CONTRADICTIONS

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In memory of Petr Uhl

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EDITORIAL
Thinking Left Dissent

After the fall of state socialism, the central concepts of leftist thought, such as socialism and Marxism, have appeared in concert with the adjective "democratic" as a mere *contradictio in adjecto*, a contradiction in terms. Instead, post-1989 democratic regimes identified with liberal values, which were often defined by unregulated individualism and distrust toward collectivist political models, including various non-Soviet alternatives to liberal capitalism. The same perspective framed the historic role of the Eastern European dissidents, who were chiefly focused on the defense of human rights and political freedoms – that is, on values connected with political liberalism. Connecting the dissidents' negotiation of a democratic space within a socialist (or even a Marxist) space was practically unmentionable in Central and Eastern European countries after 1989. The postwar experience of (not only) this region casts a shadow over the entire socialist political project and, in the eyes of many citizens, has rendered socialism the antithesis of the political practice of democracy.

This moment has given rise to historical inquiry, primarily because modern democracy has, since the 19th century, been intrinsically bound up with the socialist movement and its various political projects. Of course, this is not to say that the Left has no dark marks in its past, when it denied or disavowed democratic principles, often even radically. On the other hand, the political Left played an indisputable role in spreading democracy worldwide. In its nearly 200-year history, the modern Left has had a hand in establishing democratic constitutionalism, spreading civic, economic, social, and cultural rights, fighting for equality, and propagating respect for differences and social inclusion. Along these lines, in *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000*, Geoff Eley goes so far as to identify all democratic negotiation as leftist.[1] However controversial, activist, or one-sided this opinion may seem, the fact of the matter is that the interconnection of the Left, or rather socialism, and democracy is historically incontrovertible, just as the discrediting of leftist concepts after the fall of state socialist dictatorships in Europe is partially understandable.

[1] Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy. The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Eley studies the long-term development of the European Left and sees that, in Western Europe, the historical domination of socialism over other leftist concepts began to disintegrate in the 1960s with the advent of the so-called new social movements (feminism, pacifism, environmentalism). These assumed the leftist political agenda and, in their emancipatory rhetoric, partially sidelined the classic political categories defining the identity of the Old Left, such as "working class" or "workers' interests." The New Left deemphasized this original class analysis and prioritized cultural criticism of various forms of disenfranchisement.

In state-socialist Europe, the situation was understandably different. The anthology *Revolutions for the Future: May '68 and the Prague Spring*, which we review in both the Czech-Slovak and English issue of the current *Contradictions* (by Michal Lipták in the former and by Sezgin Boynik in the latter), traces the different trajectories of 1968 and its legacy in France and Czechoslovakia. No doubt, it is problematic to automatically impose the political categories of Western thought onto an Eastern European context, where political identities and divisions came into being under different conditions. The tradition of democratic thought in East Central Europe after 1968 was linked primarily to the dissident movement, which was long considered to be "non-ideological" thanks to its criticism of official socialist politics. Such a view was also formed by the dominant interpretive framework that mostly connected the dissident movement with so-called nonpolitical politics, or the effort to find consensus across the political spectrum and to build common "pre-political" values. If we are to understand the diverse world of meaning of East Central European dissent, our research must not stop at this assertion. The effort within the human rights agenda to unite various dissident currents against their common enemy did not mean that some dissidents did not continue to politically shape and present their views. The very question of whether human rights and thus also human freedom should be understood only as negative freedom (freedom from), implicating the liberal conception, or as positive freedom (freedom to), as in the socialist conception, formed fundamental divides within the political dissident movement. In the English issue of our journal, an interview with Ilya Budraitskis further illustrates this conflict in the context of Soviet dissidents. Michał Siermiński tackles this very same problem in his book, reviewed for us by Jakub Szumski.

The research paradigm in which we situate *Contradictions* casts doubt on the dominant interpretation of the dissident movement as an ideologically liberal project. Academic discussions betray a glaring and pressing need for "reevaluating" and "rethinking" the history of the dissent, which also leads to new examination of the political thought that emerged in Central and Eastern Europe before the radical transformations of 1989. It has become clear that several socialist political concepts began to form within the dissident movement and that the term Marxist dissent is not, in fact, a *contradictio in adjecto*.

We are chiefly interested in political thought, in the content of criticism, programs and visions, and in their philosophical relevance. We understand the leftist dissent – the value of which the liberal narrative sidelines – as a way of thinking that resists the

liberal interpretation. This, of course, does not mean that we can make our work easier by simply defining the leftism of the dissent as "illiberal." Such an approach would be as reductive as the original generalizing liberal conception. When scoping out the terrain, we did not restrict ourselves to one limiting definition; instead, we tried to examine the leftist dissent from various perspectives, which together bring this topic – at first glance clearly identifiable but under closer scrutiny multilayered and thus wholly intangible – more fully under our microscope. As such, we endeavored to define the leftist dissent with several mutually interconnected characteristics.

First off, we must emphasize that while the leftist dissent fought against the existing model of socialism, and dissidents often identified with liberal values (for example in respecting human rights), by no means, however, did they identify with capitalism as a socioeconomic order. Given the circumstances of the time, including the threat of various degrees of persecution, enemy number one was always the official – be it the Soviet, Yugoslav or Albanian – model of socialism. However, the rejection of real socialism did not inevitably mean the rejection of socialism *per se*. For example, Inxhi Brisku's study on the reactions of part of the Albanian party and intellectual elites to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union maps the Albanian dissident efforts. In the translated text "To Be a Marxist in Czechoslovakia" (arranged for publication by Dirk Dalberg), Miroslav Kusý focuses on the Czechoslovak case to trace contemporary evidence of distancing from the official model of socialism. This is also evident in Josef Guttmann's analysis "The Soviet Union - A New Class Society" from 1944 and Egon Bondy's "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" from 1949/1950, which were both editorially prepared for the Czech issue by Pavel Siostrzonek and Petr Kužel. Both texts present annihilating critiques of the Soviet Union and of Soviet-type societies without renouncing Marxist foundations and socialist ideals. At the same time, they both demonstrate that the term leftist dissent need not be reserved for merely the 1970s and 1980s, as it typically is, and that we can speak about leftist dissent even in years prior. In a similar vein, Peter Bugge, in his contribution, discusses the etymology of this term, its transformations, and its history.

Leftist dissidents did not share a homogenous idea about the socialist social order. Most often, the only common ground in their approaches was their criticism of and delineation against both the existing realization of socialism and capitalism. Naturally, this disparateness was the result of a departure from the ideological canon of the time. Leaving behind the unifying and binding language of official Marxism-Leninism gave rise to considerable heterogeneity, which was fortified by various ideological influences that may have overlapped but never created a singular theoretical or political language for dissident leftist intellectuals. At that time in East Central Europe, it was possible to observe various reactions to and receptions of Maoism, as we see in the text by Kristóf Nagy and Márton Szarvas, who study this phenomenon in the context of radical Hungarian art groups, and in its treatment and development by Egon Bondy, an independent Czech Marxist associated with the underground art scene.

We see the influences of the New Left, along with Trotskyist inspiration, on the Czech radical student group *Hnutí revoluční mládeže* (Movement of Revolutionary Youth), which is presented in Ondřej Slačálek, Micheal Polák, and Matyáš Křížkovský's text. Several Marxist intellectuals that originally worked in official institutions also wound up as dissidents, including Yugoslav philosophers around the journal *Praxis* – outlined by the authorial trio of Gazela Pudar Draško, Milivoj Bešlin, and Balša Delibašić – and German philosophers such as Wolfgang Harich, Robert Havemann, and Rudolf Bahro, whose programs of social change are analyzed here by Alexander Amberger. Ondřej Holub then reviews the Czech translation of Bahro's book *The Alternative*. In the Czech issue, Holub also presents his study on the Slovak Marxist philosopher Rudolf Šíma. Similarly, we cannot leave out the various independent socialist groups that, in the Czech setting, included the Brno group of independent socialists (with which historian Jan Tesař was closely associated and whose book of essays from the time is reviewed for the Czech issue by Václav Skořepa) or the former reform communists, who flirted with Eurocommunism and whose critique of the Soviet socialist model is analyzed by Kristina Andělová for the Czech issue.

Along with the existing socialist order, the official language was also a frequent target of dissident critique (see M. Kusý's text). Yet language is not the same as the conceptual apparatus, and so there was not as strong a need to repudiate Marxist concepts. This is evident as early as in the book *The New Class* by Milovan Djilas, later in *The Open Letter to the Party* by Karol Modzelewski and Jacek Kuroń, and until state socialism's end in the work of leftist dissidents. Intellectual activity at the time was fundamentally defined by, among other things, efforts to purge Marxist terminology of the ideological detritus of the ossified official language; to return to original Marxist terminology as a tool of theory; and to restore the analytic capacity of terms such as revolution, class, exploitation, and division of labor. While theory – whether that of Western Marxism, the New Left, Trotskyism, Maoism, or various local socialist traditions – largely kept to the Marxist terminological arsenal, the visions of political practice differed and diverged according to individual ideological influences. Maoists dreamed of cultural revolution by means of rejecting the old world; radical students envisioned a new society born of true revolutionary change; independent socialists, such as those of the aforementioned Brno group, imagined a symbiosis of leftist and civic principles; exile reform communists bet on Western European communist parties and potential changes in the Soviet Union; and so on. Just as Marxism was reformulated on the level of theory, so too was revolutionary Marxism revived, by various groups, as a union of revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice. While the stability of this union was allegedly, according to the official propaganda, secured by the Communist party, dissident thought understood this connection as the creation of a new, dynamic, and unceasingly revolutionary political power. Along these lines, it was entirely natural for Egon Bondy and Petr Uhl to criticize Soviet society and simultaneously see themselves as Marxists. We explore this duality in Apolena Rychlíková's interview with Anna Šabatová in the Czech issue.

But let us return to the theme we introduced at the very beginning. Much like the contemporary critics of state socialism, we believe that certain Marxist terms still represent useful tools for analyzing today's society and that the almost Sisyphean struggle of the former leftist dissidents to create an equal and just society helps us to take up their legacy (see, in particular, the interview with Anna Šabatová or Wolfgang Harich's critique of growth society as discussed in Alexander Amberger's text). Although we are reviving leftist dissident thought and attempting to read its stories and ideas anew, this does not mean that we intend to heroize it.

For instance, the tendency of many representatives of the *Praxis* school to ethnonationalism (see the text of Gazela Pudar Draško, Milivoj Bešlin, and Balša Delibašić) opens up topics to which we should direct our future criticism. Likewise, we might also address the question of why texts of that time essentially lack any reflection of different forms of oppression, such as gender inequality (a rare anomaly being Blaženka Despot's text, which Zsófia Lóránd editorially arranged for the preceding issue of this journal[2]). Thus far insufficiently explored leftist dissident thought gives rise to an array of other research topics: for example the dissident concept of solidarity, questions of the critique of labor laws, or later inclinations to various forms of authoritarianism in the region.

Just as this volume of Contradictions was going to press, we received the sad news of the passing of Petr Uhl, a lifelong fighter against injustice and a tireless defender of the rights of the oppressed. At this stage it is not possible to publish a full and proper memorial to Uhl, but we would like, at least in these few words, to pay respects on behalf of the editorial board to a man who never compromised his principles and ideals and who, even under the most difficult conditions, never changed who he was. For those of us who come one, two, or even three generations after him, Petr Uhl remains an inspiration. We dedicate this volume of Contradictions to him, to rend him honors and thanks for the legacy he left us to build on.

Kristina Andělová, Jan Mervart, and Petr Kužel
Translated by Tereza Jonášová

[2] Blaženka Despot, "Women and Self-Management," introduced by Z. Lóránd, *Contradictions: A Journal for Critical Thought* 4 (2020), no. 2, pp. 141–151.

STUDIES

POST-GROWTH UTOPIAS FROM THE GDR

The Ecosocialist Alternatives of SED Critics Wolfgang Harich, Rudolf Bahro, and Robert Havemann from the 1970s*

Alexander Amberger

Abstract

While the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), under its new chairman Erich Honecker, focused on consumption and economic growth in the 1970s, some Marxist intellectuals in the GDR recognized the urgency of the ecological question. They took the warnings of the Club of Rome seriously and pleaded for a different communist way of life, one that would abandon the ever-prosperous industrial economic model. To this end, they independently formulated eco-socialist utopias. Wolfgang Harich was the first in 1975 with Communism without Growth?*, followed by Rudolf Bahro with* The Alternative *from 1977, and Robert Havemann with his book* Tomorrow, *published in 1980. In this article, the three utopian*

* This article is based on the results of the author's dissertation, see Alexander Amberger, *Bahro – Harich – Havemann: Marxistische Systemkritik und politische Utopie in der DDR* (Paderborn: Schoeningh Ferdinand, 2014). An English translation of the book is planned for 2022 and will be published by Brill.

texts and their authors are presented, analyzed and compared. Amberger shows that the oppositional thinking of Harich, Bahro, and Haveman does not only belong in the history books but can also be an inspiration for today's debates on climate change and environmental destruction.

Keywords

Eco-socialist utopias, GDR, Marxist intellectuals, Wolfgang Harich, Rudolf Bahro, Robert Havemann

On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, and less than a year later the GDR was history – and with it almost all the Central and Eastern European "people's democracies," including the Soviet Union. A social system that had been founded on noble ideals but in reality not only failed to live up to those ideals but in some cases turned them into their opposites, was bankrupt. With it, the utopian and ideological history of socialism in general seemed to have failed, even if the Russian attempt to implement it occupies only a comparatively small historical period of this dream of humanity. Intra-socialist disputes about the (right) way and criticism of dictatorial communism from the left hardly interested anyone immediately after 1990.

Conservatives and neoliberals, mantra-like, invoked the end of all utopias. Margaret Thatcher's slogan "There is no alternative" and Francis Fukuyama's narrative of the supposed "End of History" were hegemonic in the West until at least the Lehman Brothers crisis. The thesis was that the so-called "real socialism" of the communist states was a realized utopia. Its failure was seen by conservative critics as clear evidence of its unsuitability in practice and the latent totalitarian danger of the entire genre of utopia.

However, this is a truncated interpretation because the connection between the genre and the former "real socialism" is not evident. This pejorative reading overlooks some core elements that make up the history of political utopias and their dynamics. Firstly, the centuries-old tradition of anarchist utopias should be mentioned here. Secondly, the conservative critique of utopia ignores the fact that, in modern utopias, internal contradictions are often discussed and the possibility of failure is considered.[1] Thirdly, this form of critique finally overlooks the contradiction between "Ideology and Utopia," as Karl Mannheim had already called it in his work of the same name in 1929.

According to this view, the GDR in its last years was at best a utopia that had coagulated into an ideology. A realized utopia can no longer be a utopia anyway, since it has gone from being a literal non-place to a reality in space and time. At this point, there is a latent danger that it will solidify into ideology when the transformation process loses momentum. To avoid this, new utopias are needed that analyze, criticize, and extrapolate the actual situation. Marxism congealed after the October Revolution, its

[1] A good example of this is *The Dispossessed* by the US author Ursula K. Le Guin from 1974.

initial utopian impulse quickly falling victim to civil war, war communism, the Cheka, the ban on factions, and the growth of the Stalinist bureaucracy. What remained in the end was the truncated and dogmatic ideology of Marxism-Leninism whose purpose was not to preserve the utopian idea, but to legitimize the dictatorship of the Bolshevik party (elite).

It was also based on a constructional error of Marx and Engels: the "ban on images." The two authors of the *Communist Manifesto* founded their "Scientific Socialism" as a demarcation from the ideas of earlier socialists, anarchists, and followers of other intellectual currents competing for the favor of the working class. Their approaches were portrayed as unscientific – thus their social utopias as well. The "ban on images" prohibited communists from concretely imagining their golden future. What counted was not a fool's paradise, but only the concrete here and now. Communism as the teleological end of history was placed at the end of the revolutionary transformation process. At the latest, it was only after Lenin that a revolutionary vanguard party was to point the way to this end. Painted communist images of the future that went beyond fantasies of technology were undesirable – but images of the respective party and state leader were not.

Only a few Marxists defied this ban, for example the SED[2] critics Rudolf Bahro, Wolfgang Harich, and Robert Havemann.

In the 1970s, they tried to use utopia to write against the ideologization of the transformation process. In this way, they wanted to give new impulses to the ossified real socialism. However, these Marxists were not only driven by concerns about the further development of communism, but also by the debate on ecological issues, which had become important at the time. Writings such as *The Population Bomb* by Paul R. Ehrlich (1968), the *Doomsday Book* by Gordon R. Taylor (1970), and above all the first Club of Rome report on the "Limits to Growth" (1972) suddenly brought up fundamental questions concerning the way of life of modern civilizations: if humanity continued to treat nature as carelessly and instrumentally as it had been doing up to that point, an ecological catastrophe would result.

These Western authors and scientists were not communists; their ecological demands did not stem from some left-wing political camp. As a way out of the crisis, they called for a turn away from economic growth, but refrained from a general critique of capitalism. They also derived the causes anthropologically and generally blamed "Man." The Marxists Bahro, Harich, and Havemann, on the other hand, were of the opinion that only communism could offer a functioning alternative to the capitalism of the West with its inherent environmental destructiveness – but at the same time not a growth- and industrial-policy-oriented socialism like that of the existing Communist states. They wanted models that would be the first alternatives to Western capitalism.

[2] Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*).

In the GDR, little consideration was given to the environment within the context of the overall economic race. Driven by its inherent competition with the West, initially the conditions were to be created at great expense in order to at least catch up in terms of productivity, if not to "overtake without catching up," as Walter Ulbricht put it.[3] In the 1970s, Ulbricht's successor, Erich Honecker, focused on a better supply of material goods to the population, at the expense of investment in industry and foreign debt. Money for environmental policy measures was hardly available. Ideologically, this was justified by saying that the environment would be preserved and restored after the victory of socialism which, unfortunately, was not possible at the moment.[4]

Bahro, Harich, and Havemann, as Marxists, however, not only pleaded for ecological communism, but unusually combined this with the demand for utopian thinking against the background of the ecological crisis. They were probably the best-known dissidents of the GDR.[5] In today's historiography and the reappraisal of the SED dictatorship, however, they have become marginal figures. When their names do appear, it is more in the context of an injustice that had occurred and of oppositional demands for civil and human rights. Freedom in the capitalist sense was not a serious alternative for Bahro, Harich, and Havemann. They were like Ernst Bloch, who moved (involuntarily) from Leipzig to Tübingen in 1961 but maintained until the end that "freedom as an utopia of Western capitalism is chloroform."[6] The three dissidents had a different kind of socialism in mind, but not a non-socialism. The ideas and demands of the Marxist oppositionists have been neglected in the post-1990 reappraisal of the GDR, partly because they did not always fit into the historical narrative. Political science research into utopias offers a new perspective here: the texts of Marxists who were critical of the SED can be analyzed comparatively and placed in their historical context.

The utopias *Kommunismus ohne Wachstum?* (Communism without Growth?),[7] *Die Alternative* (*The Alternative in Eastern Europe*),[8] and *Morgen* (Tomorrow)[9] are remark-

[3] Cf. Hans-Hermann Hertle, Stefan Wolle, *Damals in der DDR*, 2. Auflage (München: Bertelsmann, 2004), p. 116.

[4] This is how the economist Jürgen Kuczynski put it on behalf of the SED in his 1973 book *Das Gleichgewicht der Null. Zu den Theorien des Null-Wachstums*. Cf. in detail the chapter "Meadows und die GDR" in Amberger, *Bahro – Harich – Havemann*, pp. 30–49.

[5] However, they were not friends and did not act together politically. Each fought for himself, and sometimes they even made insulting remarks about each other. Cf. Alexander Amberger, "Wolfgang Harich und die 'aus-der-Bahn-Geworfenen.' Das Spannungsfeld Bahro-Harich-Havemann," in Andreas Heyer (ed.), *Wolfgang Harichs politische Philosophie* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovac, 2012). On the relationship between the three, see pp. 36–54.

[6] Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 682.

[7] Wolfgang Harich, *Kommunismus ohne Wachstum: Babeuf und der 'Club of Rome'* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1975).

[8] Rudolf Bahro, *Die Alternative: Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus* (Köln–Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1977).

able in several respects: the three SED critics used utopia with its core elements – an analysis and critique of the existing state of things, linked to an alternative proposal – to name the distortions of "real socialism" and to propose strategies for overcoming them.

In doing so, they fell between many stools: firstly, they belonged to the minority of confirmed Marxist critics within the opposition of the entire Eastern Bloc; secondly, within Marxism itself they belonged to the small minority that professed utopianism, and thirdly, within the history of literary genres, the three authors were quite the last ones to adhere to eutopic designs, that is, utopian societies that were supposed to function without serious internal contradictions. With his "Communism without Growth?" Harich even took up the utopian line of strict dictatorial designs that had actually already been overcome.

On the Concept and History of Utopia

The modern variety of the utopian genre emerged during the Renaissance, when the legacy of antiquity was revived by Thomas More in his *Utopia* (published in 1516). Campanella's *Sunshine State,* and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* were also written at this time. In these early texts, the desire for order dominated, which was linked to a critique of the somewhat chaotic contemporary conditions. The (mostly French) utopias of the Enlightenment followed on from the early writings of the genre. They reacted to the social ills of absolutism and countered them with alternative, normatively better, social designs, such as Lahontan's *Conversations with a Savage* and Mercier's *The Year 2440*. At that time, anarchist concepts were designed and opposed to absolutism. Historically, the Enlightenment era was followed by the era of industrialization, which brought major social upheavals. This proved to be a propitious breeding ground for the emergence of political utopias. At the beginning of this era, the works of Charles Fourier, Henri de Saint-Simon, and Auguste Blanqui, among others, were written. Later, the classics of social utopia appeared, such as Ètienne Cabet's *Journey to Icaria*, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Back from the Year 2000*, or William Morris' *News from Nowhere*.

With the reality of the dictatorships of the 20th century, which often legitimized themselves in terms of power politics by their (supposed) claim of realizing political utopias, the genre fell into serious crisis. The best-known dystopias, Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World,* and George Orwell's *1984*, show that the utopian genre can also be self-critical to the point of being self-destructive when social realities demand. After the end of the Second World War, the utopian genre seemed to have fallen victim to the tragic attempts at its realization. It only emerged from this lethargy in the late 1960s with the emergence of post-material utopias, what with statist approaches having hardly been represented or justifiable after the experience of the dictatorships of the last century. Anarchist designs with self-reflexive elements, however, did survive that century.

[9] Robert Havemann, *Morgen: Die Industriegesellschaft am Scheideweg: Kritik und reale Utopie* (München: Piper, 1980).

Countless other utopias have appeared over the last 500 years. Through a combination of critique and alternative, they reveal a lot about their respective eras. Almost all of them can be assigned to either the statist or the anarchist schools. At the same time, there are different methodological approaches in utopia research, especially in political science. Between the poles you will find conservative rejection of utopia for the reasons mentioned above, practical-philosophical, system-overcoming readings in the sense of Ernst Bloch, and an ideal-typological categorization, such as that tackled by Richard Saage in his elaboration of a classical concept of utopia.[10]

Here, Morus's *Utopia* is regarded as the reference work of the genre and individual elements of other utopias are compared with it. A comparative analysis of the books by Bahro, Harich, and Havemann on this basis makes sense. It is true that only Havemann chose the form of the novel with *Tomorrow*, whereas Harich and Bahro did not.[11] However, the classical concept of utopia is not limited to novels but is instead open to other forms of utopia as well.

With regard to the texts by Bahro, Harich, and Havemann, however, an exclusive limitation to the classical concept of utopia would run the risk of ignoring their practical-philosophical elements in the sense of Ernst Bloch. Such a limitation would leave a central building block missing because Bloch's philosophy of hope was always present as an influence in the texts of (critical) GDR intellectuals. Without a doubt, his utopian thinking influenced many GDR opposition members, with many critics of the system taking up his plea against the Marxist ban on images and his demand for an "upright walk."

However, Bloch's approach is unsuitable for comparative research into political utopias. He himself rejected such an approach and interpreted social utopias in a highly subjective and political fashion. Using the classical concept, however, the texts can be analyzed, compared, and classified in terms of genre history.

The drafts by Bahro, Harich, and Havemann are interesting especially with regard to the last point. They can also be described as exotic within the genre. For, in contrast to Western modern utopias, they were clearly Marxist, holding onto an image of history that saw communism as the highest and final stage of human development, thus they refrained from planning for their own failure, and there are no references in their designs to esotericism, spirituality, or nature mysticism. The designs are almost free of contradictions and are thus quite unique among the utopias of the 1970s.

At the same time, the GDR representatives show many parallels to Western utopias of the time, especially with regard to their preoccupation with the themes of the new social movements. The desire for peace, a criticism of consumerism, demands for equal

[10] Saage wrote numerous books on the history of utopia. Of particular note is the four-volume work "Utopische Profile" with a total of approximately 1,600 pages.

[11] They chose the interview form in the case of Harich and the essay form of a political pamphlet in the case of Bahro's *Alternative*.

rights for women and, above all, environmental protection can be found in almost all social utopias of this period.

The three SED critics sought above all to address the question of growth or the growth dilemma. Much more than in the American utopian discourse, this played a role, if not *the* central role, for them – especially with regard to the Marxist philosophy of history, which was to be turned upside down in its goal of achieving material prosperity for all people. Questions on "soft" policy fields became secondary contradictions to this problem. For this reason, the term "post-growth utopias" is more precise in relation to the texts by Bahro, Harich, and Havemann than the term "post-material utopias," which is often used for the American designs. This also makes the texts compatible with the current post-growth discourse, which is conducted under the keywords degrowth and décroissance. Over the course of the growth of the climate movement in recent years, some ideas from back then are experiencing a renaissance, without an awareness of these GDR thinkers being intellectual forebears in today's understanding. For example, in 2020, shortly after the global outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Swedish human ecologist Andreas Malm made an appearance within the climate debates with his plea for an "eco-Leninism."[12] Much of what he calls for unconsciously resembles Harich's 50-year-old ideas.

The confrontation with the warnings of the Club of Rome shaped the three GDR authors and at the same time turned them into revisionists, that is, deviationists from Marxism-Leninism. Bahro, Harich, and Havemann questioned Marx's prognosis from his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, according to which under communism "all fountains of cooperative wealth would flow more fully." They revised it ecologically and designed different utopias in the process: Wolfgang Harich took up the statist utopian tradition and saw an ascetic, global eco-dictatorship as the only way out. Rudolf Bahro envisioned a new society with a high level of education and a completely changed, post-material structure of needs. Robert Havemann supplemented this change in needs with technical instruments for solving ecological problems. He was the closest to the anarchist utopian school.

For many years, research in Germany had hardly dealt with the three texts under discussion here in particular and with GDR utopias in general. It is only in the last few years that they have received greater attention again, but not to the same extent. While the last major research work on Bahro and Havemann dates from 2015 (Ines Weber *Sozialismus in der DDR: Alternative Gesellschaftskonzepte von Robert Havemann und Rudolf Bahro*), Harich is getting much greater appreciation: his literary estate has

[12] Cf. Andreas Malm, *Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency: War Communism in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2020). For a comparison between Bahro, Harich, Havemann, and Malm, see Alexander Amberger, Inga Jacobsen, "Ökologische Planwirtschaft bei Harich, Bahro, Havemann – und Malm", in Timo Daum, Sabine Nuss (eds.), *Die unsichtbare Hand des Plans. Koordination und Kalkül im digitalen Kapitalismus* (Berlin: Dietz, 2021), pp. 76–90.

been in publication since 2012, in a series of sixteen planned volumes. Two of them, volume 8 from 2015 and volume 14 from 2020[13], are dedicated to his ecological writings. *Communism without Growth?* was also reprinted in the latest volume. The editor of the Harich estate, Andreas Heyer, has provided the volumes with detailed introductions. So, what makes the three utopias different in terms of their content? What are the differences and why are they so special?

The Ecological Dictatorship of Wolfgang Harich

Wolfgang Harich was born in 1923 into an educated bourgeois family, grew up among books, was well taken care of and was already very much interested in philosophy and literature as an adolescent. He managed to desert from the front twice during the war, went into hiding and was active in the resistance against the Nazis. After the end of the war, he studied philosophy and worked as a journalist for political magazines in the Soviet occupation zone. He had a stellar career and soon became a young star among GDR intellectuals. In the early 1950s, he wrote his doctoral thesis on Herder, becoming a lecturer at Berlin's Humboldt University, editor-in-chief of the newly founded *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (German Journal of Philosophy) and, as an editor at Aufbau Verlag, supervised the writings of Ernst Bloch and Georg Lukács, among others. Together with them, he advocated an open debate and a thorough examination of bourgeois philosophy. The Stalinist hardliners in the SED, on the other hand, wanted to convey their ideology dogmatically and did not want doctrinal discussions. After the XXth Party Congress of the CPSU in 1956, there was also a small thawing period in the GDR. Intellectuals at Aufbau Verlag demanded a discussion of errors, de-Stalinisation, an end to the personality cult, democratization, and the ousting of Ulbricht. Ulbricht retaliated at the end of 1956 and had Harich and others arrested and sentenced to long prison terms in a show trial the following year. Harich was released in 1964 and wanted to stay in the GDR. However, the SED did not allow him to appear in public again as a philosopher. At the beginning of the 1970s, he discovered the Western debates on the global consequences of economic growth and actively campaigned for environmental protection. From 1979 to 1981, he stayed in the West on a permanent visa and participated in building the Green Party. After his return to the GDR, things turned rather quiet around him. After 1990, Harich became involved in coming to terms with German-German history and advocated a discussion on equal terms – that is, against the one-sided view of history held by the victors. Harich died in Berlin in 1995.

What distinguishes his 1975 conception of *Communism without Growth*? The book contains six interviews and an exchange of letters between Harich and the West German editor and social democrat Freimut Duve. In it, the philosopher pleaded for a turn away from a growth trajectory. To his mind, the only way to solve the pressing problems of

[13] Wolfgang Harich, *Das grüne Jahrzehnt, Schriften aus dem Nachlass*, vol. 14 (Baden-Baden: Tectum, 2020).