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**CRITIQUE OF COMMUTOPIA  
ON AN ECONOMIC CONCEPT OF THE NEW LEFT**

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*Heinz Schimmelbusch*

Johns Hopkins Institute for Applied Economics,  
Global Health, and the Study of Business Enterprise



# **Critique of Commutopia**

## **On an Economic Concept of the New Left**

By Heinz Schimmelbusch

### **About the Series**

The *Studies in Applied Economics* series is under the general direction of Professor Steve H. Hanke, Founder and Co-Director of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Applied Economics, Global Health, and the Study of Business Enterprise ([hanke@jhu.edu](mailto:hanke@jhu.edu)).

### **About the Author**

Dr. Heinz Schimmelbusch is the chairman of the management board, chief executive officer, and founder of AMG Advanced Metallurgical Group N.V., listed in Amsterdam, a critical materials company with global operations. He is also founder and non-executive chairman of the board of Puraglobe Inc., a global leader in the recycling of used motor oil with refinery operations in Germany and the US.

Previously Dr. Schimmelbusch was founder, general partner and managing director of Safeguard International Fund, L.P., a vintage 1998 U.S. based private equity firm targeting transatlantic investment opportunities.

From 1981 to 1993, Dr. Schimmelbusch served on the management board of Metallgesellschaft AG, Frankfurt, a global leader in non-ferrous metals, commodity trading and process engineering. Dr. Schimmelbusch has served on the supervisory boards of Teck Corporation (now Teck Resources), Methanex Corporation (as chairman), Canada, Mobil Oil AG, and Allianz Versicherungs AG, Germany.

He also, as chairman, was a member of the boards of Norddeutsche Affinerie AG, Hamburg (today Aurubis AG), Dynamit Nobel AG, Troisdorf, and Buderus AG, Wetzlar. He served as a member of the advisory board of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, London. He was also a member of the board of directors of Norilsk Nickel, Moscow.

Beyond his corporate positions, Dr. Schimmelbusch was a Member of the Presidencies of the Federation of German Industries, Cologne, the International Chamber of Commerce, Paris, and – as an Austrian citizen – the International Advisory Board of the Austrian Chancellor, Vienna.

Dr. Schimmelbusch received a Doctorate in Economics from the University of Tuebingen. He received Goldene Ehrenzeichen fuer Verdienste fuer die Republik Austria

## **Summary**

This study is an analysis of Commutopia, a theoretical economic system. Commutopia has never existed anywhere. The system was planned to be set up in the Federal Republic of Germany by a revolution, which was propagated by the Socialist German student organization SDS. The revolution never took place. The SDS dissolved in 1969, after its revolutionary appeal was echoed only at some German universities. Commutopia is a model of a planned economy. The plan is worked out by the highest soviet and determines the input-output-relations for all communes. The communes are production cooperatives of universally educated individuals. The plan is legitimated within a concept of a kind of Soviet-democratic centralism. The high stage of educational development of the people in Commutopia is guaranteed by a permanent rotation of all individuals through all social positions. Even if a German revolution under the leadership of the SDS had taken place, Commutopia would not have been set up in the Federal Republic. It can be shown, that every attempt to reach Commutopia within a highly industrialized world is bound to end in secular dictatorship by the revolutionaries. It can also be shown that the immanent laws of the commutopic production technique lead to the destruction of Commutopia, once the heroic assumption is made that Commutopia exists. For these reasons Commutopia is no alternative.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Diese Studie ist eine Analyse von Commutopia, einem theoretischen ökonomischen System. Commutopia hat nirgendwo existiert. Das System sollte durch eine Revolution in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland erreicht werden, zu der der Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund (SDS) aufgerufen hat. Die Revolution hat nicht stattgefunden. Der SDS hat sich aufgelöst, nachdem 1969 der revolutionäre Aufruf nur an einigen deutschen Universitäten ein Echo fand. Commutopia ist ein System der Planwirtschaft. Die planende Instanz, der oberste Rat, legt fest, was jede Commune an jede andere Commune zu liefern hat. Die Communen sind Produktionsgemeinschaften universell gebildeter Menschen. Der Plan wird durch einen rätendemokratischen Zentralismus legitimiert. Der hohe Bildungsstand der Menschen in Commutopia wird dadurch erreicht, dass jeder Mensch in Commutopia permanent durch alle sozialen Positionen rotiert. Auch wenn es 1969 eine deutsche Revolution nach den Vorschriften des SDS gegeben hätte, hätte Commutopia in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland nicht errichtet werden können. Es kann gezeigt werden, dass in einer hochindustrialisierten Welt jeder Versuch, Commutopia zu erreichen, in einer säkularen Diktatur der Revolutionäre endet. Es kann gezeigt werden, dass die immanenten Gesetze der commutopischen Produktionsweise zur Zerstörung von Commutopia führen müssen, wenn man die heroische Annahme trifft, dass Commutopia existiert. Commutopia ist also keine Alternative.

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## FOREWORD

In the 1990s, I was very involved in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe, where I was designing currency and market reforms. These endeavors generated a steady flow of people who requested an audience with me at Johns Hopkins. I recall three of those visits in particular.

On one occasion, the Minister of Finance from Tajikistan requested an audience. He didn't speak a word of English but showed up at my office with his son, who served as our translator. I assumed that the Minister would be seeking my advice about what to do with the Tajik ruble. No. By the time we reached desserts at the Johns Hopkins Faculty Club, the Minister finally let the cat out of the bag. He had the deal of a lifetime for me—one of those “import-export” deals in which we would all get rich. His scheme would have involved importing bananas and men's underwear to Tajikistan. He assured me that these would provide a sure-fire path to a fortune. I indicated that, although he clearly had an ingenious scheme, bananas and men's underwear really weren't in my sphere of expertise.

The second visitor that stands out from those post-Soviet days is Forrest Mars, the billionaire of Mars candy fame. He called from Las Vegas and requested a meeting. We set a date, and he arrived from Vegas with his man servant in tow. We lunched at the Hopkins Club and had a wide-ranging conversation, including a long

discussion about his ancestors and Quakers. As Forrest's departure time approached, I was wondering why in the world he had come to see me. So, I popped the question. Forrest said, "I am glad you asked. I was just about ready to get around to that." Then he indicated that he had gotten wind that I was a top gold trader and that he wanted to know where I thought the gold price was going. I said, "Forrest, why did you come all the way from Vegas to Baltimore to ask me that. You could have asked over the telephone." He told me that he did not operate that way and that he was an eye-to-eye kind of guy.

I told him what my views on gold were. Then, I inquired why this was so important, and he told me that he and Jimmy Goldsmith (Sir James) were thinking about purchasing a gold mine in Mongolia. I told him that I thought the security of property rights and the vagaries of royalties in Mongolia were much more important than the course of the price of gold. We then rushed off to meet up with Forrest's driver. A few days later, his man servant called to thank me for my advice and a terrific lunch. He indicated that my advice had tipped the scales for Forrest and Sir James, who decided to abandon the Mongolian gold mine idea. As strange as it might seem to most mortals, billionaires often make decisions in this way.

Now, I come to the third and most memorable visitor in those post-Soviet days. I received a call to request a meeting. The man on the other end had a thick German

accent and a long German-sounding name, which I failed to write down. Never mind. We agreed on a date for a meeting and lunch.

At the appointed time—precisely at the appointed time—the mystery man with a heavy German accent arrived at my office. We started to visit—general small talk. While doing so, I was thinking, “The gentleman’s name, what’s the gentleman’s name, and what is the purpose of his visit?” Then, the gentleman made a move towards his objective, which was the German industrial giant Metallgesellschaft (MG). He said, “I understand that you have been working on the MG oil hedge.” I snapped to attention and indicated that Chris Culp and I had written an article about MG for the *International Economy*, a magazine that I serve as a contributing editor for, and that I expected to receive the galley proofs any day. At that point, my guest leaned over and slowly pulled some papers out of his briefcase. Then, he said, “Professor, I know about that article. These are the Hanke-Culp galley proofs.” I was taken aback, thinking, who in the hell is this guy and how in the hell did he obtain my galley proofs before had I laid eyes on them? He then politely said, “I don’t think you actually know who I am.” I embarrassingly confessed that I had failed to write down his name and did not know who he was. He then announced himself. He was none other than Dr. Heinz Schimmelbusch, CEO of MG and a member of its Management Board, as well as the man behind the famous MG hedge. At that point, we both had a very good laugh and proceeded with our discussions over a long lunch at the Johns Hopkins Faculty Club.



By the way, my involvement in the MG hedge included two articles that were published in *International Economy*, “Derivative Dingbats” and “Pummeling Derivatives.” I co-authored those with my former student Dr. Christopher Culp. One of my *Forbes* columns, “Confusion of Confusion” also dealt with the MG hedge. Furthermore, Sylvia Nassar’s reportage in the *New York Times*, “The Oil-Futures Bloodbath: Is the Bank the Culprit?,” covers my involvement and collaboration that I had with Culp and Nobelist Merton Miller on the MG hedge. Our analysis, which had been completed long before I even knew of the existence of Heinz Schimmelbusch or before he showed up at my Johns Hopkins office of all things, was that the MG hedge was innovative, if not ingenious, and well-constructed. We were solely focused on the hedge, not the personalities involved.

After our first lunch, Heinz and I stayed in touch and saw each other from time to time in New York and Wayne, Pennsylvania, where the offices of the Advanced Metallurgical Group (AMG), a firm that Heinz founded in 2006, are located. Then, in 2013, I was invited to join the Supervisory Board of AMG, and, in 2019, I became Chairman of AMG’s Supervisory Board. Since Heinz is the Chairman of AMG’s Management Board and AMG’s CEO, we have an opportunity to discuss all aspects of AMG and the markets on a daily basis. And, since we are both economists who have wide-ranging interests and experiences and were both deeply involved with communist regimes, both pre and post the fall of communism, we discuss many other things as we oil the axle of the world each day.

In the course of our recent conversations, we began to discuss the revolutions of 1968 in both Germany and France and how eerily similar today's scene is to those unsettling days of 1968. It is then that Heinz indicated that he had published in German "Kritik an Commutopia" in 1968. We then decided that it would be worthwhile to dust that essay off and have it translated and published in English. Heinz's son Andreas, who resides in Berlin, provided a translation, and Spencer Ryan, a research assistant at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Applied Economics, Global Health, and the Study of Business Enterprise, line edited that translation. I thank both of them, as well as Dr. Schimmelbusch, for bringing "Kritik an Commutopia" back to life in English, and for bringing it to English readers at a most propitious time.

Prof. Dr. Steve H. Hanke  
The Johns Hopkins University  
Baltimore, USA  
13 December 2020

## PREFACE

Communism, as a revolutionary economic concept, was introduced to the world via the writings of Karl Marx. In practice, it made its big entrance via the Russian Revolution in 1917. The Revolution was instigated and managed by Vladimir Lenin and led to the establishment of the Soviet Union. At its core, communism's basic idea was to eliminate individual property rights today, while, at the same time, promising the comrades a paradise in the distant future.

For the purpose of this preface, allow me to search for the word "communism" on my curriculum vitae to see what shows up.

I was born in Vienna in 1944. The Soviet Union appeared almost immediately in my life in the form of tanks in the Russian occupied zone of Austria. When the tanks rumbled up the valley, where I lived near a small town in Upper Austria, my sister and I would run into the woods and hide. But, that remembrance, while frightening, was minor. A major nightmare concerned my mother. Once, when returning from the American occupied zone, where my mother had gone to obtain medicine, she was accidentally shot by a Russian soldier. She survived, but only after a few weeks of severe crisis. My sister and I learned to say our prayers at that time.

Then, there was Hans Schimmelbusch, my grandfather. He had built a company that supplied machinery for the regulation of the Danube from Vienna to the Black Sea. He was murdered in cold blood on his front doorstep by Russian soldiers in 1945, when the Soviets confiscated his house in Vienna for use as a "Kommandatura." My grandfather did not give in. It was not in him.

In 1955, I was with my other grandfather, Erich Schlimp, the father of my mother, in a large crowd assembled below the Belvedere castle in Vienna. It was then that the Foreign Ministers of the four occupying powers were assembled on the balcony. They included Minister Vyacheslav Molotov from the Soviet Union. The Austrian Foreign Minister, Leopold Figl, declared from the balcony "Oesterreich ist frei" (Austria is free). The crowd sang the Austrian National Anthem. My grandfather did not sing. He had lost his two sons in the war. He also lost his buildings materials company in Slovakia, which had been nationalized by the communists.

My next encounter with communism was in 1956, when the boarding school I attended in Vienna took on refugees from Hungary. The refugees told us about the horrors they had experienced when the Soviets crushed the Hungarian Revolution.

Fast forward. In 1968, I was a junior member of the Economics Faculty at the University of Tuebingen in Germany. While working on my doctoral thesis, I was teaching economic theory courses. My studies focused on “Austrian Economists” and different shades of socialist economic systems, starting with “big government” a la Keynes and ending with the East German central planning system. Suddenly, the 1968 student uprising erupted. It was led by the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS). When the SDS arrived in peaceful Tuebingen from their headquarters in Berlin, I was chosen to be the one to debate with representatives from SDS.

One of the more interesting debates at the University was when Bernd Rabehl, a SDS Grande from Berlin, was giving his “Kapitalismuskritik” in the Auditorium Maximum of the University of Tuebingen. I was designated as the one to respond to Herr Rabehl. He expounded a standard Marxist critique of free-market economies. In my response, I enumerated deficiencies of capitalism as Herr Rabehl had listed them, and I agreed with some of his points. But, I said, “A critique of capitalism is not why we are here. We have assembled to hear what the economic system that you and your comrades envision and want to install in West Germany looks like.” Our debate went back and forth with little movement, with Herr Rabehl taking a position that capitalism had transformed the people living in it and, only after the complete destruction of the existing system, would it be possible for the newly freed people to come up with a new system. That did not

convince the crowd. I then confronted him with a barrage of arguments. My critique won the applause of those in the audience.

Given my encounters with the SDS, I was motivated to write “Kritik an Commutopia” to simulate what the SDS economic system would look like. I designed Commutopia based on various SDS statements on the subject. The result was published by the local University publishing house. I also published there a Treatise “Grenzen der Planung” (Limits of Planning). In it, I argued that the iterative planning procedures that were necessary for a centrally planned economic system in an industrialized economy were unable to converge to an equilibrium. My conclusion was confirmed by the notorious multiyear delays and various cancellations of the consecutive 5-Year-Plans used by the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) to govern the East German economy.

In West Germany during the seventies, there was a strange discussion within the German “social-democratic” party about “Investitions-Lenkung.” It was a kind of communism light. Socialist systems appear in many shades. The idea was to create a government agency to directly control capital expenditure decisions of private corporations. At that time, I could not resist publishing a satirical treatise about that: “Marktwirtschaft, Buerokratie, und Leistung.” In my satire, I simulated what would happen to this social-democratic project if implemented. Fortunately, it never saw the light of day.

Turning to my industrial life, I was deeply involved in East-West trade. From 1981 onwards, I was a member of the Management Board of Metallgesellschaft AG, Frankfurt, one of the world's leading trading houses and engineering enterprises. Metallgesellschaft (MG) was the largest Western trading partner of the DDR. It was also heavily involved with cross-border trade with the communist regimes who were members of COMECON, which was controlled by the Soviet Union. I described this in 1984 in a presentation before the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C. In my testimony, which is recorded in the Congressional Record, I argued that U.S. policies to restrict East-West trade were irrational, and that in the absence of such policies, the communist systems would collapse more rapidly.

In 1981, I traveled to China for the first time. That was just two short years after Deng Xiaoping produced a roadmap for the Communist Party of China to selectively allow for a private economy and market mechanisms to evolve—his famous “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.” I traveled to Beijing because a leading U.S. bank had requested that Metallgesellschaft design a structure for servicing sovereign loans to China by the way of Chinese commodity exports. Our traders identified a large molybdenum mine as a suitable exporter for such a concept. As a result, I traveled to Shanxi province to see the mine north of Xian. The first contract for this “loan to be repaid by commodity exports” structure was eventually signed in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing that year. In the coming years, I spent at least a month per year in China to follow the intriguing business

opportunities of Deng's new communist architecture that allowed for private enterprise.

On November 9, 1989, the day of the fall of the Berlin Wall, I was at the communist "Kombinat Mansfeld" hosted by Generaldirektor Henning Rost. The Kombinat was East Germany's giant copper producer. The Ministry of Trade in East Berlin had chosen the Kombinat for the site to conclude the transaction. We at Metallgesellschaft bought the strategic non-ferrous metal stockpiles of the DDR. It was a very large transaction, and I, as chairman of MG, was on hand for the signing ceremonies. In the evening, we had a celebratory dinner. As we were congratulating each other, a secretary appeared to announce that the Berlin Wall was falling. Talk about an exogenous shock. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime event—to be in the company of many of the most important personalities in the communist leadership when a secretary announced that the game was over.

In 1991, Metallgesellschaft signed, with Prime Minister Chernomyrdin of the Russian Federation, an engineering contract to supply the technology for the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles stored in various sites throughout Russia. I was on hand in Moscow to finalize that deal. That first-of-its-kind deal was to be financed by the G7 and facilitated through the German Defense Ministry. The negotiations were largely done with the minister of the Defense Industry, General Boris Belousov. We became friends. When the general detected



that I had my eye on a brass miniature version of a Russian tank on display at the Ministry, he presented it to me as a gift. Today, that little tank is in my study in Frankfurt. The General also kept his eye on my son when I sent him to Moscow for a three-month internship at a global auditing firm. Once my son called to say, “There is a car outside my place with two goons inside.” “For safety,” I answered.

In 1993, I resigned from Metallgesellschaft, when Deutsche Bank, a major and dominant shareholder of Metallgesellschaft, started to liquidate its industrial holdings, such as Metallsellschaft, to finance its entrance into the sphere of global trading of financial instruments and investment banking, a venture that ultimately failed. Of particular importance in my relationship with Deutsche Bank was a disagreement that we had about the use of derivatives to hedge oil sales that had been made by Metallgesellschaft. Deutsche Bank blamed me for what appeared to be losses from those hedges. Prominent academic scholars including Nobelist Merton Miller of the University of Chicago, Prof. Steve Hanke of Johns Hopkins, and Christopher Culp, also of the University of Chicago and a former student of Prof. Hanke’s, countered the Deutsche Bank narrative. Fortunately, it ended up in a settlement in my favor. In the Book of Rules, it states that the “winner” in a settlement is the one who receives compensation. Well, as a result of the Deutsche Bank-Metallgesellschaft fiasco, I received the compensation.

By the way, I had never met and didn't know the Professors who aided me in my legal proceedings. I thought that had to be corrected. So, I contacted Dr. Christopher Culp, who at the time was teaching in Switzerland. We had a great meeting in Zurich. With regard to Professor Hanke, I telephoned him at Johns Hopkins, introduced myself, and suggested that I would like to meet him in Baltimore. Prof. Hanke agreed, and I showed up at his Johns Hopkins office at the appointed time. After a while sitting in his ascetic office, while the Professor was obviously somewhere else with his thoughts, he said: "And who are you actually?" I told him, and Prof. Hanke became very much alive. After an hour or so of conversation, we repaired to the Johns Hopkins Faculty Club, where we had a great lunch. It was obviously more frugal than the lunch I had with Dr. Culp in the Baur au Lac in Zurich with roesti and Montrachet.

After I relocated to the U.S. in 1994, I formed a private equity group, Safeguard International Fund L.P., vintage 1998. The Safeguard Fund spotted and acquired a number of small, but globally leading, firms operating as specialists in the increasingly interesting space of "critical materials and related technologies." And, more than 10 years later, in the process of exiting the Fund's investments, I created the Advanced Metallurgical Group N.V. (AMG), a company where I operate as Chairman of the Management Board and CEO. In 2007, AMG listed its shares on the Euronext in Amsterdam. And, as the wheel of life turns, when the

opportunity arose, the Supervisory Board of AMG invited Prof. Hanke to become a Supervisory Board Member, and today he serves as the Chairman of that Board.

Incidentally, AMG's engineering unit has a long history in China, as well as in Russia. Presently, AMG is executing a variety of significant engineering contracts in China, including vacuum furnace plants for the production of high-performance steel. In a cutting edge, one-of-a-kind operation, AMG is also recycling weapons grade plutonium into commercial fuel for nuclear power plants in China. Among other things, this plutonium operation enables China to significantly reduce its CO2 footprint.

As 2020 comes to a close. I watch with amazement that the United States, the country that I had always considered to be immune from giant socialist experiments, seems to be drawn to that fatal attraction. Indeed, many members of the self-proclaimed "intellectual elite" and even members of the U.S. Congress are echoing words that I heard in Germany in 1968—words that would lead to totalitarian socialist state. Many of my more liberal, in the U.S. sense of that word, friends assure me that I will not have to relocate. Never mind. I keep telling them that only a tiny minority in Europe still harbors socialist desires. The European audience viewed the communist ordeal in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The U.S. politicians lack that experience, and they downplay what has happened in Venezuela.

Be that as it may, given this ideological confusion, Prof. Steve Hanke has encouraged me to dust off the forgotten paper Kritik an Commutopia and publish it in English.

Dr. Heinz Schimmelbusch  
Palm Beach, Florida  
11 December 2020

## INTRODUCTION

The present study is an attempt to **outline** ideas developed by the Socialist German Students' Union (SDS) regarding the economic order of the post-revolutionary society in Germany. These ideas have remained fragmented for years, and a comprehensive model of the economic order, which would serve as an **alternative to the present economic system**, has never been construed.

I will attempt to show that, in the background of many unsystematized statements of so-called extraordinary members of the SDS on questions regarding the organization of the communist economy, such a model can be made visible with the help of outside sources and with findings from the theory of economic order.

We call this model Commutopia because it is, on one hand, based on communes as life and production entities, and on the other hand, of a demonstrable utopian character. Commutopia is a concept with a very high degree of abstraction.

We will not compare this model with existing national economies. Because of the different nature of the objects of comparison, such a process would be subject to distortion. In the political discussion, this distortion has often enough led to an >>unfair<< assessment of the existing economy and to a glorification of an utopia. The market economy of the Federal Republic of Germany, when compared to Commutopia regarding fundamental aims of society such as the

equal distribution of economic possibilities, exhibits deficiencies. Something similar can be said about the Soviet planned economy when compared to the neoliberal dream of a free market economy, in which the harmony of the economy is guaranteed through a multilayered arrangement.

John Stuart Mill has already warned of such comparisons. “If, therefore, a choice had to be made between communism with all its prospects and the current state of society with all its suffering and injustice; if the institution of private property would necessarily entail, that the output, as seen today, would be allocated in an almost inverse relation to the work... if this state or communism would be the alternative, then all significant or insignificant difficulties of the latter would merely be dust on the scale. In order to arrive at a fair comparison, we have to look at communism in its best incarnation next to private property as an institution, not how it is, but how it could be.”<sup>1</sup>

The extreme version of an “unfair” critique of the so-called social market economy is the purely destructive call for revolution. The logical foundation of the propagandist of the revolution without a stated goal, or of the proclaimer of the revolution for **its own sake**, is contestable for another reason. In the case of a call for the revolutionary march towards utopia, the goal is at least stated. Then, the individual decides for or against the revolution, while in total ignorance of the post-revolutionary economic order. Without such future knowledge, he or she can not form an opinion on the probability of success of the revolution itself. This

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<sup>1</sup> *J. St. Mill, ...*

problem will be debated below. Also, we will attempt to clarify why the SDS found itself frequently accused of adopting a purely destructive position, even though elements of the revolutionary goal were stated, and the utopia was outlined.

In the first chapter, we will specify a list of the possible sources of the work along with a key for their weights. We will present the method by which we compiled the statements of the extraordinary members of the SDS (we designate these statements as direct sources) into a comprehensive economic concept. Thus, the opportunity arises, as a by-product of the source problem, to form the basis for an easier understanding of subsequent elaborations, and to mention and discuss the precursors, role models, and some of the related authors of Commutopia. The indirect sources have to be handled with the utmost care, and can only be consulted with regard to Commutopia under very specific circumstances.

The second chapter encompasses the analysis of the commune as a production unit. The education of the communards, the organization of production, and the council's democratic structure of self-government will be paramount. In the third chapter we will examine how a microeconomic general equilibrium model for coordinating communes, which does not contradict the sparse statements of the SDS, can be developed. One will arrive at a model circumscribed by the term "council democratic centralism." This is a combination of a democratic-centralist and an anarchic body of thought.

In the fourth chapter, the attempt will be made to present the outcomes of the analysis of the two preceding chapters as a closed theoretical system. Thus, it becomes possible to declare a constitution for Commutopia. Moreover, the *homo communis*, the theoretical communitarian, will be axiomatically generated.

The fifth chapter contains a discussion of the possibilities, based on the assumption of a “late-capitalist economy,” of reaching Commutopia. We will attempt to tease out important elements of the strategy debate within the SDS. In the sixth chapter we will assume that Commutopia has been reached in one way or another. It will then be asked, “what if during the transition towards a dynamic approach, contradictions arise that could lead to the negation of Commutopia?” We will then examine the reaction of Commutopia to certain endogenous and exogenous impulses. Thus, this will be a stability analysis, which, of course, implies Commutopia’s existence.

Finally, we will abandon the assumption of Commutopia’s existence in the seventh chapter. It will be examined whether or not the paths mentioned in Chapter 5 are passable or must lead past Commutopia. Moreover, the problem of accessibility will be analyzed in general.

We will arrive at the conclusion, that with regard to Commutopia at least one condition for a utopia according to our terminology is unfulfilled: The realization probability of Commutopia, regardless of which path one might choose (meaning independent of the probability of the paths), is, for the current generation, equal to zero. Thus, we will not live to see it happen.



With regard to epistemological preliminary remarks, we can be brief. We apply the method, which we came upon in the direct sources, systematize and compile. If the *homo communis* exhibits a formal similarity to certain other model people, perhaps to the classic *homo oeconomicus*, then this is **indicative** of the fact that the vision of the SDS can be described as a system of hypothetical-deductive relations, which allows the deduction of principally empirical-substantial hypotheses. In light of the strong front within the SDS against the “pure and apolitical scientific character,” this seems somewhat confusing at first.

As an author of this kind of study, one runs the risk of being called an apologist of the prevailing circumstances in the capitalism of the Federal Republic. One of the extraordinary members of the SDS once said, that a dispute “with the academic consecrate priests of the capitalist system” is “a futile effort from the start.” The judgement of these consecrate priests is accordingly “fixed like the amen” in church. The councils are groundless utopias and follies, but ultimately seduction ideologies of totalitarian regimes intended to undermine the eternal character of the free, democratic order of the harmonious community of the social partners in monopolistic capitalism. “No pathos, no lie, or defamation is too much for the apologists of capital, in order to fulfill their mission.”<sup>2</sup> Thereby, Rabehl alleges, that the ‘apologists of capital’ highlight the utopian character of the ‘revolutionary’ ideas in order to strengthen the ‘reaction.’ Obviously, every critic of a specific ‘revolutionary’ appeal is supposed to be made readily into an apologist

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<sup>2</sup> B. Rabehl, Remarks on the problem ...

of another system – maybe, in order to distract from their critique. For this reason, we underscore that the deduction of contradictions which prevent the attainment of a certain system, or cause a specific system to self-destruct once it is attained, does not readily permit a conclusion of the author’s political position. If a system is reduced to absurdity, it is by no means an apology for some other system.

Finally, it should be mentioned that this study does not assert to perhaps exhaust the potential range of the critique of Commutopia. We content ourselves with the deduction of a few contradictions of the kind described. A number of important approaches to economic and especially sociological critique, which are obvious and might be missed by the reader, will not be taken into account.

The study represents an expanded version of a speech which the author gave at the Democratic Club Tübingen (a registered association) in the context of a seminar, which the ‘Neo-Marxism’ working group of said club hosted about ‘Problems of socialist economic orders.’ The discussions in this seminar and the remarks by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Fikentscher and Prof. Dr. Friedrich Tenbruck, who both read the manuscript, led to a series of improvements. For these, I am very grateful.

## CHAPTER 1: THE SOURCE PROBLEM

### 1.1 *The lack of an overall viewpoint authorised by the SDS*

One can assume that every economic regulatory concept should provide detailed answers to the following questions, (1) who will, (2) with what legitimacy, and (3) according to which rules, determine (a) the production schedules of the enterprises (i.e. the quality and quantity of the goods to be produced), (b) the working conditions of each individual (nature, location, and scope of the work to be performed), and (c) the distribution of the goods produced to the enterprises and individuals.

When searching for explicit answers from the SDS to these questions, we were unable to unearth an overall viewpoint authorised by this organization. To our knowledge, such a viewpoint does not exist. As a partial explanation for the lack of a reasonably comprehensive economic system before the envisioned revolution, one should invoke a sentence by Marx, especially because Duschke also cited this sentence in a related context: “the revolution is not only necessary because the ‘ruling’ class can not be overthrown in any other way, but also because only by means of a revolution can the ‘overthrowing’ class rid itself of the dirt of the past, and thus be enabled to newly establish society.”<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the alienated individual (we will further touch upon different variants of the term

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<sup>3</sup> R. Dutschke, ...

‘alienation’) does not possess this ability in a capitalist system. This is expanded upon in more detail in the following assertion: “The objectification of the individual is perfected through the falsity of his consciousness. The most important characteristic of capitalist society regarding an analysis, which considers its reality in terms of its revolutionary modifiability, is that individuals in a capitalistic society are unable to adequately recognize their societal reality<sup>4</sup>.” If reality can not be ‘adequately’ recognized, this also applies to its shortcomings which a revolutionary target system would seek to eliminate, the alienated individual is not able to articulate a target system, or liberate himself from alienation.

Because the SDS and its respective members exist in a capitalistic environment, the question arises: how was it possible, that statements concerning a post-revolutionary economic order were nevertheless posited, which, in a few fragments, seem to indicate fairly detailed ideas. Dutschke commented on this in an equivocal fashion. In an interview with the *Spiegel* on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1967, he observed that critical theory must come up with a concrete utopian idea. A few months later, however, he rejected this method – while referring to the ‘macrosocial unconsciousness’ (see above)<sup>5</sup>.

One can already sense, that the deus ex machina regarding this predicament can only be the revolutionary vanguard, which has managed to

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<sup>4</sup> Dutschke, ...

<sup>5</sup> Cmp. ...

remove itself, at least temporarily, from the capitalistic production process and thereby from the most significant hotbed of alienation.

### 1.2 *The revolutionary appeal: destruction vs. utopia*

For individuals who are faced with a revolutionary appeal and have to decide for or against, it is of crucial importance whether the revolutionary target system will only begin to emerge as the revolution progresses. Subsequently, it is important whether said target system – if it has already been determined – exhibits utopian tendencies or not. The decision-making situations, which can be articulated to this end, can be utilized to more clearly define the above-mentioned (in 1.1) predicament.

Let us begin with a ‘representative’ individual, who – when confronted with said appeal – is not familiar with the revolutionary alternative, i.e. the envisaged economic system. Furthermore, let us assume, that said individual is aware, that he is, in fact, ‘representative.’ In other words, that the other individuals of said society will decide for or against the appeal in a similar fashion (uniform electoral behavior).

In case of a decision against the appeal, the outcome is certain. The revolution will not take place. The present economic order remains unchanged. On the other hand, if the individual goes along with the appeal, the outcome is completely up in the air. The outcome can be the economic order of the point of

departure (failure of the revolution), or any other conceivable order. Without additional information, which can, for instance, be extracted from a hypothetical action plan, which also includes constructive elements, the allocation of the probabilities of realisation is problematic.<sup>6</sup> A decision-making situation is described outright by the quantity of possible outcomes, *the quantity of the probabilities of realisation*, and the preference function regarding the quantity of outcomes weighted with said probabilities. If a revolutionary appeal is purely destructive, it will not contain any elements, which make the outcome predictable, and the individual will only go along with the appeal under very special circumstances. For instance, he could find the status quo to be unbearable, or – more generally speaking – he could surmise, that any arbitrary status is better than the current one.

If, on the other hand, a target system is specified and possesses said utopian tendencies, the decision-making situation will undergo a drastic change. To expand on this, we need to define what we mean by utopia. At this time, it is not feasible to enter into the vast debate regarding the different definitions of utopia.<sup>7</sup> It is, however, important to note that we are not in agreement with a definition that sees the essence of utopia as “a critical negation of an existing present in the name of a happier future”<sup>8</sup>. In this case, any idea which ventures beyond the existing present and asserts a status that the person in question

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<sup>6</sup> We ...

<sup>7</sup> Cmp. ...

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32.

prefers to the existing present would be an utopian idea. The concept of happiness is far-ranging. The most marginal of reforms can be interpreted as being utopian. Thus, it should not be the definition of the word 'utopia,' which remains our starting point, that is paramount here. And, after which 'utopia' is defined as 'nowhere.' Nowhere is unattainable. This unattainability is not limited according to time. We will modify this definition somewhat. We will define utopia as an imagined social status, which, when starting from the status quo, and on the basis of the societal standard of knowledge<sup>9</sup> of the present generation, is seen as unattainable.

Let us assume for a moment that the individual whose electoral behavior we are analysing is sufficiently informed about certain arguments, which establish the unattainability of the revolutionary target system. The individual is aware of the utopian character of the system. In this case, he will calculate the probability of realisation of the targeted societal status as zero. Under said assumptions, this 'impossible' outcome does not directly enter into the preference considerations. The utopian target system nevertheless plays an important role in terms of decision-making. Certain elements of the action program of the revolution can be derived from it. This narrows the scope of possible outcomes with regard to the case of the purely destructive appeal. For instance, it is readily apparent, that the action program of the so-called utopian socialists contains the elimination of the

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<sup>9</sup> This term ...

private ownership of the means of production. The decision-making situation is thereby simplified.

In spite of Dutschke's comments with regard to Marx's hypothesis, touched upon in 1.1, some of the preeminent members of the SDS specified a target system for the revolution, among them – as mentioned above – Dutschke himself. A purely destructive appeal would have all but ruled out an analysis of this type.

The citizens of the Federal Republic reacted uniformly negative, when confronted with said revolutionary appeal. A few of them did observe constructive elements and judged the appeal, or the movement which propagated it, as being capable of inciting or even leading a revolution. Some of them affirmed the principles of the target system but negated its realisation probability. Thus, they classified its concepts as part of the category of utopias, per our definition. In conjunction with this, a socialist order of some kind was predicted as the outcome of the revolution, which would then – like its many historical predecessors – perpetuate itself, and secularly prevent the realisation of a 'higher phase of societal development' in the form of the SDS's vision. In the following, it will be comprehensively established why this group would have been proved correct – with regard to their prognosis – had the revolution come to pass. We will not discuss the revolution's evaluation of said principles, which opposed not just the realisation probabilities of the concepts mentioned, but also the principles themselves.



The SDS apparently interpreted the dismissal of the revolution by the populace and the impossibility of recruiting the revolutionary cadres from the ranks of the 'proletariat' as a confirmation of their own hypothesis: the consciousness of the working populace does not recognize its own alienation. Of course, this hypothesis and the method of its verification cannot be interpreted according to the demands of empirical-scientific processes.

### *1.3 Direct sources: Statements of the extraordinary members*

To begin with, the statements of the extraordinary members of the SDS, as well as the documents of the delegate conferences should be considered as literary sources pertaining to the revolutionary target system. Various judicial bodies have already dealt with the relative assessment of these two sources. In its ruling in the legal dispute between the Federal Minister for Family and Youth and the SDS regarding the allocation of funds for the Federal Youth Plan, the Higher Administrative Court of North Rhine-Westphalia (HAC) consulted both the statements of the extraordinary members, as well as the documents of the delegate conferences. As the next higher instance, the Federal Administrative Court (FAC) emphasized that the statements of the extraordinary members were not crucial to the ruling: "The citations from the resolutions of the delegate conferences already more than justify the decision of the appellate court."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> NJW, ...

Thereby, the FAC emphasized the significance of these documents while curtailing that of the statements of the extraordinary members. This seems to be in response to the partial reason for an appeal by the representatives of the SDS which states that the HAC's ruling is contradictory insofar "as it, on the one hand, utilizes literary statements of reputed extraordinary members, and, on the other hand, has deemed as irrelevant the declarations of the only representative, whom he actually heard during the oral proceedings, namely the first chairman at the time."<sup>11</sup> The FAC has pointed out that the statute of the plaintiff explicitly specifies "that its political guidelines are a direct result of the fundamental resolutions of the delegate conferences."<sup>12</sup> This may be of some importance for a legal debate. In any case, one should not, with regard to the scope of our inquiry, readily follow suit here since the SDS has, time and time again, made use of an anti-authoritarian structure. This problem, however, does not arise for us in this shape or form because the documents of the delegate conferences have little to say about a potential post-revolutionary society.

If one wants to draw upon the statements of the extraordinary members, the question of how one would identify them immediately arises. One could call a member extraordinary if they have a relatively high level of consciousness. By this, we mean the ability to adequately<sup>13</sup> recognize societal reality. What this really means is maybe best explained by a short remark by Marx regarding the objective

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<sup>11</sup> Ruling of the FAC, ...

<sup>12</sup> NJW, ...

<sup>13</sup> Cmp. ...

of his principal work, which seeks to expose the economic law of the movement of modern society. From this perspective, the ability to adequately recognize reality means having “uncovered”<sup>14</sup> the “natural law” of societal movement. This is, then, also a necessary condition for the ability to eliminate the determinants of the intellectual and physical impoverishment of individuals and to conceptualize communist society.

It should be asked if there exists a method, which allows an individual to objectively (intra-individually constant) determine which one of two individuals possess the higher level of consciousness. Such a method is only conceivable in the event of very restrictive conditions. Society’s law of movement would have to be objectively established; the individuals' level of information would have to be measurable according to an objectively valid, one-dimensional scale. If such a point of reference<sup>15</sup> does not exist, or an appropriate scale of this kind cannot be developed, the determination of the relative level of consciousness of two individuals would remain a subjective process. This has important consequences for elections within the SDS. If the voters, who had filled the different positions via elections, were incapable of identifying objectively higher levels of consciousness, the possibility could not be excluded that relatively important positions would have been occupied by members with a relatively low level of consciousness and vice versa. This means that one should not infer a member’s level of consciousness from his or her position in the organizational structure of the SDS if one does not

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<sup>14</sup> *K. Marx*, *Das Kapital*, ...

<sup>15</sup> We will discuss, to what extent the Marxist analysis ...

accept the above conditions as a given, and if one precludes speculative axioms, which could determine that members with a higher level of consciousness, through ways unspecified, always manage to assert themselves in such elections.

We will primarily draw upon statements by Dutschke, Rabehl, and Semler. This selection is, especially in connection with that which was just set forth, mostly arbitrary. Nevertheless, it has its legitimacy because the published statements<sup>16</sup> were not contradicted from within the ranks of the SDS, and because these publications are, according to our literary source knowledge, the only attempts made to define the revolutionary target system. The statements of these three authors regarding the organisation of the economy after the revolution rarely contradict each other and complement each other to a great extent. We designate them, jointly with those statements of certain other members of the SDS, as direct sources.

When attempting to complete the fragmentary picture that results from the exclusive use of direct sources, we will fall back on statements which do not directly refer to the envisaged economic order, but from which it is only indirectly possible to infer certain characteristics. These include statements critical of capitalism and/or socialism and references to role models, predecessors, and guiding principals in general. Moreover, the texts of related authors can be consulted in a complementary and elucidatory manner. Thereby, the quantity of direct sources is supplemented by indirect sources, on which the same emphasis

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<sup>16</sup> These statements ...

cannot be placed. Direct sources will be used to clarify the use of indirect sources in closing the gaps in the picture. It should be readily apparent that, in this regard, an absolutely satisfactory approach can hardly be achieved.

#### 1.4 *The use of indirect sources*

On one hand, the SDS's critique of capitalism concerns existing capitalist economic orders, on the other, it refers to reform models – perhaps under the auspices of neo-liberalism or liberal socialism -- which are seen as a reaction by capitalist apologists towards the increasing contradictions of that system. Their implementation, in reality, serves the stabilization of capitalism. Said contradictions, however, are only superficially eliminated.<sup>17</sup> The arguments from within the ranks of the SDS in this context resemble those of other neo-marxist authors, for instance those of Baran and Sweezy.<sup>18</sup> Such authors can thus be consulted with regard to controversial questions. Said statements critical of capitalism and socialism will be considered indirect sources, in the sense indicated above, and, in particular, in the third chapter in which the coordination of the production activity of the communes will be analyzed. Different forms of coordination, which initially seemed possible due to the related vacuum of the direct sources, can thus be eliminated.

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<sup>17</sup> Cmp. ...

<sup>18</sup> P.A. Baran/P.M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital* ...

The most significant historical role model of a revolutionary target system with respect to the direct sources seems to be the Paris Commune of 1871. Dutschke designates it as the first revolution in a metropolis.<sup>19</sup> A metropolis in this context is an urban societal complex exhibiting a high level of industrialisation. Rabehl has suggested that historical circumstances play a lesser role here than the model standing behind the establishment of the commune.<sup>20</sup> This corresponds with Marx's approach, which idealized the commune in his 'Civil War in France.'<sup>21</sup> The following passage from this work is especially important in understanding Marx's basic concepts: "The commune was established through the town councillors, which were elected by universal suffrage in the various districts of Paris. They were held accountable and could be deposed at any time. Of course, their majority consisted of workers or recognized representatives of the working class. The commune was not supposed to be a parliamentary, but a working body, at once administrative and legislative. The police, which had so far been a tool of the government, was immediately stripped of all its political properties, and transformed into the accountable and always deposable instrument of the commune. The same was the case for the officials of all other administrative bodies. From the members of the commune on down, public service had to be provided for a worker's wage. The vested entitlements und representative funds of the high state dignitaries disappeared, along with the dignitaries themselves.

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<sup>19</sup> Cmp. R. Dutschke, ...

<sup>20</sup> Cmp. B. Rabehl, ...

<sup>21</sup> K. Marx, ...

Public positions ceased being the private property of the stooges of the central government. Not only the municipal administration, but also the entire initiative, which had so far been exercised by the state, was put in the hands of the commune.”<sup>22</sup>

Lenin’s comments concerning the Paris Commune are more sceptical than those of Marx. Lenin emphasized the Paris Commune’s mistakes, particularly three of them: “it did not take possession of Bank of France, did not proceed to attack Versailles, did not have a clear program etc.”<sup>23</sup> This quote also outlines the reasons for the Commune’s failure. It collapsed, to a lesser extent, due to inner contradictions, but mainly due to external influences. We will come back to this indirectly when the paths away from Commutopia are analyzed.

There are manifold predecessors for commune models: those that actually existed as well as those that were mere utopian concepts. Worth mentioning are the settlements of the ancient Germanics, the first Christians, and the early communists. Babeuf’s *Manifest of Equals* anticipated significant traits of the Paris Commune.<sup>24</sup> Also worth mentioning are the experimental settlements of the utopian socialists of, for instance, the 19th century. In the ranks of the predecessors of those communes propagated by the SDS, the Russian collective settlements and the Chinese people’s communes should not be ignored<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> K. Marx, ...

<sup>23</sup> W. I. Lenin, ...

<sup>24</sup> Cmp. ...

<sup>25</sup> Especially the Shanghai commune is worth mentioning here ...

Parallels can also be found to Israeli manufacturing cooperatives (Kibbuz and Moshav), not to mention monasteries and similar special cases.<sup>26</sup>

The central principle underlying the revolutionary target system of the SDS is that of the minimization of the rule over the people. Even if there was sometimes talk of abolition, in other words, the total elimination of this rule, the council model of the SDS contains authorities, namely said councils. We will see that direct control and permanent depositability did not succeed in abolishing this. With reference to the learning effect of the revolution, the intermittent federal chairman of the SDS, Krahl, kept his options open by noting: “we will realize during the revolutionary practice, to what extent rule is abolishable.”<sup>27</sup>

### 1.5 *An example for the closing of gaps*

We will attempt to derive the educational system of the SDS-concept for the postrevolutionary society, which we want to expand towards Commutopia, from indirect sources containing statements of related authors critical of capitalism.<sup>28</sup> With regard to the educational system, a series of direct sources are also available. The method in our example thus principally resembles that of the ex-post forecast. We will derive certain theses from the indirect sources, which we will then verify with regard to the direct sources. The procedure of this example

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<sup>26</sup> Cmp. ...

<sup>27</sup> Statements ...

<sup>28</sup> Cmp. ...



will serve to answer whether gaps in the direct sources can be closed in this manner.

Let us begin with the dimension of alienation<sup>29</sup> that has the capitalist division of labor at its root. In Marx, it is the factory “which maims the worker into being a partial worker.” The factory worker generates “productive activity merely as an accessory in the workshop of the capitalist.” “A certain intellectual and physical mutilation is wholly inseparable from the division of labor in society at large. However, since the manufacturing cycle carries this societal fragmentation of the branches of work much further, but only seizes the individual at his or her root with its idiosyncratic division, it is this division, which delivers the material and impetus towards industrial pathology.”<sup>30</sup> Since Marx connected the division of labor with the alienation of the worker in the so-called Paris Manuscripts of 1844, similar theses can be found in Marxist and neo-Marxist literature time and time again. The factory is the place for specialisation, and the specialized human being resembles the machine. Baran and Sweezy note: “Humans are still being specialized and sorted, they are locked into small cells prepared for them by the division of labor, their capabilities are stunted and their intellect is diminished.”<sup>31</sup> In the days of Marx, the threat to the peace and security of human consciousness appeared menacing, and, ever since, it has increased with technical advances. Marcuse takes a similar view. He sees the division of labor in connection with the

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<sup>29</sup> Cmp. ...

<sup>30</sup> *K. Marx*, ...

<sup>31</sup> P.A. Baran/P.M. Sweezy, ...

macrosocial role of the individual: “The realisation of the division of labor in terms of the economically and socially developed and safeguarded relation between rule and subjugation is the prerequisite of every further division of labor into castes, classes, professions etc., which contains an economic and societal appropriation of activities. Initially, the practice of a subjugated existence is limited to the procurement of the bare necessities with regard to the needs of the community, which it is attached to...material production and reproduction is established as a way of being, which governs the entire existence (of subjugation).”<sup>32</sup> The consensus in the evaluation of the consequences of the division of labor for the individual spiritual development from Marx to Marcuse leads to the assumption that those inside the SDS took a similar view<sup>33</sup>. The evaluation of these consequences clearly exemplifies that one of the main purposes of the revolution has to be the establishment of a social system and, in particular, an educational system which does not exhibit these negative traits regarding the spiritual mutilation of the individual. A priori, there are various methods to establish this:

*Option 1: >>People’s education by the state<<*

According to Marx,<sup>34</sup> Adam Smith had already called for this in light of the realisation of the stultifying<sup>35</sup> effects of the division of labor. Marx, however, was

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<sup>32</sup> For a confirmation, cmp. ...

<sup>33</sup> For a confirmation ...

<sup>34</sup> *K. Marx*, ...

<sup>35</sup> For an overview of Smith’s theses ...

sceptical with regard to this recommendation. The statement cited above concerning the inseparability of deformity and division of labor rules out that a state supported educational system could, in his view, eliminate said deformity without affecting the reason for the deformity, namely the division of labor.

*Option 2: Elimination of the division of labor*

If the division of labor is at the root of a certain dimension of alienation, and it is eliminated, then the dimension is eliminated as well. The response to the question: “can the division of labor can be eliminated?” necessitates an exact definition of the relationship between the divisions of labor, the overall economic system, and the objective pertaining to this system. We define a collaborative economy as an economy in which those taking part in the economic process carry out tightly confined and almost always the same economic activities. It is a generally accepted view that an explicit connection exists between this division of labor and a high level of industrialization or a progression of economic growth based on said level. If such a level, or such high economic growth, is aspired by society, then – such is the conclusion - the division of labor is a necessary condition.

*Option 3: Implementation of a rotation system of work*

Dutschke also accepts the connection between the division of labor and economic growth, when he speaks of the “ world-wide collaborative connection... which by itself facilitates the development and expansion of the productive forces and of social wealth.”<sup>36</sup> Is this, in light of a critique of capitalism partly based on alienation, a contradiction? The following way forward presents itself. If one defines a collaborative economy as an economy in which those taking part in the productive process at any given moment carry out a tightly confined but also a frequently alternating activity, then one cannot say that the individual is separated and locked in cells. The individual rotates through the cells. He or she is still a specialist, but in each period or stage of the rotation a specialist for something different. The new feature, compared to the general view suggested above concerning the connection between the division of labor and economic growth, is that the individual is now judged differently with regard to his or her capabilities. He or she is apparently not overextended by the rotation.

If one considers these three options and confronts them with other indirect sources, then, consequently, the educational system of Commutopia, which should be inferred from indirect sources, should be based on Option 3. Option 1 is unsuitable due to the criticism alone, which the SDS voiced at Universities of the Federal Republic.<sup>37</sup> At the center of the criticism stood the external influence of the state. Option 2 is also unsuitable due to the fact that the total elimination – not just the extension of its definition – of the division of labor

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<sup>36</sup> *R. Dutschke, ...*

<sup>37</sup> *Cmp. ...*

would result in a reversion to more primitive economies. Such an elimination would mean that any productive individual provides a reflection of all economic activities of the overall economy, as is the case in primitive self-reliant economies. He or she does not rotate through the different activities; his cell reflects the economy on a smaller scale.

This leaves Option 3. The analysis of the commune, its characteristics with regard to the organisation of work, and the education of the communards, which follows in the next chapter, will confirm the conclusion just drawn in line with the third option. Thus, we will answer in the affirmative if gaps in the picture obtained when using only direct sources, can be closed with the help of the indirect sources.

## CHAPTER 2: THE COMMUNE AS A COLLECTIVE

### 2.1 *Towards a definition*

'Commune' stands for 'community,' 'in commune' stands for 'for mutual benefit.' In 1415, miners in Leoben founded a collective production system in order to "mine the ore with a common profit and use in mind," and "in order to work, buy, and sell together."<sup>38</sup> It was called a commune. The commune of Leoben was probably the first union according to mining law on its side of the Alps. The use of the word 'commune' varies from then on, passing through many iterations until the settlements of the hippies, especially in the forests of the Southwestern United States, who had fled the big cities, were designated as such.<sup>39</sup>

Marx understood the term commune as designating, on one hand, the classless republic<sup>40</sup> (in reference to the Paris Commune), and, on the other hand, the governing body of the classless republic, towards which the different Parisian districts sent their delegates.<sup>41</sup> The decrees of the Paris Commune with regard to this matter of definition can also not be unambiguously interpreted. The SDS understands the term commune as designating that which Marx implied with the term "workers' cooperative" or "workers' association." The Marxist term of the

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<sup>38</sup> Cmp. *F. Tremel*, ...

<sup>39</sup> Cmp. ...

<sup>40</sup> Cmp. ...

<sup>41</sup> Cmp. ...

“communist community,”<sup>42</sup> which is also applicable here, is further defined by Rabehl: “Collectives of three, four, or five thousand people, respectively, which are centered around a production plant.”<sup>43</sup> It can be surmised that all of Commutopia is broken down into such communes: “The entire city should be broken down into such decentralized communes.” This quote refers to Berlin. Marx said that the Paris Commune “should naturally serve as a model for all the large epicenters in France.”<sup>44</sup> One can assume that – like Paris for France – Berlin was thought of as a role model for the organisation of the entire Federal Republic.

## 2.2 *The workers’ council*

The commune as an association of producers is headed by the workers’ council. Of course, said council is no longer “a part of the trade union hierarchy..., which is an instrument and institution of the ruling state.”<sup>45</sup> The workers’ council is elected by the communards of the corresponding commune in free and equitable elections. Everybody votes; everybody can be elected. Every member of the workers’ council can be voted out at any time. Thereby, essential elements of every council structure are fulfilled. In Commutopia, the workers’ council is an extremely competent body. “Compared to the management in capitalism,”<sup>46</sup> it is

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<sup>42</sup> K. Marx, *The Capital...*,

<sup>43</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

<sup>44</sup> K. Marx, *The Civil War ...*,

<sup>45</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 59;

much better at running the business. This claim is initially vague for the reason that the criterion for 'good' management remains open. This criterion can refer to the working conditions and/or to the productivity of the labor factor, to name just two possibilities. This productivity plays a decisive role in Commutopia when taking into account statements regarding the efficiency of the economic system in Commutopia, of which we will speak below. Certain limits concerning the variability of working conditions will result from this.

The general active and passive right to vote would, in reference to the postulate of the minimization of the rule of people over people, not be sufficient. But, if only certain workers were to possess the qualification to run the business in such a way, then the efficiency criteria would be fulfilled. Therefore: "The workers would have to qualify for the running of the businesses."<sup>47</sup> Without any further limitation, here 'the' also means 'all' workers. Thereby, we arrive at the starting point of the educational system in Commutopia, whose particular achievement must be such a qualification for all workers.

### 2.3 *Vertical and horizontal job rotation*

The educational system in Commutopia is based on the rotation of the communards through different jobs within the businesses, which leads to a comprehensive knowledge of the production process: "The worker should be able

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<sup>47</sup> B. Rabehl, ...



to wander through the business, as it were, through all the different professions; he would have to get away from specialization and know the entire business.”<sup>48</sup> This does not mean “that the worker merely develops into an accountant.” The accountant is the prototype of the bureaucrat, and the term ‘bureaucrat’ was often used in socialist literature synonymously with that of the specialist. The rotation, however, is supposed to abolish precisely this type of specialization. Another important element of the system is addressed when the altruism and the helpfulness of the communards is indirectly referred to: “other forms of cohabitation should be found, other forms of solidarity within the business.”<sup>49</sup> This element will prove to be crucial within another context.

The position of a workers’ council member heading up the business, in other words, the council body, should also be seen as a job and thereby as a part of the workers’ migration. In this job, the worker learns to inhabit a management role. We designate the rotation through this kind of profession as a vertical rotation. The ‘mental laborers’ or ‘engineers’ act as instructors and later (after the transitional phase) *it will be* all the engineers who become qualified to run the business. “The mental laborers and the manual workers should come together, whereby the engineers should instruct the workers in the management of the businesses.”<sup>50</sup> The transitional phase is the phase after the revolution in which “the workers become informed, schooled, and scientifically qualified, and increasingly

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, p. 153.

empower themselves to scientifically control production.”<sup>51</sup> Such a rotation also has to exist in the higher phase of communist society. Even if one assumes a stationary economic system, in which all economic variables exhibit the same values in each period, the burgeoning communards will still exist as trainees.

The vertical rotation is defined as a rotation into and out of the ruling positions. The council democracy, as a system of direct control (via the imperative mandate and permanent deselection), cannot abolish ruling positions. The councils can be voted out, but the council body cannot be abolished. The directives of the base have to leave the council some leeway for its own decisions. Otherwise, the council can be abolished and replaced by the base. In the preparatory phase of the revolution in late capitalism and in the phase of transition to the system of Commutopia, the councils hold additional ruling positions, since, because of the differences of consciousness, direct control can only be constrictively approved. “In the actions before the revolution, the councils or factory committees are organs of spontaneity, institutions, in which the workers can shape their revolutionary consciousness with regards to the class struggle, by regarding the factories as ‘their’ property, by readying themselves to control production, and by finding themselves, through their demands, strikes, and demonstrations, in direct confrontation with the capitalist state apparatus; these workers’ organizations are a means of organizing the workers and, simultaneously, of a double rule. After the revolution, these councils don’t just have the function

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<sup>51</sup> *id.*, ...

of mobilizing the workers **for** socialism, but also the function of integrating the councils themselves into the material context of the technical **operating** process. Only the creative initiative of the workers **and** scientists within the production will unveil the possibility of social production.”<sup>52</sup>

Ruling positions, whether under direct control or not, can be defined as positions in which decisions by the seat holders can assume the form of binding instructions for certain individuals. Above, we have implicitly identified these positions as the council’s posts. The statement made at the beginning of this section about the migration through the different positions doesn’t just include the vertical rotation, but also the horizontal one, by which we mean the rotation within the area of positions of dependency. Just as the vertical rotation has managed to eliminate that dimension of alienation, which has been designated as ‘powerlessness’<sup>53</sup> in the relevant literature, the horizontal one eliminates the “partial worker,” who “does not produce any goods.”<sup>54</sup> The partial workers turn into complete workers who take part in the entire production process. In Commutopia, both components of the rotation result in the universality of the individuals in the economic sector of the commune. This economic universality is a part of the universality of individuals, which Marx spoke of as a precondition for the higher phase of communist society<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> *B. Rabehl*, Council Democracy..., ...

<sup>53</sup> Cmp. the term powerlessness in *E.G. West*, ...

<sup>54</sup> *K. Marx*, Das Kapital..., ...

<sup>55</sup> *id.*, Critique of ...

## 2.4 *Additional conditions of economic universalization*

Up to this point, we have been concerned with the instrument of the elimination of specialization within the commune, which for Marx would have been the elimination of the “division of labor in the factory.”<sup>56</sup> The universalization of individuals, however, would go even further in Commutopia. The division of labor “within society” should also be eliminated. This means that the communards could also oversee the spheres of production of all other communes. One condition for this is a system of schools. These would be organized according to democratic councils and the curriculum would be determined by the respective plenaries. In the course of this, there will be no special privileges for any specific groups, because there are no groups. Everybody is “teacher and student all at once.” “In such a school, the difference between theory and practice, between worker and engineer would generally speaking disappear.”<sup>57</sup> Thereby, the worker learns to carry out all functions including leading the commune<sup>58</sup>. Thus, the council schools support the learning effect of the horizontal and the vertical rotation. But the worker will also learn more. Dutschke calls attention to a significant extension: “The different council schools could then exchange the qualified people, rotate them, thus setting in motion a learning process throughout the different production spheres, in order to get to know them, to understand, and adopt

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<sup>56</sup> *id.*, *Das Kapital...*, ...

<sup>57</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

<sup>58</sup> Cmp. *ibid.*

them.”<sup>59</sup> This means that all of society will turn in a university. There “would be no more faculties, we would have a learning society.” In Commutopia, the universal learning process eventually leads to all the activities of the communards merging into one unit. Thereby, the universalization transcends the economic framework, to which we assign: “the factories are not only production facilities, but also educational institutions, since the universities demonstrate their connection with the basis of production, and integrate themselves into the larger plants: the scientific work, the productive activity, and the fulfillment of needs, the ‘non-repressed life activity,’ form a unit, just as no more difference exists between the scientific seminar, the workers’ collective and the communities of friendship.”<sup>60</sup> This reference, once more, illustrates the concept of the multi-dimensional, complete individual in Commutopia. In many ways, this concept is reminiscent of Maoist ideas. This becomes evident in the following appeal of Mao’s: “Workers are primarily employed in industry, but must also study military affairs, politics, and culture. They must also take part in the socialist educational movement and the critique of the bourgeoisie. The commune farmers are primarily concerned with agriculture, including forestry, animal husbandry, ancillary trade, and fishing; but they also have to study military affairs, politics, and culture. If certain conditions are met, the farmers also have to collectively establish a few small factories and take part in the critique of the bourgeoisie. The same goes for pupils and students. They primarily concern themselves with their professional studies,

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<sup>59</sup> *R. Dutschke, ...*

<sup>60</sup> *B. Rabehl, ...*

but have to learn other things next to these studies, namely working in industry, agriculture, and military affairs; they also have to take part in the critique of the bourgeoisie... Workers and employees of trading enterprises, service providers, and party and government organizations must, if certain conditions are met, also act in this manner.”<sup>61</sup> The difference here with regard to Commutopia is essentially that the many different job positions are aggregated into large sectors, for example, the industry sector. One has to bear in mind, however, that this quote concerns a transitional phase, which is something that can already be inferred by the many references to the necessary critique of the bourgeoisie. In light of the ramified division of labor of modern industrial societies, and of the progressive explosion of knowledge, the existence of the multi-dimensional, universally educated individual, who is therefore generally suited for said exchange of roles, is not readily plausible. Two features of this concept generally work against scepticism concerning the transferability of Commutopia onto such societies: the limited working hours of the communards on the one hand and the simplicity of the work to be carried out on the other. Both features are suited to principally facilitate the fulfillment of the educational demands for the communard.

With respect to the working hours in Commutopia, or during the transitional phase, Rabehl writes: “The collective consciousness of the individual is not just formed during working hours, but above all during the increased leisure time, which, through intensive education, works to allow this switching between

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<sup>61</sup> The whole country must become a school for the doctrine of Mao-Tse-tung, in ...

the roles of scientist, worker, farmer, and management professional in the first place.”<sup>62</sup> A daily working time of about five hours is deemed appropriate. Since Dutschke also states that such a reduction makes “the universalization of the individual and thereby the comprehension and control of the industrial structure as a whole”<sup>63</sup> possible, the conclusion is evident. The educational effect of the leisure time (attendance of council schools etc.) is assessed as being relatively high, compared with that of the rotation through the different positions.

Ceteris paribus, in the case of a reduction of working time per capita, the increase in personal labor supply becomes necessary if production should at least remain steady. To achieve this, the integration of many groups of the unemployed into the sphere of production and a general increase in productivity are considered (whereby the condition of Ceteris paribus stated above must be abandoned). Furthermore, in Commutopia, the bureaucracy becomes no longer necessary. “Let us stipulate: The bureaucracy as a violent organization must be destroyed. The thousands and tens of thousands of human working capacities, which today are absorbed by the bureaucracy, must be productively educated... Nobody can be turned away, for everybody is a productive force.”<sup>64</sup> This is also the case for the ‘old,’ the pupils, and the housewives. “The old have to, once again, enter the circulation sphere, but also the production sphere, namely in their former workshops.”<sup>65</sup> Of course, the reference to the former workshops is only

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<sup>62</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

<sup>63</sup> R. Dutschke, ...

<sup>64</sup> R. Dutschke, ...

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, ...

consistent during the transitional phase. During the progressive transition, the individual communard can, to a lessening degree, and in Commutopia, ultimately no longer be associated with a certain job position, since he has been rotating his whole life. Among the pupils, the polytechnic education facilitates their integration into the production process, whereas the women are expected to break up their families and emancipate themselves.<sup>66</sup>

That is enough for the reduction of the working time. Now, on to the simplification of the activities at the individual workplaces. The simplification of work is a postulate, which is mentioned time and again in socialist literature in connection with the 'specialist problem.' In his play, 'The Days of the Commune,' Brecht lets the communard Langevin, whose dialogue partner, Genevieve, points out to him the irreplaceability of the bureaucrats (here=specialists), retort in a particularly impressive manner: "Their (The specialists') main concern is to make themselves irreplaceable. It has been like this for centuries. But we will have to find people that organize their work in such a way so that they are always replaceable; the simplifiers of work, these are the great workers of the future."<sup>67</sup> In the Paris Commune, the elimination of the specialists failed. Brecht ascribes this to the respect for the Bank of France and the most important specialist, its governor. Lenin and many other socialist historians of the commune have harshly criticized said respect and saw it as one of the reasons for the failure of the commune.

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<sup>66</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

<sup>67</sup> B. Brecht, The Days Of The Commune, in: ...



Consequently, the work in Commutopia is simplified. The simplifiers of work are the computers. Semler says: "If the computers didn't exist, they would have to be formally invented with regard to the constitution of the councils. Only they can facilitate the gathering of information, which now replaces the necessary decisions of the former bureaucracy, namely in such a way, that no more bureaucratic positions exist, which cannot be recast within fourteen days."<sup>68</sup> We will, once again, take a stand on this issue later. At this point, it is particularly significant that a simplification of the activities via automation could, by virtue of the lower educational demands, actually substantially facilitate a rotation. With regard to the 'specialist problem,' there are a few statements which prima facie weaken the quote of Semler's above, and which – this is also made clear by the examples mentioned, and the new human in a new society put in contrast to them – consequentially can only refer to the transitional phase<sup>69</sup>.

In conclusion, the educational system in Commutopia is characterized by three main elements: the rotation through the different positions, the system of council schools, and the school rotation. As additional conditions, the limited working hours and the simplification of work requirements could be mentioned.

In 1.1, our understanding, within this text, of an overall economic regulatory concept was defined. With regard to this classification, we have outlined in this chapter that (1) the workers' council will, (2) with a democratic council legitimacy, and (3) under the objective of establishing or maintaining a

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<sup>68</sup> Ch. Semler, ...

<sup>69</sup> Cmp. R. Dutschke, B. Rabehl, Ch. Semler, ...

rotation, facilitate the universalization of the communards and determine (a) the working conditions of the communards (nature, location, and extent of the work to be performed). This says nothing, of course, about (b) the determination of the production plans, and (c) the allocation of the produced goods. In order to cover these areas, more information is required about the system of coordination of the individual communes, which we will turn to in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: THE COORDINATION OF THE COMMUNES

### 3.1 *Isolated or interdependent communes*

The question concerning the coordination principle, which characterizes the interaction of the economic activity of the individual communes, cannot be answered offhand. On the one hand, this is a consequence of the fact that the direct source material concerning this matter is not very fruitful. Furthermore, the individual sources – when viewed in isolation – do not always seem clear-cut or, in part and *prima facie*, consistent. The closing of gaps with regard to these sources according to the methods described in Chapter 1 turns out to be difficult, because the theory of economic systems, within which one should proceed, is extremely complicated. A particular problem arises because it is not always clear if a direct source refers to Commutopia or merely to the transitional phase.

However, the question concerning the coordination principle must be answered. If one wants to arrive at an overview of the economic order of Commutopia in the comprehensive sense, which we defined in 1.1, only a familiarity with the coordination principle facilitates a response to the outstanding issues regarding decision-making about production and allocation (cmp. the statements at the end of 2.4). Thus, we will attempt to examine different conceivable forms of coordination in terms of their compatibility with the direct sources. In the

process, we will consider said problem as solved if a form can be found, which does not contradict the existing and relevant direct sources.

A theory of a 'self-reliant economy' can be positioned at the outset of the theory of economic orders. By this, Eucken means a small, manageable economic unit, which generally has no relation to other such units, with which it forms an economy. A medieval monastery could serve as an example for this. Eucken provided the following description in this regard: "Thousands of self-reliant economies, which have no economic association whatsoever with each other, work side by side. Each individual family supports itself in full, and is a centrally managed community, which is subordinate to one of its members. There are smaller and larger communities; but none of them is so big that a special administrative apparatus would be necessary to manage it. In all of these, the manager himself directs the entire economic process, which he personally oversees. In the case of totally centrally managed family economies, any kind of barter is absent, and there are no prices and no exchange values of the goods."<sup>70</sup> In search of the coordination principle in Commutopia, we will initially pose the theory: if communes, as we know them from their presentation in the second chapter, can be associated with a modified concept of the self-reliant economy, which still contains, however, the element of isolation, then it is safe to say that the communes in Commutopia are not self-reliant economies. This, for one, becomes clear due to the fact that the high degree of industrialization presumed

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<sup>70</sup> W. Eucken, ...

necessary for Commutopia is not compatible with the division of labor within a self-reliant economy. This does not need to be discussed any further. The high level of industrialization in Commutopia can be derived from the fact that a computer-based automation of the different job positions plays a central role (cmp. with 2.4) and that the capital goods necessary to this end (especially the computers) obviously also need to be reproduced. Nevertheless, it is interesting to initially interpret the commune as a self-reliant economy. In this way, a few important questions with regard to the coordination principle can already be clarified beforehand. In an economy comprised of self-reliant economies, any and every coordination principle of the economic activity of the different units is negated, not in favor of anarchy, but in favor of isolation.

The Euckensian term of the self-reliant economy has to be repeatedly modified when applied to the commune. Firstly, the families, of which Eucken speaks, now turn into extended families of emancipated communards, and a manager is now akin to an employee representative. Subsequently, there is an important difference regarding the answer to the question of how the manager of the self-reliant economy should effectively make his decisions.

Eucken seems to presume a 'dictatorial' authority of the manager. Thereby, his legitimacy remains unexplained,<sup>71</sup> and any possible decision-making rules are never stated. The Euckensian example with regard to the self-reliant economy as "a totally centrally controlled economy"<sup>72</sup> indicates that the manager of this self-

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<sup>71</sup> For a simple ...

<sup>72</sup> Cmp. *W. Eucken*, ...

reliant economy, in a way more or less unspecified, decides on the production plan, the working conditions, and the allocation of the consumer goods produced<sup>73</sup>.

Even if Eucken doesn't specify how the preferences of the manager with regard to all these partial decisions are actually formed, it has been determined, that during the transition to the specific case of the commune as a self-reliant economy, the decisions of the workers' council cannot contradict the preferences of the majority of the respective plenary of the commune (cmp. to the imperative mandate, and the direct control, respectively). The logical difficulties, which might oppose the identification of a joint and consistent preference order of a group of individuals, should not be ignored here. These difficulties can be described in greater detail via a reference to the so-called Arrow-paradox and confine the possibility of such joint preference orders to a few special cases.<sup>74</sup>

It is important to note that the protection of the minority via an attachment of the workers' council to the majority will is not guaranteed. The majority can, but is by no means obligated to, let outlandish consumer requests of a minority enter into the production plan. Thereby, the crucial restriction of the sovereignty of the consumer, which we define by the influence that the consumers can exercise over the production plan, is now also a given. This restriction can be eliminated by the (heroic) assumption that all contentious issues will be lengthily debated in the plenaries, until a general consensus has been

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<sup>73</sup> Cmp. the decisions (a) to (c) ...

<sup>74</sup> Cmp. *K. J. Arrow*, ...

reached. In other words, until no more minorities exist. In such a world, the difficulties regarding the formation of a preference order, according to which the workers' council decides, cease to exist. Its clarity and consistency will be arrived through a sufficiently lengthy debate.

Once the production plan has been fixed, a certain adjustment can – if one assumes that the same range of consumer goods is allocated to each communitarian – be reached by allowing corrective exchange transactions.<sup>75</sup>

A self-reliant economy in no way has to be organized without existing barter, prices, or exchangeable values, as von Eucken assumed. It is entirely conceivable that the head of the self-reliant economy acts in line with the market. In this case, the self-reliant economy would be a company offering various products, and its members would be those demanding the consumer goods.<sup>76</sup> Eucken's market formation theory itself would call this a supply monopoly.<sup>77</sup> For the commune as a self-reliant economy, this construct can definitely have some significance. Let us assume that the plenary assembly of a commune organized in a self-reliant manner stipulates that the workers' council should not act as a monopolist, but rather as an 'as-if-polypolist,' and should determine the factor input as well as the production program in accordance with the decision rules applicable under these preconditions.<sup>78</sup> The communards would be extremely qualified to control the execution of this assignment. The educational system puts

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<sup>75</sup> Cmp. ...

<sup>76</sup> The capital goods ...

<sup>77</sup> Cmp. ...

<sup>78</sup> These decision rules ...

them – as is already known – in a position to oversee the entire production process, and to determine if and to what extent the decision rules are violated. This construct is interesting in comparison with the former, especially because - if, once again, an equal compensation of all communards is assumed – each communard has the same influence on the production program, no matter how outlandish his consumer requests may be. The protection of minorities is guaranteed as such in this regard, and not just as a possibility.

### 3.2 *Principle of coordination 1: The invisible hand*

As mentioned, the degree of industrialization demanded for Commutopia precludes a dissection of the national economy into isolated communes because of the necessary economic division of labor. In the following, we assume such a division of labor, whereby we conveniently postulate that each commune only manufactures one single product. As the first potential coordination principle of such a flock of interdependent communes, we will examine the “invisible hand” (Adam Smith). This invisible hand, the pricing system, which is seen by all market participants within the scope of a strategy of quantity adjustment as a premise, restricts the consumer requests of the communards, who constitute the demand side of the market for consumer goods, exactly to the extent that they conform to the supply of consumer goods produced by the communes. In order for the resolution of the suggested model to result in a Pareto-optimality, meaning a state



of supply of consumer goods to the individual communards, in comparison to which no other state can be found, that improves the situation of at least one communitard with regard to the supply of goods, without putting at least one of the others in a worse position, various conditions must be met. Two of these, which refer to the decision rules, under which the communes, or the workers' councils have to economize, are especially interesting for us. First, so much should be demanded of any arbitrary factor of production, that the marginal return of this factor equals the factor price. Second, so much of the produced commodity should be supplied so that the differential costs equal the commodity price. This goes for each individual commune. Analogous to the statements in the previous segment with regard to the control of the workers' councils, one can now assume that the communards overseeing the economic production process would control the adherence of the communes to the stated decision rules.

Before we examine to what extent the coordination principle of the invisible hand corresponds to the intentions of the SDS, or the regulations in Commutopia, two additional remarks should be made. The first concerns the remuneration of the communards; we again assume that each individual communitard receives the same wage. This assumption should be valid for Commutopia, independent of the coordination principle. On the one hand, this could be motivated by the concept of justice according to Marx,<sup>79</sup> which stands in the background of the corresponding demand in the Paris Commune. On the other

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<sup>79</sup> Cmp. *K. Marx*, ...

hand this is motivated by purely economic considerations. Since each communal is led towards universalisation by the educational system, the production factor of labor can be seen as homogenous. Since, moreover, each communal constantly rotates, each individual yields the same output in the long run, whereupon the principle of equal remuneration readily arises from that of performance-related compensation.

The second additional remark concerns the sovereignty of the consumers. It is a given that, without the kind of restriction identified in the previous segment, the macroeconomic production plan also reacts **according to** ‘dissenting opinion.’ It keeps reacting until a Pareto-optimality is reached. We have assumed that the communals possess complete and total information with regard to the consumer goods, which, given the total oversight that they have over the production processes, is not surprising. We have not mentioned the problem of consumer goods innovations<sup>80</sup> and that of public goods. Can the assertion regarding consumer sovereignty be readily transferred to public goods? A public good can be characterized by the fact that the consumption of one unit of this good by one consumer does not reduce the remaining amount of said good available to the other consumers. The differential costs of these goods are equal to zero and are – if it is a matter of goods produced – lower than the average costs.<sup>81</sup> A Pareto-optimal supply of consumer goods seems called into question if the problem of financing the production of public goods cannot be solved. The distortion would

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<sup>80</sup> One could ...

<sup>81</sup> We designate the public goods ...

be grave, since the group of public goods,<sup>82</sup> in the case of a high degree of industrialization, is usually a heavy burden. We will come back to the role of the public goods in Commutopia shortly.

The financing problem could be solved according to a suggestion by Louis Blanc with regard to a similar question. Early on, he endorsed a system of production cooperatives, in which the workers should take on entrepreneurial roles. Successful cooperatives were to deposit a part of their profits into a trust, which would then subsidize less successful enterprises.<sup>83</sup> The basis for this proposal stems from the attempt to distribute the earnings equally among all workers, since, according to Blanc, the wages are tied to the success of the respective enterprise, where the said worker is employed. If one transfers this to our problem, one could analogously demand that the economically viable communes are to finance the losses of those communes that produce public goods. But, since the invisible hand does not allow for profits<sup>84</sup> that would make this financing possible, prices for different goods would have to be increased. Then, one could simply just increase the prices for the public goods since the stated conditions for a Pareto-optimality are violated in any case. As a way out, a production financed via the taxation of the communards presents itself. Since all the communards receive and should receive the same compensation, a head tax makes the most sense. Its amount will be determined so that the production of

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<sup>82</sup> If one ...

<sup>83</sup> Cmp. *G. N. Halm*, *Economic Systems, A Comparative Analysis*, 3rd ed., London... 1968, p. 304 et seq.

<sup>84</sup> Therefore, constant average costs are assumed here ...

public goods can expand in such a manner that the market price of each of these goods arrives at the level of its differential costs.

In conclusion, one can characterize the model just outlined, which, of course, was in no way exhaustively depicted, as a market economy, in which the participants represent democratic, self-governed communes. Well-rounded and uniformly compensated communards rotate through the positions and directly control the adherence to the decision rules for the communal supply and demand behavior via the workers' councils, so that the conditions for Pareto-optimality are not violated, which – as we assume – is supposed to be realized. One now has to ask if such a system, or if the coordination principle of the invisible hand so specified, is compatible with what we know about Commutopia from direct sources.

To begin with, a consensus with our model can be established by the fact that a supreme council exists in Commutopia “where the representatives of the individual communes, the individual councils, which are at any time electable and deselectable, send their representatives.” This council is supposed to “control the economic process, and namely without offering up any disciplinary directives.”<sup>85</sup> This task corresponds to the coordination principle of the invisible hand if one lets the ‘control’ refer to the adherence of the stated decision rules, and the ‘disciplinary directives’ to any exertion of influence exceeding this. The supreme

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<sup>85</sup> *B. Rabehl, ...*

council could then also immediately undertake the fixation, collection, and forwarding of the taxes.

Furthermore, there is an interesting reference by Dutschke, which can be interpreted as a commentary on the system, which is considerate of differentiated needs regarding the demand for consumer goods: “We need commercial kitchens, for instance, which do not distinguish themselves by their simplicity, but rather develop highly sophisticated needs.”<sup>86</sup> This reference is not at all affected by Semler’s response<sup>87</sup> that in 1918/19, the introduction of the council system in commercial kitchens was rejected by the council editors of the magazine *Workers’ Council*. Moreover, Dutschke obviously refers not only to the kitchen, but also to the supply of a series of public goods.<sup>88</sup>

Not applicable to the model of the invisible hand is a part of the critique that Tugan-Baranowsky puts forwards against the Blancian production cooperatives: “the egotism of the capitalist is not eliminated by these, it is merely transformed into the egotism of a group of workers participating in a certain commune.”<sup>89</sup> In the model of the communes, egotism does not have a starting point at all. Because remuneration is the same for everyone, and everyone (cmp. 3.1) performs in the same manner, egotism in a world of solidly united, brand new people is impossible.

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<sup>86</sup> R. Dutschke, ...

<sup>87</sup> Cmp. Semler’s response, *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Cmp. Enzenberger’s previous statement, *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Cmp. to this G. N. Halm, ...

Engels also argued against syndicalist ideas with the contention that these would not change the essence of the capitalist system. In his polemic against Mr. Dühring ideas regarding the organization of society on the basis of economic communes, he writes: “In any case, the economic commune has the means of labor for the purpose of production at its disposal. How does this production take place? According to everything, which we learn from Mr. Dühring, (it takes place) in the old style, just that the commune takes the place of the capitalist.”<sup>90</sup> Thereby a central argument of the Marxists against the syndicalists is suggested. Since the sole amendment is the substitution of the commune for the capitalist, the capitalist crises will persist as a possibility, and the arguments against the coordination of the capitalists will not be suspended.

This could be viewed as the first indication that the coordination principle of the invisible hand is not suitable for Commutopia. Here too, a capitalist remnant simply subsists, and in effect said crises cannot be off-handedly ruled out. It should be added that many do not want to let the communes economize autonomously. For Rabehl, it is “still not really clear how the relative industrial and human autonomy of the decentralized units can be reconciled with an overall plan, in order to arrive at the highest degree of efficiency. It is out of the question that they just completely self-sufficiently muddle along...therefore, we have to combine autonomy, namely radical human autonomy and productive autonomy and planning.”<sup>91</sup> The model of the invisible hand is caught in a long term

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<sup>90</sup> *F. Engels*, Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft, ...

<sup>91</sup> *B. Rabehl*, ...

discrepancy with the following tenet: “we, therefore, do not ask...about costs or prices, but rather we ask about the possibilities of the liberation from labor within the entire system. In other words, it is not the question of costs, that plays the main role in the individual enterprises, but the optimal implementation of technology as a means to the liberation from repressive work.”<sup>92</sup>.If costs and prices are not taken into account, the invisible hands finds itself unable to coordinate. We will bring up further indicators for the incompatibility of this coordination principle with Commutopia as part of later discussions.

### 3.3 *Coordination principle 2: The visible hand*

If the decentralized plan withdraws, then only the centralized one remains; macroeconomic planning takes the place of microeconomic planning. That being said, the method of planning has not yet been determined. One possibility would be to implement price planning. With this, we have arrived at the theory of market socialism. It is based on the reasoning of Enrico Barone, which focuses on the compatibility of price planning and Pareto-optimality. Crucial further development stems from Oscar Lange. His model focuses on two rules.<sup>93</sup> This can be expressed with the help of the postulate, that, on the one hand, the method of production, or the combination of production factors, which minimizes average costs, will always be employed, but, on the other hand, enough of a certain good will always

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<sup>92</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

<sup>93</sup> Cmp. O. Lange, On the Economic Theory of Socialism, in: ...

be provided, so that the differential costs are equal to the price. Thus, the output and the input of every enterprise are determined if the prices are given. For the fixation of the prices for capital goods, there exists – in Lange – the “Central Planning Board,” and the prices for consumption goods and for the production factor of labor are determined by the markets. The visible hand manifests itself in the central planning office. When determining the prices of the capital goods, it abides by the criterion of the total equilibrium of the national economy. As part of a trial-and-error process, it will attempt to find the equilibrium prices for each good so that, with regard to each individual good, the quantity demanded is equal to the quantity supplied.

The transfer of this line of reasoning onto a world of communes is simple. The two rules mentioned become decision rules for the workers’ councils of the communes, the adherence to which is directly controlled by the communards in the proven manner. The functions of the central planning office are performed by the supreme council.

If we approach an answer to the question of whether the suggested coordination principle of the visible hand is compatible with the ideas regarding Commutopia, without an in-depth analysis, this is because a clear statement exists in the direct sources that refutes this principle. The statement refers to the conditions in Yugoslavia. There, market socialism, combined with a certain version of worker self-sufficiency and regional decentralization, was being implemented



which Semler<sup>94</sup> has described as follows: “The Yugoslavs are granted a fictitious self-employment, which ceases with regard to all substantive decisions, and is, at the same time, a sectional-anarchistic stand-off of pseudo-competition. In the long run, a competition of this kind does not even accomplish the task which it undertook in industrial capitalism, which was to organize the market and to act upon the pricing mechanism.” Therefore, market socialism is not compatible with Commutopia. Before we, for this reason, turn to the third coordination principle, two short remarks should be made regarding the previous principles, one referring to the role of money, the other to the labor market.

One can readily assume that, in a highly industrialized market economy, money as a means of exchange is essential. Therefore, if one wants to round out the models of the invisible and the visible hand – which here, because of their incompatibility with Commutopia, seem superfluous – the banking system would have to be depicted, and the determinants of the demand for money would have to be specified, both with regard to the communes as production units, as well as with regard to the communards as consumers. From here, a close connection to the possibility of crises exists, as suggested in 3.2. Likewise, this applies to the labor market. Namely, it is as similarly imperfect as the labor market according to Keynes, in which the rate of money wages is temporarily constant, which can lead to an underemployment equilibrium. We know, that each comunard works for

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<sup>94</sup> *Ch. Semler, ...*

five hours. Thereby, the assigned amount of the labor factor is temporarily constant, and crises can be the result.

### 3.4 Coordination principle 3: The total volume plan

We have just examined the method of central price planning; the central planning office fixes a portion of the prices, and the enterprises or communes adjust their quantitative input or output according to certain behavioral rules. The alternative to the central price plan is the central volume plan. If the central planning office establishes a total quantitative plan, then this means that the production and delivery schedule of each enterprise is centrally fixed. We now turn to the analysis of this coordination principle.<sup>95</sup>

Socialist authors have considered the possibility and the problems of such plans early on. Among them, Neurath stands out.<sup>96</sup> He states: “The overall organization, whose establishment we discussed, can only then increase the economy of a way of life, if it has at its disposal an adequate *economic plan*. It is not sufficient to be acquainted with the production possibilities and the consumption as a whole, one has to be able to track the movement and the destiny of all the commodities and energies of the people and machines throughout the economy. Next to the commodity and energy balance, which addresses the generation, the transformation (consumption), the stockpiling, the

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<sup>95</sup> For a similar classification of the coordination principles ...

<sup>96</sup> *K. Tisch* gives an overview, ...

import, and export of the whole country, and keeps track with regard to individual commodities like copper, iron, etc., the balance of the individual branches of industry, of agriculture, etc. must become visible. One has to be able to discern, what amounts of coal, iron, chalk, etc., and machines, people etc. are utilized for the steel works, what amounts of ore and slag, etc. are won, and what part of these passes into industry, or into agriculture.”<sup>97</sup> Apart from minor discrepancies, it becomes clear that Neurath is outlining a model analysis of the supply relationships within the national economy, and between it and its trade partner countries. In the concrete case, this analysis should be undertaken by an in-kind-accounting center. Thereby, this center would have to draft a series of alternative total production and supply schedules: “the *in-kind-accounting center*, which is how we could call said authority, would have to, on the one hand, illustrate the respective economic process, but, especially, **would have** to draft *economic plans* for the future.”<sup>98</sup> From these plans, it should be possible to extract “what kind of quantitative displacements, for instance, the construction of dams, a general cementation of the fertilizer pits, and the like would entail within the scope of the overall economy. The meaning and the feasibility of each individual measure would become apparent through a consideration of the whole.”<sup>99</sup> The working hours and the in-kind employee’s wages would also be a subject of these considerations. The in-kind-accounting center would simulate the consumption

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<sup>97</sup> O. Neurath, *Wesen und Weg der Sozialisierung*, ...

<sup>98</sup> O. Neurath, ...

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

possibilities with regard to a varying work effort and would determine “how much bread, how much meat, how much apartment, how much clothes, etc. could at the most be allotted to the individual.”<sup>100</sup>

When the in-kind-accounting center has identified the different alternatives, combined with the consequential economic plans, for instance, under the assumption “that a power station will be built and agriculture improved in a way, and a second one under the assumption, that a canal will be dug and a smelter erected,” it then submits the plan to the economic leadership and the representation of the people. These entities have to decide which alternative should be realized, for instance: “the superior supply with electricity and foodstuffs amongst other effects, or the superior supply due to the elaboration of imports and increased iron production.”<sup>101</sup> The representation of the people is according to Neurath either ‘social democratically’ or ‘council democratically’ legitimized, whereby the second possibility overcomes the bureaucratization of the first. If “society, through a corresponding representation of the people, regulates production and consumption centrally and in a certain sense bureaucratically, then a *social democratic way of life* is given. In some circumstances, however, the council system serving political purposes can also take the place of the democratically elected parliament with its administrative apparatus; councils tiered above each other as heads of production, that finally

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<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16

merge into a council of councils, are virtually supposed to replace the bureaucracy in all positions through substitute bodies.”<sup>102</sup>

The logical shape of the economic plan in Neurath’s model can be clarified by a quantitative-input-output-formula. Raupach has referred to the formal and partially also contentual connection between the ideas of Neurath and Leontief, who developed the input-output-formula, and to the influence of such ideas on Lenin and the development of the Soviet planning system.<sup>103</sup> The supply currents contained in the economic plan can be summarized through a matrix  $X=(x_{ij})$ , whereby  $x_{ij}$  is the supply flow from the (one-product-) enterprise  $i$  to the (one-product-) enterprise  $j$ . The running indices  $i$  and  $j$  fluctuate from 1 to  $n$ , and  $n$  represents the number of undertakings of the national economy. The technology of the economy can be described through the matrix of the technical coefficients  $A=(a_{ij})$ , whereby the technical coefficients  $a_{ij}$  have the form  $x_{ij}/X_j$ , and  $X_j$  signifies the output of the enterprise  $j$ , insofar as it is delivered to other undertakings as an industrial interim demand.  $X_j+Y_j$  is the overall output of the  $j$ -th enterprise, whereby  $Y_j$  is equal to the so-called final demand, which appears in the open input-output-formula, encompasses the demand for consumption purposes,<sup>104</sup> and lets the formula appear suitable for planning purposes. The economy can now be planned by, for instance, the Neurathian parliament fixing the vector  $Y=(Y_j)$ , and letting the in-kind-accounting-center calculate, with the help of the input-output-

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<sup>102</sup> O. Neurath, ...

<sup>103</sup> Cmp. H. Raupach, ...

<sup>104</sup> Cmp. H. Platt, Input-Output-Analyse, ...

formula, what each individual enterprise has to supply, and how the societal working hours are to be set.<sup>105</sup>

If the planning takes place in the manner indicated, then it remains unclear which criteria the parliament will decide regarding the final demand of the national economy and how the in-kind-accounting-center receives the information about the production conditions (thus, essentially about the  $a_{ij}$ ). No accurate statement can be made about the criteria regarding the determination of the final demand. The decision about the final demand reflects the will of the majority of the representation of the people.<sup>106</sup> It is of interest that, with a council democratic legitimation according to Neurath (cmp. his council tiering, the council pyramid), the will of the majority of the council of councils in no way has to correspond to the majority will of the base if the pyramid is two- or multi-tiered. A simple example to this end. Let there be a two-tiered council pyramid consisting of the base, the councils, and the council of councils. Let the base consist of three groups of three individuals each, that have already dispatched their council to the consequently three-person council of councils, which is endowed with an imperative mandate regarding the decision between alternatives A and B. In groups 1 and 2, this mandate leads to a proportion of votes of 2 to 1 each for the alternative A, and in group 3, a proportion of 3 to 0 for B. Thus, the council of councils decides by 2 to 1 for A, but the base would have voted 5 to 4 for B. In the case of a one-tiered pyramid – for example, in the self-reliant economy with a

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<sup>105</sup> For this and an alternative structure of input-output-planning, cmp. *H. S. Levine*, ...

<sup>106</sup> Let it be mentioned ...

council democratic determination of its leader – such a reversal of the will of the majority of the base is not possible.

How can the representation of the people, aside from the specific legitimization and the mandate of the individual representatives, receive information about the desired supply of consumer goods, or about the production conditions, especially about the *aij* in our formula? For this question, a reference to Lenin and the so-called democratic centralism is relevant. In the narrower sense, democratic centralism initially just means “that representatives of the local organizations come together to elect an accountable body, which then has to exercise leadership.”<sup>107</sup> For example, the central committee of the party is elected, controlled, and removed by the congress. So much for the aspect of centralization and its control. However, the information of the central office also belongs to democratic centralism in the broader sense, and it depends on decentralization. “If, with regard to the ideological and practical leadership of the movement and the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, a *preferably large degree of centralization* is essential, then, with regard to the *information* of the central party office (and consequently of the party in general) about the movement, and with regard to the *accountability* to the party, a *preferably large degree of decentralization* is necessary. A preferably small number of preferably homogenous groups of tried and tested professional revolutionaries has to lead the movement. A preferably large number of preferably distinct and varied groups

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<sup>107</sup> W. I. Lenin, ...

from the most diverse strata of the proletariat (and other social classes) should participate in the movement. The central party office has to, at all times, have ... exact specifications of each of these groups about their activity”<sup>108</sup> at its disposal. The decentralization thus corrects the centralization. It is nothing else “but the flipside of said *division of labor*, which is, as generally acknowledged, one of the most existential practical prerequisites of our movement.”<sup>109</sup>

This line of reasoning is readily transferable to the economic realm. The division of labor is just as necessary in and between the individual enterprises as it is in the party organization. If one applies the informational component of the concept of democratic centralization analogously, the enterprises now have to inform the – if we return to Neurath – parliament, the economic leadership, and especially the in-kind-accounting-center about the production conditions. The same goes for the consumers, which can send a signal regarding their preferences ‘to the top,’ for example, via the results of polls. However, in determining the final demand intended for consumption, the socialist parliament will not react purely passively to these preferences.<sup>110</sup>

In conclusion, the coordination principle of the total volume plan can be characterized by an input-out-formula fixed by a central planning authority according to some sort of legitimization, which is disaggregated with regard to each and every enterprise.<sup>111</sup> This formula is selected from a series of alternative

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<sup>108</sup> *W. I. Lenin*, Brief ...

<sup>109</sup> *ibid*, p. 241.

<sup>110</sup> *Cmp. to this J. G. Zielinski*, The Consumption Model and Means of its Implementation, in: ...

<sup>111</sup> One-product-enterprises are, once again, assumed here.



formulas, whereby the desired final demand and the technical coefficients play the central role. An extreme version of such a concept can be found – as Neuberger relates – with regard to the newer Soviet literature in M. Fedorovich: “Fedorovich recommends a system in which all economic information is transferred to the center and processed with the help of computers and comprehensive mathematical models of the economy. The results are transmitted as commands to the enterprises, which themselves are to be automated, to eliminate the interference by human elements.”<sup>112</sup> Similar to how the coordination principle of the invisible hand appeared in an atrophied form in the self-reliant economy organized in line with the market, the principle of the volume plan can be closely linked to the centrally planned self-reliant economy.

Now, the question should be asked, whether the economic activity of the communes in Commutopia could be organized according to coordination principle 3. Initially, the formal transfer of the principle onto Commutopia occurs without difficulties. The representation of the people is the highest council in Commutopia. An in-kind-accounting center for the development of alternative economic plans is basically not necessary, since the communards and therefore also the members of the highest council are universalized. The migration through the job positions has, as a result, allowed that the production conditions be surveyed. The decentralization in Lenin could consequently already be seen as having been anticipated. However, the prerequisites of the division of labor could nevertheless

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<sup>112</sup> E. Neuberger, ...

suggest such a center. With regard to the final demand, thus, with regard to the amount and allocation of the consumption, each commune representative in the highest council keeps the imperative mandate of his commune in mind, controlling him directly. Thus, this also goes for the intertemporal allocation of resources. There is no difference at all in the treatment of private or public goods. The working time is generally, once again, five hours, and each communitarian receives the same assortment of consumer goods as a natural wage. Money as a medium of exchange does not exist.

In 2.4, we mentioned the role that belongs to the computers in Commutopia with regard to the simplification of the individual job positions. This automation, on a computerbasis, is simultaneously a feature of the economy, which can be very conducive to the implementation of the total volume plan. Is there evidence of such a plan existing in Commutopia? The question can be answered in the affirmative. Rabehl writes to this end; the councils ensure that “economic plans and urban building projects are developed. Thereby, the new technology will display its positive side. One utilizes computers, in order to calculate what has to be built, how the plans should look, what dangers might arise.”<sup>113</sup> In the transitional phase, he writes elsewhere, the status must be radically criticized; the workers have to inform themselves, gain their scientific qualification, acquire the proficiency for the “scientific control of the production, in order to arrive at the realization for the necessity of the centralization of

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<sup>113</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

production.”<sup>114</sup> This means that the workers in the final state have arrived at the realization of the necessity of centralization. That centralization must exist in the final state. Rabehl is at his clearest when he writes, “a *central planning office* collects all the production data and, according to the production capacity of the individual branches of industry, calculates the general increase in production, then forwards the indices of production to the individual enterprises or economic sectors. After every production period or every planning stage, the actual production is measured, and after the socially necessary deductions, a social allocation key is created, which is supposed to distribute the rest of the total product according to the societal needs.”<sup>115</sup> The reference to the capacity and the socially necessary deductions indicates an emphasis on economic growth. This also goes for the perception of consumption as the rest of the total product compared to that of a final demand fixed at the outset of the planning period. This indicates that a dependence on the planning methods of the Soviet Union exists here: “It seems clear that Soviet planners are thinking of using input-output in the construction of the annual plan to work ‘forward’ from a given X vector rather than ‘backward’ from a given Y vector.”<sup>116</sup> According to Rabehl, an investment office shall also serve to promote growth and record bottlenecks, write-offs, and growth industries. When he says that this office shall calculate the “benefit of new production facilities,” then one is directly reminded of Neurath's in-kind-

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<sup>114</sup> *id.*, ...

<sup>115</sup> *id.*, ...

<sup>116</sup> *H. S. Levine*, ...

accounting-center. A central distribution office, which hands out share certificates in the transitional phase for the performance of the individual, does this in the final phase - in accordance with the then equal performance of the individual – “according to his needs.”<sup>117</sup>

This hints at - and Rabehl recognizes this - the necessity of a bureaucracy. The counterforce lays in the decentralization. Computations about the potential capacity are compiled in the enterprises and declared to the planning authorities, entirely according to the principle of democratic centralism in the broader sense mentioned above. The planning authorities receive information about the *aij* ‘from below.’ A regional decentralization according to districts, or a sectoral one according to industries, which manifests itself directly in the structure of the planning authorities, also works in the same direction. “The dissolution of the contradiction of decentralization, in order to ensure the participation of everyone in control and centralization, in order to increase work productivity in the technical working process, already takes place beforehand in the concrete class struggle.”<sup>118</sup> In the final phase, meaning in Commutopia, the contradiction does not exist anymore, the class struggle is over and done with - entirely in keeping with the tautological observation: “the council theory is a utopia, as long as its realization does not emerge from the concrete class struggles.”<sup>119</sup> The economic order in Commutopia can now be characterized by the concept of council democratic

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<sup>117</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>119</sup> B. Rabehl, ...

centralism. It remains an open question, according to which decision rules the highest council shall decide, if one understands these rules to mean more than just the allegiance to the majority will. The growth objective expressed above does not suffice. This also goes for the reference to the well-rounded, new person, who shall make these decisions. The reference to the new human is, however, conducive to the comprehension of the compatibility of the total volume plan with the statement by Dutschke already mentioned in 3.3, that the council shall control the economic current „without disciplining instructions.“ The necessity of disciplining is definitely not given when the respective communard has an insight into the necessity of the respective plan.

## CHAPTER 4: COMMUTOPIA

### 4.1 *Axiomatics toward a minimization of rule*

As a crucial goal of the SDS, one can assume the minimization of the rule of people over people. The economic order of Commutopia would thus have to achieve this minimization, since Commutopia is the intended final phase. It is relied upon that via a council democratic centralism, coordinated communes of newly well rounded people accomplish this feat while maintaining the efficiency necessary for the further development of a highly industrialized economy. If one assumes that for the well-rounded individual communard, the total development of his consciousness is a condition of his freedom, then this well-roundedness must exist in Commutopia and continue to exist. The well-roundedness can be defined by the ability to oversee the entire production process. It is safeguarded by a vertical and horizontal rotation. The rotation takes place within the scope of a system of generally unlimited electability and deselectionability.

In addition, the unlimited electability and deselectionability can be concretized by references to the imperative mandate and direct control. The election, the control, and deselection are brought about respectively by the majority of each responsible election body. These majorities have two crucial tasks. On the one hand, they have to uphold the rotation of each individual communard through their elections, on the other, they have to surveil the activity

of the elected communal. This can lead to conflicts. Someone, who, in a certain position, does not adhere to the imperative mandate and is thus deselected, runs the risk of losing his well-roundedness since his rotation is interrupted. The majority can find itself in the situation of either sacrificing the well-roundedness of a certain communal, or relinquishing the strict adherence to direct control.

The possibility of deciding, in an arbitrary decision situation, for the optimal alternative can be seen as a further condition of the freedom of the communal. Thereby, the problem of a potential discrepancy between the majority and minority will is addressed. That such discrepancies exist in Commutopia can be concluded by the emphasis on elections, since otherwise any random communal would decide in the same way as the respective election body, and elections would not be necessary. If a member of the minority is elected into a directly controlled office within the scope of the vertical rotation, he has to implement the majority will. Neither his dissenting opinion - for example, when determining the consumption plan - nor his passive election into a council, which has to enforce the majority will - for example, the distribution of the consumption goods - assure him of any influence. Thereby, the minimization of rule mentioned above can be defined as maximization of the rule of the majorities. Thus, each communal, generally speaking, has at least two good reasons to associate himself with the majority will. First, he avoids the danger to his well-roundedness, and second, he eliminates the discrepancy between his own optimum and that of

the majority. He remains well-rounded, and rules, instead of being ruled. The conditions of freedom stated are fulfilled.

In order to illustrate the system of the minimization of rule in the sense indicated, an axiomatic verbalization is advantageous, because the different assumptions can be linked in a straightforward manner. In doing so, we begin with the specification of the location of the election or deselection of a communard into or out of a social position:

*Axiom 1* (location of the election)

The location of the election is the plenary session of the commune.

From the perspective of a communard, the amount of social positions or roles can be divided into (1) positions in his (regular) commune, (2) positions in another commune, and (3) positions in the council pyramid, which lays above the level of the communes. In the process, we examine positions without differentiation, according to whether they are assigned to the production process and/or a council school.

An implication of the unlimited election and deselection is the general right to vote with regard to the person, the position, and the time:

*Axiom 2* (general passive right to vote)

Each communard can be elected into every social position.



*Axiom 3* (general right to vote)

Each comunard can vote.

*Axiom 4* (permanent electability and deselection)

It is possible to elect or deselect into or out of any social position.

Moreover, the weight to be assigned to the individual votes must be determined. Furthermore, the necessary majorities have to be defined:

*Axiom 5* (weighting of votes)

All votes carry the same weight.

*Axiom 6* (majority election)

The majorities required for the individual positions have been determined.

Thereafter, the well-roundedness of all comunards must be guaranteed:

*Axiom 7* (well-roundedness)

Each comunard oversees the entire production process.

This leads to a uniform distribution of the knowledge concerning this process. Contrarily, not every equal distribution of knowledge about the production process leads to a well-roundedness of those with that knowledge. We will have to return to this asymmetry:

*Axiom 8* (election and deselection motivation 1)

The election and deselection motivation 1 for every communard is the creation of an adequate rotation.

Only a rotation, which leads to the realization of Axiom 6, can be designated as an adequate rotation.

*Axiom 9* (deselection motivation 2)

Those acting in opposition to the imperative mandate will immediately be deselected from the social positions.

Axiom 8 especially requires some further definition. It is conceivable that the plenary session could instruct the workers' council to establish a rotation plan, which initially would merely guarantee the well-roundedness concerning its own commune and its own communards. In a next step, the workers' councils would have to come to an agreement, amongst each other, in order to organize the interchange of the communards - all this, of course, is only possible with the endorsement of the respective plenary sessions.

As a result of Axiom 9, the possibility that every rotation plan can fail becomes institutionalized. A series of actions against the imperative mandate by elected communards can provide for the standstill or collapse of the rotation system. A contradiction between Axiom 7 and Axiom 9 can - in other words - only

be effectively ruled out if none of the communards disregard the imperative mandate. If one incorporates this explicitly into the axiomatics, this results in:

*Axiom 9a*      (link to the imperative mandate)

The communards link their decisions to the imperative mandate, if such a mandate is declared.

If Axiom 9a applies, then the Axiom 9 is superfluous. If one assumes that no communard will breach the imperative mandate, then the rule of people over people becomes weaker, and the freedom of the communards in general (or the number of free communards) in the above sense of the second condition tied to the notion of freedom always becomes stronger. These forced become weaker and stronger according to how large the number of communards is and whose personal preferences coincide with the preferences of the majority which has declared the imperative mandate. This then leads to the last Axiom:

*Axiom 10*      (general consensus)

A general consensus with regard to all questions exists amongst the communards.

Thereby, Axioms 5, 6, 9, and 9a becomes superfluous. It no longer makes sense to declare an imperative mandate. Everybody in every social position does the same thing: what anybody else in their social position would do. If such a consensus, which renders elections futile, does not exist, then the principle of the

minimization of rule turns into that of the maximization of the rule of majorities over minorities.

The decentralized decision could be replaced by the decision of a rotation center, without the principle of rule minimization being affected. The condition here is that the central rotation plan also effects and perpetuates the well-roundedness of the communards. A compromise is also allowed in this regard. Perhaps one **in which** the vertical rotation is kept running via elections, and the horizontal one via planning.

#### 4.2 *The outline of the constitution of Commutopia*

The (economic) constitution cannot, at this stage, be reproduced verbatim and outright, but it can definitely be reconstructed with regard to its crucial elements. If this outline, in comparison to the established constitutions of socialist states, appears to be somewhat meager, one reason for this would be that it limits itself to the economic realm. Moreover, many things have to be recorded in the constitutions of the socialist states because of their status in the transitional phase. In this paper, such information have been omitted. Commutopia is the final phase. Ultimately, we have limited ourselves to the essential features of Commutopia and have disregarded detailed regulations.

## CONSTITUTION OF COMMUTOPIA

### *I. Council democracy*

#### *Art. 1 (communes as the basis)*

- (1) All of Commutopia is divided into communes.
- (2) The communes are composed of two-thousand to five-thousand communards.
- (3) Each commune is managed by a workers' council.

#### *Art. 2 (highest council)*

Commutopia is managed by the highest council.

#### *Art. 3 (right to vote)*

- (1) There exists an unlimited active and passive right to elect and deselect with regard to the communards, the positions, and the election dates.
- (2) Every communard has one vote. The majorities are determined through the rules of procedure (in the elections to the highest council, qualified majorities are required).
- (3) The workers' councils are elected in the plenary sessions of the communes.
- (4) The workers' councils elect one representative each into the highest council.
- (5) The highest councils consists exclusively of elected representatives of the workers' councils.

#### *Art. 4 (imperative mandate)*

- (1) All elected communards are tied to the imperative mandate of the respective election body, if such a mandate is declared.
- (2) The adherence to the imperative mandate is directly controlled.

(3) Each comunard, that violates an imperative mandate will be deselected directly thereafter.

*Art. 5 (well-roundedness)*

(1) The comunards rotate vertically and horizontally through all social positions.

(2) The vertical rotation is affected by elections.

(3) The horizontal rotation is determined by a central rotation plan.

*II. Economic centralism*

*Art. 6 (property)*

There is no private property of the communes, or of the comunards with regard to resources.

*Art. 7 (total volume plan)*

(1) There is a total volume plan.

(2) The total volume plan determines all economic transactions (delivery currents of goods and services) between the communes.

(3) The total volume plan determines all economic transactions between the communes and the comunards (job performance and allocation of consumer goods).

(4) The working time and the allocation of consumer goods to the comunards is the same for all comunards.

(5) Corrective exchange transactions between the comunards are permitted.

*Art. 8 (planning center)*

(1) The total volume plan is drawn up by the planning center.

(2) At the end of each planning period, the planning center submits a series of alternative plans for the next period to the highest council.

(3) The limitation of this series takes place according to criteria specified by the highest council.

Art. 9 (plan determination)

The highest council selects the total volume plan for each period.

Art. 9 (plan determination)

The highest council selects the total volume plan for each period.

## CHAPTER 5: PATHS TOWARDS COMMUTOPIA

### 5.1 *Waiting for the crisis*

We will now analyze how, originating from a capitalist economic order, Commutopia can be implemented. One possibility is the following path: capitalism, or waiting for the crisis – crisis, breakdown, and/or negation of capitalism and expropriation of the expropriators – transitional phase – Commutopia. With this sequence, we want to characterize a path, which is defined by a relatively high passivity of the “exploited.” The expropriation of the expropriators (capitalists) by the exploited unceremoniously arises from the breakdown of the system. The exploited do not do anything up until then, they simply wait.

For Marx and many Marxists, the breakdown of capitalism is inevitable. The final crisis is caused by social antagonisms, which result from the capitalistic mode of production. Besides a series of other social forces, it is the centralization of capital which leads capitalism to this crisis. The centralization begins with one capitalist expropriating another. “The expropriation is put into effect through the interplay of the inherent laws of capitalistic production itself, through the centralization of capital. Each capitalist kills many more.”<sup>120</sup> This happens in any case, precisely because of the laws of the capitalist mode of production. “It is because of these laws themselves, these tendencies, which function and assert

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<sup>120</sup> K. Marx, *Das Kapital...*, Vol. 1, loc. cit., p. 12.



themselves with a brazen necessity. The industrially more developed nation merely paints the less developed one a picture of its own future.”<sup>121</sup> With this reference to the repetition of historical processes, the deterministic, mechanical, brazen necessity of the breakdown becomes abundantly clear. The reversibility is an integral part of mechanical processes.<sup>122</sup> Thus, one could speak, with regard to the expropriation of the capitalist by the capitalist, of an inevitable, almost tragic digression of the expropriating capitalist.<sup>123</sup>

The expropriation of capitalists by capitalists will continue and result in the total expropriation of capitalists as a whole by the proletariat. “With the steadily decreasing number of capital magnates...the amount of pain and suffering, of pressure, of servitude, of degeneration grows, but also the outrage of the constantly swelling working class, which has been educated, united, and organized by the mechanism of the capitalistic production process itself. The capital monopoly becomes the shackle of the mode of production, which has flourished with and in adherence to it. The centralization of the means of production and the socialization of work arrive at a point, where they become incompatible with their capitalistic shell. It is blown up. The hour of capitalistic private property strikes. The expropriators are expropriated.”<sup>124</sup> Marx did not predict, he prophesied. His assertion with regard to the breakdown does not pertain to a concrete case, nor

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<sup>121</sup> K. Marx, *Das Kapital...*, Vol. 1, loc. cit., p. 12.

<sup>122</sup> Cmp. N. Georgescu-Roegen, *Analytical Economics*, Part 1, Introduction: Some Orientation Issues in Economics, Cambridge (Mass.) 1966, p. 82 et seq.

<sup>123</sup> Cmp. A. Lesky, *Die griechische Tragödie*, 2. redesigned and expanded ed., Stuttgart 1958, p. 31 et seqq.

<sup>124</sup> K. Marx, *Das Kapital...*, Vol. 1, loc. cit., p. 791 et seq.

is it equipped with a timetable. However, nothing stands in the way of the attempt of, on the basis of an explicitly formulated growth model, prognosticating with regard to a specific case, such as the Federal Republic. Components of such a model would have to be those characteristic factors, whose general movement accompanies the centralization of capital on the road to the breakdown of capitalism, the organic composition of capital and the rate of profit. One goes up, the other down.

It is natural that the capitalists will attempt to stem the decline in the rate of profit. Marx recognized this. They could, for example, increase the degree to which work is exploited. This applies, regardless of whether the capitalists see the decline in the rate of profit as an indication of the collapse of the system, or merely of a temporary – for instance, cyclical – downturn, which will be followed by a fresh upturn.

Irrespective of this, Marx pointed out, were members of a society suddenly informed as to the future of said society. Thereby, Marx indirectly anticipated the theory of self-actualization and -acceleration of prognoses<sup>125</sup>. Prognoses possess an autonomous effectiveness, they will, if not kept a secret, enter into decision-making situations of those people informed.<sup>126</sup> If society recognizes, for example, through a perusal of Marx's principal works, the laws of capitalistic production, it

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<sup>125</sup> Cmp. to this *S. Grundmann*, Prognose als philosophische Kategorie, in: *G. Heyden* (Hrsg.), *Gesellschaftsprognostik, Probleme einer neuen Wissenschaft*, Berlin 1968, p. 39 et seqq.

<sup>126</sup> Thereby, the mechanical character of these laws is challenged, since: >>The feedback between a mechanical system and the theories with regard to it can... be ignored. The free fall theory has as such no influence on the process it explains<<, *Ibid.*, p. 43.

will certainly – according to Marx – only be able to become restrictedly effective: “A nation should and can learn from another. Even if a society has identified the natural law of its own movement – and it is the final and ultimate objective of these works to expose the economic law of movement of modern society - it can neither bypass, nor enforce a decree against natural development phases. But it can shorten and alleviate the growing pains.”<sup>127</sup> If one relates the growing pains to the definitive crisis alluded to, Marx seems to recommend a passive strategy, “waiting for the crisis, since a premature revolution must fail.”<sup>128</sup> It is interesting to note that he only deduces the possibility of an accelerating effect from the disclosure of the laws of development. Even capitalists can read. If they recognize that tendencies are becoming effective, which threaten to eliminate capitalism and, thereby, the capitalists, they will attempt to annul these tendencies. They will attempt to elude tragedy. Thus, in principle, they will become active, just as they reacted to the decline in the rate of profit.

Thus, if one extends Marx’s line of thought, one can interpret neoliberalism with its ordering of competitive policy, Keynes’ theories on the necessity of anticyclical fiscal policy, and finally, the establishment of social protection systems as the capitalist reactions.<sup>129</sup> The stabilizing reactions of the capitalists and the governments of many capitalist states were actually, in the eyes of a series of

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<sup>127</sup> K. Marx, *Das Kapital...*, loc. cit., Vol. 1, p. 15 et seq.

<sup>128</sup> Marx wrote these words in 1867, they reflect the initial skepticism regarding the chances of the Paris Commune.

<sup>129</sup> These measures, of course, must in no way, be understood, in a Marxist sense, as apologetic reactions. One can also classify them as an attempt to maximize social welfare through stable economic development and fair distribution – independent of any Marxist theories.

Neomarxists, so successful that capitalism could be stabilized to a great extent. The measures mentioned, thereby, refer to the economic process in a narrower sense. The scale of these measures goes hand in hand, from the perspective of some Neomarxists, with the stabilization of alienation, which is there to prevent the exploited from being able to identify the laws of capitalism. In this vein writes Marcuse: “especially in the industrially advanced countries, the inner contradictions were, perhaps since the turn of the century, subjected to an increasingly effective organization, whereby the negative power of the proletariat was successively curtailed. Not just a small ‘workers’ aristocracy,’ but the majority of the working class was turned into an integral part of established society.”<sup>130</sup> Here, according to Marcuse, the system of technical progress, which allows for the gratification of ever-changing needs, plays an especially important role. Those gratified via consumption are, then, not anymore in a position to recognize their alienation. Taken together, all these measures effect the stability of late capitalism. Thus, something comes to pass, which Marx probably only analyzed as a theoretical borderline case, namely, a balanced development.<sup>131</sup>

For those Neomarxists, that uphold the stabilization hypothesis described, the wait for the crisis without any additional activity is not a promising strategy, since it would have to be based on the crisis not coming to pass. The SDS seems

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<sup>130</sup> H. Marcuse, *Vernunft und Revolution*, 2. ed., Neuwied am Rhein/Berlin-Spandau 1962, p. 371 et seq.

<sup>131</sup> Cmp. for a discussion of this model variant W. Krelle, *Marx im Lichte der heutigen Theorie des wirtschaftlichen Wachstums*, in: W. G. Hoffmann, *Beiträge zur Wachstumstheorie*, Tübingen 1969, p. 21 et seq.

to also hold this view. Dutschke's statements with regard to the economic and, especially, the fiscal policy of the capitalist state, point in this direction: "The natural laws of capitalist production, which Marx analyzed, were not yet familiar with the systematic dual function of the state as an economic regulator and as a direct economic actor in the public sector."<sup>132</sup> The "reformist social policy" became especially dangerous for the workers' movement "by promoting the illusion, that this 'policy of social reforms' could persevere through all phases of capitalism without consciously and organizationally creating revolutionary safeguards towards the preservation of the captured reformist positions."<sup>133</sup> Said measures will, according to Dutschke, eventually lead to a stabilization of the alienation of the workers, who in the end will no longer even recognize that they are being exploited: "Additionally, the consciousness of servitude fades. The impotence of the individual, on the one hand, and the gigantic might of capital, on the other, make it very difficult for the people to even just simply identify the root of their suffering."<sup>134</sup>

Apparently, only those who are capable of avoiding the process of repressive manipulation, are social outsiders. For these outsiders, waiting for the crisis must, in the eyes of Dutschke, for the reasons already mentioned, be pointless. Passivity and (elitist) theoretical work must, from this perspective, be

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<sup>132</sup> R. Dutschke, loc. cit., p. 54.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 43; especially here the proximity to *Marcuse* clearly comes to light.

expressions of hopelessness; one has resigned, and capitalism has triumphed.

Thus, another path towards Commutopia must be sought.

## 5.2 *The long march through the institutions*

The necessary rejection of passivity and confidence in the breakdown laws by Dutschke and his followers in the SDS<sup>135</sup> already indicates in its rationale that every other strategy would have also been rejected. Those give the capitalists, or the governments enough opportunity to take reactionary action. Such a position is not necessarily tantamount to a call for revolution. It can also lead to the slogan to commence a long march through the institutions, since this march may be long, but also difficult to prevent for the reactionaries. The relevant path can be briefly described: capitalism – long march, or infiltration through, or of the institutions – assumption of power by those infiltrated – transitional phase – Commutopia. One can speak of an evolutionary path and call this evolution the political method of acting for the long run.

The crucial element of this strategy is, that one seeks to employ the institutions of the existing state, in order to abolish this state and its institutions. One subordinates oneself to the existing power relations, in order to break them apart from the inside, one becomes a parliamentary force, in order abolish the

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<sup>135</sup> T. Pirkner gives an overview with regard to Dutschke's standing in the SDS, in: Herbert Marcuses metaphysische Revolution, ihre Jünger und Kritiker, in: L. Reinisch (Hrsg.), Permanente Revolution von Marx bis Marcuse, München 1969, p. 133 passim.

parliament, one initially operates legally, in order to eventually dispose of the constitution. It is immediately obvious that the infiltration mentioned – if one wants to evade the reaction – must be well disguised. Undisguised infiltration must, under the assumptions made by the SDS, with regard to the level of consciousness of the majority under capitalism, fail. This majority would react dismissively, the march would hit a dead end, the entire operation would have failed. In this necessity for concealment, probably also lies the major difficulty of the strategy. It does not suit the revolutionary to coexist for years on end and act as if he had not even recognized his suffering. Not for nothing was that theory also rejected, which said, that one could replace world revolution by a peaceful path towards socialism. A striking confirmation of this rejection in one of the last publicist activities of the Tübingen SDS: “Instructed by the theory of a ‘Peaceful transition to socialism,’ the Soviet Union practices ‘Peaceful coexistence’ with imperialism. All over the world, it sabotages the unfolding of national liberation struggles.”<sup>136</sup> From this follows the revolutionary strategy, whose total failure eventually doomed the SDS.

### 5.3 *The revolution*

The path remains: capitalism – revolution – transitional phase – Commutopia. Dutschke interpreted the 1964 Anti-Tschombé-Demonstration in

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<sup>136</sup> Call for a demonstration for Vietnam, *Kommunistische Studentenzeitung* 1, 1969, p. 1.

Berlin as the beginning of the cultural revolution in Germany.<sup>137</sup> Student groups were red guards. The models for revolution in the Federal Republic soon adopted more militant traits, as seen in the ‘wars of liberation’ in the Asian and Latin American countries. The function of the Vietnam demonstration was, first and foremost, to highlight the Vietcong and propagate the people’s war in the metropolitan cities of capitalism. This function is clearly expressed in the following citation: “International solidarity with the national liberation struggles means... to introduce proletarian-internationalistic strains into the incipient anticapitalistic struggles of the West German proletariat. To overcome the resignation and disorientation of the workers by enlightening them to the successful struggle of the Vietnamese revolution.”<sup>138</sup>

The “incipient anticapitalistic struggles?” The SDS interpreted the ‘wild strikes’ of September 1969 in the Federal Republic as such. Its federal board<sup>139</sup> attempted to endorse itself to the strikers as a kind of organizational center. One wanted, above all, to be an informational center, since one alleged, that the ‘bourgeois’ newspapers were manipulating the masses through fragmentary information. One accused the parties of crafting in unity of action with the ‘bourgeois’ commentators a “theory of national shame,”<sup>140</sup> and/or conspiracy theories. The rulers – in the case meaning the capitalists and unions – have –

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<sup>137</sup> R. Dutschke, loc. cit., p. 63.

<sup>138</sup> Call for ..., loc. cit., p. 2.

<sup>139</sup> Cmp. press release of the SDS federal board, in: SDS-Info 21, >>Zu den Septemberstreiks<<, 5. Sept. 1969, p. 1.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.



according to the SDS – forced the workers to accept laughable compromises. Since this was only possible because the actions of the strikers were not coordinated, the SDS wanted to “break through the manipulative isolation of the strikers from their colleagues by leaflet campaigns everywhere in the Federal Republic of Germany.”<sup>141</sup> The optimistic zealotry during the strike days soon gave way to the realization that nowhere could a unified front with the strikers successfully be forged.<sup>142</sup>

More and more, the symbolic figure for the revolutionary people’s war was Che Guevara.<sup>143</sup> Dutschke characterized Guevara’s fundamental idea as follows: “Guevara’s answer for Latin America was that the revolutionaries should not always have to wait for the objective conditions conducive to revolution, but could through... the armed vanguard of the people create the objective conditions for revolution by subjective activity.”<sup>144</sup> Thereby, he interprets Guevara’s theory in opposition to that of Marx. Because Guevara is obviously of the opinion that – in Marx’s terminology – society can (through revolution) bypass natural phases of development.<sup>145</sup> Marx negated precisely that. Marx was proved right, with regard to the Federal Republic and the revolutionary appeal of the SDS – if one for the moment assumes that the Marxist natural laws are valid. Thereby, it is also hinted at why – in the eyes of Marx – the SDS had to fail.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Cmp. *W. Levevre*, Einige Konsequenzen aus der Streikbewegung im September 69 für unsere Arbeit, in: SDS-Info, loc. cit., p. 22.

<sup>143</sup> Cmp. to the Guevarist fraction in the SDS *R. Ahlberg*, Die politische Konzeption des Sozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbundes, Bonn 1968.

<sup>144</sup> *R. Dutschke*, loc. cit., p. 69.

<sup>145</sup> Cmp. above 5.1.

Thus, all three paths turn out to be problematic, with regard to the route from capitalism to the beginning of the transitional phase. This does not necessarily mean, however, that this section of the paths is not accessible. In order to be able to subject this accessibility to an empirical review, more revolutions would, for example, have to be attempted. Those experiments, however, would prove too expensive because of social costs. Furthermore, with this, still nothing has been said about the transitional phase, the still missing section of the paths.

#### 5.4 *The transitional phase*

The negation of capitalism is merely the first, necessary condition for the realization of Commutopia. The other is that, in the transitional phase, the different attributes of Commutopia are established step by step. To begin with, one will establish communes, insofar as this is possible without endangering economic efficiency. Council schools will form. It is paramount, that a few people already exist who can assume control of the leadership and disseminate the idea of Commutopia. These new people have to experience their ideational realization, while capitalism still exists: “and so, we also have to, in confrontation with our ruling system, become ‘new humans,’ have to, in our political disputes, recognize ourselves as people and work on the massification of the idea of social liberation.”<sup>146</sup> This idea of a sense of mission often found resonance in Dutschke.

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<sup>146</sup> R. Duschke, loc. cit., p. 77.

How these new humans guide the others, can be taken from the principles, that Dutschke specified for the direction of demonstrations: "Only through organization and direction does the development of initiative, practical participation of all demonstrators become possible. Manipulative guidance means exploitation and objectual utilization of the demonstrators, frustration and resignation. Emancipating leadership means an actualization of the potential practical-critical activity of the people involved, means ideational realization imparted through enlightenment."<sup>147</sup> Also of crucial importance is the manufacturing intelligentsia: "A revolutionary strategy for the highly developed capitalist countries cannot abstract from this class, since precisely from its ranks those *revolutionary specialists* have to evolve, who practically comprehend the central management of the economy and the development of mass initiative not as a mutually exclusive contradiction, but as a dialectical unit of the socialist transformation process."<sup>148</sup> Thus, in conclusion, it can be stated, that in the transitional phase new people in the sense just specified and revolutionary specialists share control of society, whereby it is evident that the specialists administer those functions, which Commutopia will later be fulfilled by,<sup>149</sup> and that the new humans will monitor. Neither the specialists nor the new humans in the narrow sense are universal like the communards in Commutopia. The universal communard as a representative individual of society is in any case "a

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 81 et seq.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>149</sup> Cmp. to the specific configuration of the plan during the transitional phase also the explanations in *B. Rabehl, Bermerkungen...*, loc. cit., p. 19 et seq.

result of a long, painful struggle.”<sup>150</sup> He arises not as if it were in continuation of the laws of capitalistic production, but with a brazen necessity.

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<sup>150</sup> *R. Dutschke*, loc. cit., p. 91.

## CHAPTER 6: PATHS AWAY FROM COMMUTOPIA

### 6.1 *The Homo Communis and the commutopian equilibrium*

As a starting point, with regard to the analysis in this chapter, we will assume, that Commutopia exists at a certain point in time. We, therefore, assume, that the constitution drafted in 4.2 is in effect at a certain point in time and that the constitutional reality is consistent with it. Furthermore, we assume the universality of all communards at said point in time. This is necessary, since this universality – as has already been conveyed above - plays a central role in the overall concept of Commutopia, whereby Dutschke's statement is the last in a long line of similar statements, a line, which finds its starting point with Marx.<sup>151</sup> The axioms 1 through 9a in 4.1 describe the principle of a certain version of the minimization of governance, whose existence we also assume (which will further determine the constitutional reality in terms of its content). If Commutopia is in effect at said point in time, it is plausible to further assume, that (1) no communard feels the urge to, once again, abolish Commutopia, and (2) each communard affirms the rotation plan, which has led to his universality. One has attained the economic order and the type of consciousness, that one has painstakingly and lengthily attempted to realize. Axiom 10, then, is realized in the restricted version, taking into account (1) and (2).

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<sup>151</sup> Cmp. *K. Marx*, *Kritik...*, loc. cit., p. 24 et seq.; *R. Dutschke*, loc. cit., p. 91.

From here, one can arrive at a concept of equilibrium. To this end, we state the defining characteristics of the theoretical communard, who has become a reality in Commutopia. He is universal in the sense discussed, moreover, he fulfils the behavioral implications of axioms 1 through 9a. In a specific interpretation of the concept of equilibrium, we determine that the individual equilibrium of the *Homo Communis*, as we will call him following the designation of related model people, is provided by conclusions (1) and (2); he does not want to change the status quo. Since the *Homo Communis* is representative of all communards in Commutopia, it is possible to speak of a total equilibrium. It must be immediately pointed out that this equilibrium does not imply an economic equilibrium of the individual communard.<sup>152</sup>

We will now focus on the possibility of there being disruptions of the equilibrium over time. By these, we mean endogenous or exogenous impulses, that, at the minimum, initially cause the equilibrium to become a disequilibrium. Accordingly, at least in the short-term, Commutopia would be destroyed. Secondly, it is of importance, whether these impulses – if they exist – lead to stable (those gravitating back towards the equilibrium) or instable (those gravitating away from the equilibrium) developments.

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<sup>152</sup> We designate as the economic equilibrium of the communard the state in which he does not anymore make use of the possibility of corrective exchange transactions. Either the planned range of consumer goods exactly corresponds to the optimum of his preference order, or he has already exchanged enough, in order to realize – of course, in consideration of the given restrictions – such a range.

## 6.2 *A disruption*

While searching for disruptions, which one has to take into account when assessing Commutopia's chances for continuous survival, we again arrive at the central idea, that of the universality of the communards. Is such an idea feasible at this time? This can be answered in the affirmative if one assumes a stationary front with regard to societal knowledge. In this case, no new disruptions will arise with regard to universality. However, in a studious and exploratory society, these do exist. Thus, the above question should be reformulated as such: Is an advancement of knowledge, which is equally distributed among the communards, possible? Such advancement must be possible and also a given, in order to secure Commutopia's continuous existence. An unequal distribution of knowledge at any point in time leads to a disruption of the equilibrium.

The number of problems on the frontlines of societal knowledge in an evolutionary and highly technical economy is enormous, especially if this society has set as its objectives to further simplify the activities at each and every place of employment, to further decrease working hours, and, finally, to largely overcome the scarcity of goods.<sup>153</sup> As a result, for an efficient pursuit of these objectives, one has to proceed towards a complex division of labor with regard to the production and retention of knowledge: a division of labor which can be viewed as a necessary

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<sup>153</sup> The scarcity of goods – this can be extrapolated from a series of direct sources – remains unchanged in Commutopia. If this were not the case, and, thus, only free goods existed – as in the self-reliant economy of Diogenes - the terms economy, or economic system would be problematic.

condition for a broad progression of societal knowledge, which covers the many different domains.<sup>154</sup> In this context, we designate as societal knowledge the entirety of those problem-specific and verified<sup>155</sup> propositions stored in society and the relations between them.<sup>156</sup>

What, more precisely, does the division of labor mean in the context of a broad progression of knowledge? Let us assume there are  $p$  problems that must be solved in order to move the scope of knowledge in society up by one level. Let the number of communards be  $m$ , whereby, for reasons of simplicity, we assume that  $p=m$ . The following alternatives arise: (1) In the first period under consideration, each communard focuses exclusively on one of the problems to be solved. (2) In said period, all communards focus on the same problem. (3) In said period, certain groups of communards (e.g. communes) focus on certain problems or groups of problems, whereby all communards are employed and all problems are dealt with.

Alternative (3) can be organized according to the principle of team research and/or of parallel research. One can define team research as the process in which different people focus on different aspects of a problem and attempt to combine the results of their research towards a solution to the problem. Parallel research is in place if different people and/or teams shall attempt to work up

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<sup>154</sup> As we already know, the SDS does not reject the division of labor as such, but just its permanence, its solidification. From this perspective, the division of labor in research is readily compatible with Commutopia.

<sup>155</sup> By verification, we mean falsification attempts by means of empirical material. Here, we only exclude principally falsifiable propositions.

<sup>156</sup> Cmp. for a similar definition *S. H. Slichter*, *The Industry of Discovery*, in: *Science*, Vol. 128, 1958, p. 1610.



either one or more solution proposals, which shall then compete with each other.<sup>157</sup>

Let us assume that research in Commutopia shall be organized according to principle (1). Each comunard shall then – assuming an equally distributed level of knowledge among the comunards at the outset - focus on a certain problem in the first period, whereby the problems for the individual comunards are different. This will lead, obviously provided that at least one comunard produces new knowledge, to an unequally distributed level of knowledge at the end of the period. In order to uphold the universality for all comunards from one period to the next, it is necessary that each comunard informs the other comunards of the results of his research even prior to the end of the first period. This process brings about losses of efficiency with regard to the system; if the number of teach-learn-combinations is very large (which depends on the number of comunards and problems, respectively), and the level of difficulty of the propositions places considerable demands on the learners, it could also lead to a standstill of the economic process. A full disclosure of the research results is additionally problematic, because the accurate appraisal of one's own progress of knowledge is not always possible and because the teaching process could entail a learning process of the instructor. By the first objection, it is made clear that under principle (1), an equally distributed advancement of knowledge and the thereby

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<sup>157</sup> Cmp. *R. R. Nelson*, Uncertainty, Prediction, and the Economics of Parallel R and D, in: *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 43, 1961.

continuous existence of universality is impossible<sup>158</sup> to achieve in the period in question, by the other two, it is indicated that under certain circumstances this achievement is not even conceivable.

So much for the possibility of organizing the production of knowledge according to principle (1). *Prima facie*, mere efficiency problems will arise under principle (2), but not those relating to the basic feasibility of the equally distributed advancement of knowledge with regard to all communards. This principle states – as mentioned – that, during the period in question, each communard focuses on the same problem. The structure of the problems at the forefronts of societal knowledge in a highly engineered society in association with human ingenuity, could lead to the situation, where, as a rule, more than one solution can *a priori* be considered for a certain problem. If, for instance, the communards focus on the problem (I) and each of them sees a series of (I) equally promising solutions in front of them<sup>159</sup> (whereby I is larger than 2)<sup>160</sup>, then those communards – assuming the review of a solution in each case takes up the entire period - will be in the lead at the end of the period with regard to problem specific knowledge, who have coincidentally chosen the only path, which actually leads to a solution of the problem. If one complicates this example, in order to develop it as an illustration of the organization of the entire advancement of knowledge in a large

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<sup>158</sup> This refers to an impossibility in the statistical sense (probability of zero) with corresponding assumptions regarding the maximum period of time permitted for the notification process.

<sup>159</sup> Cmp. regarding the structure of an uncertainty decision of this sort *B. H. Klein*, *The Decision-Making Problem in Development*, in: NBER (Ed.), *The Rate and Direction of Inventive Activity*, Princeton 1962, p. 477 et seqq.

<sup>160</sup> Under certain conditions, if  $I=2$ , knowledge growth is, in case of arbitrary selection, commensurate.

society, then one will arrive, with regard to the communication of research results, at similar (negative) conclusions, as was the case during the analysis of principle (1).

Since principle (3) is a composite of the first two principles, it can be said in conclusion, that both in the case of an equally distributed advancement of knowledge according to (1), as well in the case of the alternative, meaning principle (2), as well as in the case of any combination of the two principles resulting in principle (3), a disruption of the equilibrium must be assumed: At the beginning of the second period, universality is not anymore generally the case, or rather has been generally eliminated.

### 6.3 *Stability versus Instability*

The disruption ensures that in the beginning of the second period a disequilibrium exists instead of an equilibrium. The actual state of society deviates from Commutopia to the transitional phase. It must now be examined if the disruption will lead to a stable or an unstable development. In doing so, we exclude principle (2) of the organization of products of knowledge.

Stability (instability), in the sense referenced, is the case when the smoothing effect of the constant disclosure process on the distribution of knowledge among the communards is only partly compensated (overcompensated) by the differentiating effect of the constant research process.

From this, one could conclude, that the problem of the organization of research, according to the concrete design of principle (3), is having to, at the very least, ensure a compensation of the two opposing effects. Can this be achieved? In order to assess this question, since we do not want to attempt an estimate of the two effects under appropriate conditions, a tendency inherent to the process of the advancement of knowledge is especially important, namely the tendency of self-acceleration. This already follows from our concept of knowledge, since, according to this, the number of relations between the propositions increases progressively with the number of propositions. The communard, who has reviewed a proposition and integrated it into the societal knowledge, which he is familiar with, overlooks *ceteris paribus* all the more relations to existing propositions, the more these propositions exist. Thereby, his level of knowledge increases all the more rapidly. This alone is enough, in order to conclude, that, in the time period in question, the constantly faster growing differentiating effect can finally not anymore be compensated by the process of disclosure, especially, since increasing rates of growth with regard to the process of disclosure would hardly be explicable, in particular in the long term. Thus, one cannot juxtapose the explosion of knowledge with a process of disclosure, which would distribute it among all communards in a large society of communards in such a way, that, in general, universality occurs. The associated instability of development is nothing more than the tendency towards enhanced specialization.

Therefore, because of the laws inherent in the process of the production of knowledge, a path away from Commutopia emerges. This seems valid, regardless of Rabehl's remark: "another thing with regard to the problem of specialists. In Cuba, the specialists left the country. This was good for Cuba. The Cubans educated their new specialists themselves. These new specialists articulated themselves politically. They don't arrogantly withdraw; they have to justify themselves. I believe, that he, who has the intention of blackmailing society, will signify this well in advance. We also should not forget that, in a new society, new people come into being. There, specialization as a danger will not at all materialize."<sup>161</sup> We have not yet examined whether this deduced tendency towards specialization, towards the cancellation of universality, also presents a danger to the rest of Commutopia's structure. A closer analysis of this question leads to the untenability of the thesis of the harmlessness of new specialists. Because, what are specialists? A specialist is nothing else but a temporary employee. Increasing specialization means that the part of societal knowledge with regard to which he is a specialist, steadily becomes smaller. He does not anymore oversee the entire production process, but rather a constantly shrinking part of it. He will be locked, by the system, into small cells prepared for him, because he has become indispensable. This indispensability increases with his specialization, with the deformation of his consciousness, until his alienation is recognized by the specialist, until it becomes unbearable for him. In this moment,

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<sup>161</sup> B. Rabehl, Diskussionsbeitrag, in: H. M. Enzensberger, loc. cit., p. 170 et seq.

the specialist becomes a threat for the still existing Commutopian shell, because, with the help of his indispensability, he starts to rebel against the system, which has let him become deformed. In this moment, it becomes clear why the universal human served, from Marx to Dutschke, as the condition of the existence of the higher phase of communist society. The specialist attempts to escape from his alienation. He starts to expropriate the other communards, the negation of the negation sets in.

This attempt is especially promising for those communards who occupy the positions of workers' council, supreme council, or member of the central planning office and whose specialization concerns itself with these leadership activities. They will invalidate axiom 9a, by pointing out that, in the transitional phase, those who are specialists with regard to the planning of the production process must assume leadership. This will be the new class which will evolve after the negation of Commutopia.

#### *6.4 The idea of permanent revolution*

The idea of permanent revolution is the idea of blocking the dialectical paths that lead away from communism. Its development shall thereby be brought back onto a stable path. This would mean, in our case, that every time specialist positions that are capable of establishing positions of dominion of people over

people emerge, a revolutionary adjustment occurs; the revolutionary masses once again abolish these ruling positions.

The great example for such a corrective – whereby the transfer onto the paths leading away from Commutopia can only be carried out with restrictions – is the cultural revolution in China. The party leadership around Mao Zedong unleashed the youth against the encrusted establishment, which for seventeen years had had the opportunity to expand and consolidate their ruling positions. During the cultural revolution, it turned out that this new class reacted flexibly, in part assuming the leadership of the revolutionary committees, controlling the revolution and diffusing its impact. Groups that acted consistently and with the Paris Commune as their proclaimed role model according to the original directives of the cultural revolution, were combatted by the ruling class. The group Province Hunan Proletarian Revolutionary Great Alliance Committee,<sup>162</sup> whose program was very similar to that of the SDS, was eventually banned. The most persistent cultural revolutionaries were, in the course of a reactionary interpretation of the rotationary idea, rotated away from the universities into the most remote areas of China for hard labor. Subsequently, the rotation was suspended until further notice.

This example highlights the difficulties, which are an obstacle to the revolutionary control of established ruling positions. The revolution only then has real chances of success if the expropriation of the communards by a group of

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<sup>162</sup> Cmp. the comprehensive presentation and the freshly printed program of this group in *K. Mehnert*, loc. cit., p. 73 et seqq.

specialists is so far advanced that the specialists, in turn, are expropriated in the course of a general rebellion among the communards.



## CHAPTER 7: PATHS PAST COMMUTOPIA

### 7.1 *On the question of reeducation*

In the sixth chapter, the existence of Commutopia was simply assumed. That analysis served the purpose of examining the difficulty of applying the rotary idea to the production of knowledge. The outcome was the realization that the inherent laws of said production must lead to specialization and this specialization leads to a path away from Commutopia, if a time-referenced approach is applied to the evolutionary Commutopian economy. One question, that is more obvious than the one regarding the concrete progression of the negation of the negation of the negation, is the one regarding the possibility of the implementation of Commutopia's specific conditions of existence. In Chapter 5, this question was not answered. There we attempted to determine, from the perspective of the SDS, which path could lead away from capitalism and towards Commutopia – without examining the chances of success of the possibilities of overcoming the transitional period without standstill or deviation more closely. During such an examination, the demand for universality will, once again, take center stage. Its fulfillment requires a reeducation of the people, if one assumes a starting position like the present one in the Federal Republic.

The people in the capitalistic economic system of our environment are characterized (1) by a disparate manifestation of personality, (2) of intelligence factors and (3) by a limited storage capacity for information. In addition - in order

to complete the series of important attributes relevant to us - a limited eagerness for work or study (with a certain load, as a threshold, the phase of positive disutility of work or study is reached). Accordingly, the reeducation towards the human without a role<sup>163</sup> necessitates (1) a certain combination of personality and (2) intelligence factors for each communitarian (defined as a minimum), (3) a certain storage capacity, which may not be undercut, and (4) job and study satisfaction.

Certain personality factors are essential for all communards who shall occupy leadership positions, in other words, for each and every one. After all, the performance of the capitalist economic system must be surpassed, in which a selection principle dominated by a performance principle is installed. The relevant personality factors can be specified. Cattell, one of the leading researchers in this field of psychology (manifestation and dissemination of personality factors) has determined in a study, which is based on an extensive program of group experiments, that the factors C (ego-strength), E (dominance), G (superego-strength), H (social initiative), N (objectivity), O (procrastination, in negative values), Q<sub>3</sub> (self-control), and Q<sub>4</sub> (nervous tension, in negative values) come across in those people, who seem predestined for leadership responsibilities.<sup>164</sup> Said groups had to compete to solve certain tasks. Four definitions of leadership were used, three of them were based of certain kinds of non-institutional dominance of

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<sup>163</sup> As a negation of the sociological human, cmp. for his definition R. Dahrendorf, *Homo Soziologicus*, 5. ed., Köln und Opladen 1965, p. 41.

<sup>164</sup> Cmp. R. B. Cattell, *Four Formulae for Selecting Leaders on the Basis of Personality*, in: *Human Relations*, Vol. 7, 1957, pp. 493-507.

group members, the fourth referred to the success of elections incorporated into the experiment.

Accordingly, the reeducation process begins with the manipulation of personality factors. Places for this manipulation are daycare facilities. That this interpretation is valid can be gathered from an SDS-publication regarding daycare facilities.<sup>165</sup> There, for instance, a daycare seminar is demanded as a measure against “social democratic” deviations, in which questions such as these shall be dealt with: “What roles, regarding the raising of the child to be an ego-strong, stable personality, do sexual education, child reading, games, mother-child-relationships, psychological problems of the child” play. Thus, the personality factors C and Q<sub>3</sub> from our combination above are already seen here as a concrete objective.

A uniform manifestation of personality factors at a high level is equally vital for universality. Said level corresponds to the highest currently observed in reality. Paramount are the factors 1 (deductive capability) and 3 (education). Lastly, an eagerness to study, that does not revert to a study disutility during virtually non-stop learning, is essential. There are no indications anywhere in the direct sources, as to how the reeducation with regard to this matter shall be organized.

Accordingly, especially with regard to the two last-named demands, a certain skepticism regarding their feasibility is appropriate - and not only that. In light of the accrual of information on the way towards universality, it should be

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<sup>165</sup> Cmp. C. Knirsch/A. Luther/M. Wittstock, Die sozialdemokratischen Handwerkeleien in den Kinderläden bekämpfen, SDS-Info, Nr. 11/12, 2. Mai 1969, p. 58.

readily evident, that, according to the definition we gave in 1.2, these conditions are utopian conditions. As a result, from the knowledge point of view of the present generation, the attempt to reach Commutopia will end in the transitional phase. Since it is programmatically determined who will occupy leadership positions in society (cmp. 5.4), and, hence, the present generation can already identify – admittedly, with some degree of uncertainty - those in their ranks, who would have the chance to become members in the establishment of said society, which has been stranded on the march towards Commutopia, there would be a revolution under commutopian auspices.

## *7.2 Simplification of work*

As we know, a program exists, on the march towards Commutopia and in Commutopia, for the simplification of work at the individual places of work. In this program, the second approach is situated, from which a deviation from any path towards Commutopia must follow. The central tool for simplification is – as we also know – the computer. It is undoubtedly correct, that with the use of a computer a range of tasks can be ‘simplified,’ if one means by this that less work effort is necessary at the respective workplace and the task can now be accomplished without a long training period. However, the computer is, on principle, excluded from certain tasks. It cannot think creatively in the sense that

it can make decisions, or can only decide, if it is programmed to. It cannot program itself, or can only do it, if it was programmed to program itself.

In order to design and program computers that are able to bring about a simplification of the tasks at the workplaces of the production of all material goods, which suffices for a rotation under realistic conditions, a wide-ranging cooperation of specialists of all affected sub-sections of societal knowledge is necessary. These specialists would receive a very extensive informational advantage compared with the rest of society, they would be similarly uncontrollable, as a biologist, who manipulates genetic codes would be, if he is to be controlled by non-biologists. This is exacerbated by the fact, that these specialists are, of course, not yet new humans, of which one – if they have not yet recognized their alienation – cannot expect an abuse of power. They are human being in the traditional sense, egotists. They, as well, will be members of the establishment of a perpetual transitional phase.

The two paths briefly elaborated on in this chapter are paths past Commutopia. Soon after the revolution, they diverge from the path towards Commutopia. In which direction they will head cannot readily be determined. This has to be examined concretely in each individual case. The records of the socialist revolutions in some of the countries that are today socialist merge to form a map of closely related paths. This map can be consulted in case of orientation questions in connection with a call for a commutopian revolution.

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