, with the possible exception of the GDR, it can only be retained militarily. The cordon sanitaire around the Soviet Union has become a hostile belt.

*Did Solidarnosc have any impact in the GDR?*

No. I would say rather that it had a stabilizing effect. The GDR leadership, which thinks in the long term, must have been immensely worried that, with no hinterland except for its unreliable Polish ally, it will have to survive on the direct link to Moscow. You must imagine what it was like in the fifties, when the saying used to be ‘from the Elbe to the China Sea’, to realize how incredibly insecure their perspective must be now. And this is another reason why the GDR leadership has such an interest in internal developments in West Germany at the present moment. It’s their only hope. Moscow can keep them in power, but economically it has nothing new to offer.

In the short term, however, those small-scale Polish speculators who cleaned out the GDR shops from Dresden to Frankfurt-on-Oder did a lot to prevent the Polish disease from spreading in the GDR. The attitude of the East German worker was that the Poles ought to work. The danger was much greater inside the Party in 1968. Provincialism or national narrowness is an additional factor, since people in the GDR don’t deal with such things at the analytic level of our present discussion. But it was enough for them to watch the papal visit on television and listen to the popular version of the national anthem (‘Give us back our free Poland...’) in order to realize which was the truly dominant force. This is all discussed in liberal Party circles, and when the SED leadership tightens the reins, they are already prepared for it. They are far from pleased, but they’ll accept it because the consensus is there.

From my earlier reform-communist perspective, I didn’t foresee the eco-pacifist movement that is now developing in the GDR. If I had foreseen it, I’m not at all sure I would have left. The opposition there now is not a political opposition against the Party; it is more of an intellectual opposition whose goal, as is the case with the eco-peace movement here, is ideological hegemony.

*Is the movement there ecological or only pacifist?*

The first book put together recently in the GDR and published over here is called *Concrete is Concrete*. It’s the same movement. They too ride their bicycles against pollution, plant trees and so on.

*You have said that, for the peace movement in the East, the tanks are more important than the missiles.*

When Roland Jahn was here, he said that of course they were opposed to the Pershings, as was the GDR regime, but that they were also for disarmament East and West, including the tanks. For the people of Eastern Europe it doesn’t make all that much difference whether the missiles come from the Atlantic or West Germany. There is just one point that is perhaps not adequately considered in the East: namely, that the stationing of the missiles here in West Germany will increase the danger of conflict breaking out in Europe. From the East the criticism is too much directed at the arming of the other side and not at the atomic danger itself. Although there is less talk about the possibility of winning a nuclear war, there is a strong increase in militarism.

From our point of view the oppositional attitude to the tanks is correct, because in the final analysis the nuclear danger is engendered by the bloc confrontation. As I said after the coup in Poland, the Jaruzelski regime is a product of Moscow alone but of both military blocs. An additional factor, which people there also see, is that the tanks are there not just to march against NATO but, as they did in the past, against Prague. However, we must also ask ourselves which is the most intelligent strategy to get rid of them. Is it more missiles in the West? Or is it not the method whereby Reagan simply strengthens Moscow’s stranglehold on Eastern Europe? The discussion on these questions has already begun with the initiative of Thompson and the Russell Peace Foundation.

*Can we now turn to the USSR itself and your assessment of Andropov? How do you see the perspectives for the Soviet Union in*
the coming period in relation to both Eastern and Western Europe? How will the Soviet Union react to the peace movement?

In what I say now, I am relying very much on some writings of Mlynañ on the Soviet Union. My view is that the Soviet Union is overburdened by its role as world power, although paradoxically it was the bomb which allowed her to play this role in the first place. But from the point of view of the economy, the Soviet military machine is a clay-footed colossus. The leaders have certainly internalized this world-role, which is natural and sacred to them. Most of them were young officers in the Second World War and the military machine that Stalin mobilized against Hitler is for them the symbol of Soviet sovereignty. They know they can’t be the victors in the economic rivalry with capitalism, and so they stick to the goal of military parity despite the burden it represents. In his last months Brezhnev restated the main dilemma facing the Soviet Union—military parity or the economy. And now Andropov is faced with the same dilemma. I believe he is a man with a more detailed and differentiated overview of the situation than Brezhnev. He was the spider in the web of information, and although he was also responsible for the repression of dissidents, his main preoccupation was the secret service. Obviously he has the subjective capacity to absorb and work on a vast quantity of information.

Both the American and the Soviet imperium have declined since the end of the war. They are losing their absolute hegemony in Europe which decided the basic shape of the post-war period, and I would say that Andropov belongs to the section of the Soviet leadership which realizes what is happening economically, militarily and socially. In view of the development of the scientific-technological revolution, there is a very serious risk that the Soviet Union will lose the arms race in the next ten or fifteen years. I don’t think they will succeed in the field of electronic mass production. But if they do, as Castoriadis has suggested, it will be at the cost of a tremendous concentration in one sector which drains the rest of the economy in such a way that the whole system begins to fall apart.

I believe the Soviet leadership is heading for a very serious discussion of the option of isolationism, because they are already so over-

stretched and there is already the fear that they will lose the arms race. They will, of course, threaten to match every step taken by the West: their very weakness makes any retreat a subjectively unthinkable risk. But there is no question of any expansive tendency. They simply don’t have the option of overrunning Western Europe. They must wish themselves relieved of the whole burden, and I believe that in the long run this will push them in the direction of withdrawal of isolationism. Of course the forces engaged in the military sector would oppose this, and it remains to be seen how the internal discussion will develop. The Western peace movement, including supporters of a freeze and so on, will be an important factor in deciding the outcome of this discussion in the Soviet Union. If we don’t succeed in stopping the missiles here, if American economic expansion successfully carries itself over into the military sphere and allows Washington to construct a defensive umbrella over the United States, then Moscow will be driven into a truly hopeless situation. I hope we will be able to convince a large enough section of European public opinion that it is in our own interest to facilitate a Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe.

This idea doesn’t seem to have taken hold of the peace movement.

No. There is such an appalling dearth of strategic minds. Maybe this has to do with the fact that the eco-peace movement sees itself only as a protest movement, an opposition, a counter-force, instead of, as it were, the core of a new world order.

It’s also true that questions of military strategy are always presented as questions of number. It is essential not just to avoid this kind of argument but to leave this particular battlefield altogether.

Yes. That is very typical. Many friends tell me that I shouldn’t talk about Germany, that that is a dubious kind of nationalism.

Do you see a Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe as a strategic goal of the peace movement?

Yes, but not in the sense of a Soviet defeat. In fact, the long-term
Soviet goal, that Eastern Europe should be happy with the Soviet Union, has already ended in failure. In the final analysis even the GDR will be lost. However, since the Soviet Union cannot lose Eastern Europe to NATO, there must be an independent Western Europe. Some people then go on to talk of an armed, nuclear Europe, but that would be even worse than the present situation and goes completely against the logic of the peace movement. At the moment the Soviets fear the American missiles and don’t really take the French or British seriously, but a third superpower in Europe would be a horrific perspective. The peace movement has to be won to a position of radical pacifism, total disarmament, our whole radical programme, so that at the level of general politics the politicians can be forced in the direction of defensive defence.

Your realistic goal, then, is defensive defence?

Yes. The power complex must be forced to go for a strategy of defensive defence that represents no threat to the Soviet Union.

But we are very far from that position now, both here and in the Soviet Union. I believe the Soviet Union is very suspicious of the peace movement here.

On the question of arms and disarmament, their position will always be to react to what happens in the West. The West has to make the first move. The conditions for this are much more favourable in Germany than they are in England or France because, as a result of the two world wars, any kind of expansionist military patriotism has no chance. The talk can only be about defence. Current military thinking would make Germany, and the whole of Europe, the battlefield of the two superpowers. We therefore have some chance of splitting even the military elite on the question of the kind of defence we need.

Why, in your view, has the Soviet Union been so critical of the peace movement?

Whether we intend it or not, our conception of the dissolution of military blocs has an ideologically subversive function vis-à-vis Eastern Europe and it is seen as such by those who are unwilling to give up Eastern Europe without some realistic alternative perspective. So when I argue that the border should be opened to dialogue between the Eastern and Western peace movements, that is considered very disloyal towards the GDR. It really is an ambivalent situation, as was demonstrated by the fact that Honecker chose to ignore the subversive aspect of the action on Alexanderplatz in order to articulate a positive response to our disarmament proposals.

The role of the DKP (West German Communist Party) is at least problematic. You have developed a thorough critique of the DKP and oppose cooperation with it. Indeed, whereas on international issues you have remained distinct from the anti-Soviet rhetoric in which much of the peace movement indulges, you have been militantly anti-Communist in international peace movement affairs.

What the DKP is doing now is simply defending its own political and ideological existence. At one time, when there wasn’t any other serious opposition to the system, there was always some brave Protestant pastor to demonstrate his independence by supporting the DKP. Such people now come to the Greens. If the DKP hasn’t disappeared already, this is due to the fact that it is artificially kept alive by support from the GDR. It has a disproportionately large apparatus and about forty thousand members. But these are forty thousand activists—cadres who represent the interests of the Eastern bloc. Arguing that Soviet strength makes peace more secure, they defend parity and oppose the stationing of new missiles in Western Europe. In addition, they offer an ideologically confused explanation of the arms race in terms of the profit motive of Western capitalism. It’s clear therefore that we can have no credibility as long as we are linked to the DKP. We can’t win the argument here in terms of pro-Sovietism, but only by demonstrating our independence of both superpowers. We can’t defend values with weapons that wipe out the people who have those values.

Are you against any minimal agreement or common front with the
Yes, not just for short-term but also for long-term reasons. The popular front policy of the thirties was an expression of the collapse of the labour movement, because it manipulated people to support a position which they did not essentially support. This basic conception can only lead to collapse because it does not allow a subjective formation around a particular historical perspective. The historical project of the DKP has already been proved a failure. Whether you say it collapsed with Liebknecht, the popular front or the cold war depends on how far back you want to go. But the model is finished and could only lead to a defeat for the peace movement. On the basis of this assessment I have said that the DKP doesn’t belong to the peace movement, which is defined by its opposition to both blocs. Any policy which represents the interests of one bloc against the other has more to do with the preparation of war than with the struggle for peace. The DKP has as much to do with the peace movement as does Franz-Josef Strauss.

Did the nature and discipline of the DKP surprise you, by comparison with the SED? Is the CP here similar to the CP in the East?

I was less surprised than impressed, because it is such an absurd concept and I can only offer a social explanation for why it still holds together. With the material support of the GDR the DKP has created for itself a kind of habitat which gives it a certain stability. But in the GDR the Party has power: it draws to itself all those who want to advance, at the level either of career or of self-development, and who know that this can be done only through the Party. The formal consensus around the slogans of Neues Deutschland is very superficial and does not determine the daily life of people or their relations with the rest of society. For instance, when the technical director of a factory has to give the Mayday speech, this is just part of his job. He doesn’t identify with what he is saying, and nor is he identified with it by others. He may be judged by how conspicuously or inconspicuously he has copied the speech from the lead article in Neues Deutschland. Since the SED is a ruling party, it must to a certain extent reflect the whole of the society. Here the DKP can only be a minority and, by its nature, a sect.

Do you also think that there is no place for the SPD in the peace movement?

I do. The peace movement, unlike the SPD, works with that part of the spectrum of consciousness, that part of psychic energy, which is not tied to the power complex. The SPD is part of that complex; it is by definition part of the NATO reserve in this country. Of course it’s a different matter with individual Social Democrats, whether they are really part of the peace movement or merely a fig leaf for leadership policies. We can discuss with such people, confronting them with the fact that they merely spread the illusion of an SPD-inspired end to the arms race.

How do you see the future of the SPD in the competition with the Greens for the position of second main party? At one time you even went so far as to say that perhaps the Greens could find better allies in the CDU—in other words, a green-black rather than a green-red alliance.

That is an exaggeration. Within the established spectrum of the metropolitan power complex I make no fundamental distinction between the SPD and the CDU. When I argued that we must make the direct transition from black to green, this was directed against those who still argue the old front politics, who think that we have to put our policies in the container offered by the SPD. Our policies are compatible neither with the SPD nor with the CDU. In the red-green trajectory that has existed up to now within the forty-five per cent, we have simply tried to shift the ratio between ourselves and the SPD. But after this election a reform bloc with the SPD means no more than leaving the SPD to win back some voters from the CDU so that we can again try for fifty-one per cent. For me the strategic question is how to make the direct transition from black to green, bypassing the SPD and establishing a different relation of forces. The Greens were established during the period of the SPD-liberal coalition, and now it is necessary to break from the political conceptions which the Social Democrats sell to the workers and which are bound up with
this reformist labour movement. The Social Democrats, not the CDU, can hold up the constitution of a distinctive green identity. Therefore the main attack has to be against the SPD.

Also against Eppler and the SPD Left?

Of course.

Is Eppler worse than Schmidt?

Yes. Of course he doesn’t have worse policies on the arms race or ecology, but whereas Schmidt could never win people from the Greens to the SPD, Eppler could win people with his eco-reformist policies, could convince them to try once more with him. Then the whole thing would go on as before. So if it’s necessary to constitute a new relation of forces, and if the people we want to win from the SPD have to be won to a completely different conception of politics, then we must first supplant the SPD as a political force. The end of the line has come for the whole reformist strategy of left versus right, whereby the job of the extreme left was always to strengthen and perhaps to radicalize a little the class fighters of the SPD. I never want to see the SPD in government again. It merely holds back the historical process. I see no reason why a worker who has this time voted CDU should ever be won back to the SPD. I look forward positively to the disintegration of the SPD, because it will set people free for a new political beginning. I think I can exert stronger pressure on the SPD from the outside. We must construct the discourse in such a way that they lose the conservative elements while the more open ones come to us. We thus cut up the SPD from both sides.

The paradigm of the workers’ movement, this hundred-year-old social democracy, is nearing its end. There will be no new Godesberg. The SPD will not be able to reconstitute itself as an eco-reformist party, and any attempt to do so would only split it. If Eppler had left, he would probably have split the SPD. But he didn’t leave, and I’m not so sure whether it was a good or a bad thing. For now we have an Eppler wing in the Greens.

Is the demise of the SPD a specifically German development? Or do you think it will be a general pattern for social democracy in the developed capitalist countries?

In this, as in all other things in the history of the European labour movement, German Social Democracy shows the way.

Do you think that socialism as a political concept is also finished?

This is similar to the problem we talked about earlier in respect to Marxism. If pushed hard, I couldn’t deny that I am a utopian socialist because so many of the elements of utopian socialism appear in my commune perspective. But concepts are for doctoral dissertations and books. In reality socialism is what exists in Eastern Europe, or it is the practice of the French Socialist Party, the British Labour Party, or Craxi. It is also the theories defended by the left Social Democrats and the extreme left, the function of which is to cover up the actual practice of social democracy. So to this extent I am green and not red. The socialist concept, in theory and in practice, was tied to industrialism and statism. And since its theory is tied to the perspectives and historical practice of the disintegrating labour movement, it would be quite illogical for me to call myself a socialist. Like Marxism, socialism has become a quarry from which we can take various things, such as the concept of self-management which socialists have dropped in any case. The best and the permanent elements have been bequeathed to us.

There is a problem here with your strategy and your analysis of socialism. You say the workers’ movement is finished. But although there has been no workers’ revolution in the West and the labour movement is in crisis, it is undeniable true that we still live in a class society. Your strategy trying to deny or go around the fact that classes exist, that they are part of daily reality. In the long run I don’t see how this is possible.

As I said before, I deny it only in the sense that I want to withdraw energy from the class conflict. If I discuss with a factory worker who wants to get involved in politics, I would advise him to invest one little finger of one hand in the trade union and to invest the rest in the
new social movement. Trade union activity is a retrograde step. It’s not good when Capital takes more than it should, but this whole defensive struggle takes place on a carousel which guarantees the continued reproduction of the system. Anyway, capital has an interest in stability and it won’t go beyond certain limits. On the old front you can only reproduce the old hierarchy, the old crap, as Marx said. We must reproduce now only that which is needed as the infra-structure of a new society.

Would I be right in thinking that you see the transformation towards a new society not as a revolution but as an entropy of the old system. You speak of liberated zones, of communes. This transformation, if it comes, will take a very long time...

Before I speak of liberated zones in reality, I would speak of occupied and liberated areas of consciousness.

Is the socialist goal of common ownership of the means of production relevant any more?

No, not at national level. This in fact becomes part of my contraction perspective. Human appropriation of the earth as a whole has to happen, but I see this as a process of the reunification of people with their means of production and with the earth. The earth can belong to no one. But if I work on this piece of earth and take out no more than I need for simple reproduction, then I am the owner and the one responsible for passing it on to the next generation in an orderly way. The problem will no longer be one of expropriation but of appropriation—and appropriation only happens when concrete individuals really appropriate their conditions of life. The strange thing about expropriation in practice is that it has never led to appropriation.

At the end of the sixties, the SPD’s Ostpolitik seemed to suggest the possibility that it would become independent of American foreign policy, if not actually neutral. In this perspective the theme emerged of a new Rapallo. You don’t believe that the SPD could achieve that now. But could the Greens or another new government bring about a new Rapallo? What would that mean?

I have considered Rapallo as a perspective for the whole of Europe and not especially for Germany. Of course the inter-German dynamic would be a specific element in this. But the SPD’s Ostpolitik is finished and, given its NATO connection, the possibility of a more radical foreign stance was never more than ideological speculation which nobody ever considered really relevant to power politics. The Greens, however, have from the very beginning constituted themselves outside of the bloc system. It is possible for us to talk about a German or European Rapallo, even at the risk of meeting with animosity in France. I have absolutely no sensitivity for the warnings of those militarists who say that we might damage Franco-German relations. They should test opinion in Alsace.

There seems to be a certain contradiction in your policy on the future of Germany. In the long run your perspective is to break up the national economy and the national state. That is your conscious goal, eco-communities and so on.

That’s not explicitly in the programme, but it is somehow implied.

But when you speak of Germany’s role as the catalyst of a new Europe, this seems to imply a strengthening, if not of nationalism, then of German national feeling. In the final analysis, are you not against nations?

I believe this to be one of those famous contradictions that exist in reality itself. It reminds me of what Marx said about the national constitution of the working class. In practice, if we want to build an ecological, decentralized Germany, we have first to free German territory. The Federal Republic is now under NATO and is the NATO country with the least sovereignty. For our perspective to work, we must first acquire sovereignty over our own territory. This inter-German border, which began as a foreign imposition and has become a danger-ridden frontier between the military blocs, only reminds the German people of the Bismarck state and the possibility of unity. It may be that the Germans would keep this border if they
were ever given the chance to decide for themselves. I see no strong
upsurge for reunification, at least not in the West. But the national
question, including the possibility of reunification, must be discussed
again, because only in this way can security and trust be created for
the rest of the European people. I don't make any assumptions
about what the Germans want. We know both types of situation
well. In the Thirty Years War we had no central power and became
the battlefield of Europe. Then came the German Reich and once
more we were the battlefield of Europe. This is the national dilem-
ma. Neither the presence nor the absence of a central state was the
solution. Maybe the Germans would now come to the conclusion
that things are not bad with the two German states, and perhaps that
they would be even better if we had many smaller German states.
This externally imposed border leads straight to a perspective of eco-
communities. Still, there are several obstacles in the way: one is the
presence in Germany of the two superpowers; another is the
psychological barrier bound up with the externally imposed border
itself. The Germans have to make a new breakthrough here. The ecos-
peace movement, which is preparing a discussion on this, is not a na-
tional movement in the sense of being defined in relation to national
history. But it will become, among other things, a national move-
ment. The question is not big Germany or little Germany. But the
question of sovereignty or self-determination is, at this level, the key
to everything.

Notes to Chapter One

1Kuba: pseudonym of the socialist writer Kurt Barthel (1914-1967), who spent the
years 1933-45 in exile in England.
2Ehm Welk (1884-1966) was a socialist writer of novels and revolutionary dramas. Die
Heiden von Kummerow (1937) describes from a schoolboy's viewpoint life in a
Pomeranian village in the years leading up to 1914.
3El Campesino (Valenti González): Legendary Communist leader of the People's Army
during the Spanish Civil War. He later broke from the Communist movement.
4Eisenhüttenstadt-Ost was a mammoth enterprise, begun in 1950, to establish a steel
complex on virgin territory around Fürstenberg-on-Oder. In 1961 Fürstenberg merged
with the newly developed Stalinstadt to form the town that is now known as Eisenhüt-
tenstadt.
5The 'National Committee for a Free Germany' was an anti-Hitler organization
founded in 1943 in the Soviet Union and pledged to the destruction of Nazism and the
establishment of a new state.
6Wunschgetreu = 'conformer'.
7Lehr = 'educational'; leer = 'empty'.