

TRANSLATION

WORLD REVOLUTION NOW

On the Latest Publication
of the Club of Rome

*Wolfgang Harich,
introduced by Andreas Heyer*

Abstract

In the following translation, long-time East German dissident Wolfgang Harich presents his Marxist ecological perspective in a reflection on a 1991 report by the Club of Rome. Introduced by Andreas Heyer and translated by Julian Schoenfeld.

Keywords

Marxist ecology, de-growth, Club of Rome, environmental revolution

WOLFGANG HARICH'S MARXIST ECOLOGY *Andreas Heyer*

Wolfgang Harich (born December 9, 1923 in Königsberg, died March 15, 1995 in Berlin) experienced the end of the Second World War in the illegal anti-fascist resistance in Berlin. His importance in the movement is suggested by the fact that the “Ulbricht Group” of leading Communist figures quickly sought contact with him after its return to Germany, as Wolfgang Leonhard reported in his book *Die Revolution entlässt ihre*

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WOLFGANG HARICH'S MARXIST ECOLOGY *Andreas Heyer*

Wolfgang Harich (born December 9, 1923 in Königsberg, died March 15, 1995 in Berlin) experienced the end of the Second World War in the illegal anti-fascist resistance in Berlin. His importance in the movement is suggested by the fact that the “Ulbricht Group” of leading Communist figures quickly sought contact with him after its return to Germany, as Wolfgang Leonhard reported in his book *Die Revolution entlässt ihre*

Kinder. In autumn of 1946, Harich became the only German to join the editorial staff of the Soviet-licensed *Tägliche Rundschau*, where he was very successful as a theatre critic and feature writer.

In the 1950s, Harich worked at Humboldt University of Berlin, became an editor at the Aufbau publishing house, and became editor-in-chief of the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*. He also found himself repeatedly in conflict with the party. Early on he championed Bertolt Brecht, and in 1953 he and Brecht both expressed positive views on the workers' uprisings and worked for the fall of the repressive State Art Commission. Lectures given by Harich on Hegel at Humboldt University in 1952 and 1955 became political issues. He was also the only prominent figure in the GDR (German Democratic Republic) to stay away from the funeral service for Stalin. His close ties to Georg Lukács and his close collaboration with Ernst Bloch came under early criticism from the SED (the Socialist Unity Party, the ruling party of the GDR). On November 29, 1956, amidst uprisings throughout the Eastern Bloc, he was arrested and sentenced the following year to ten years in prison for "forming a conspiratorial group hostile to the state". He was released on December 18, 1964 on the basis of an amnesty on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the existence of the GDR. During his years in Bautzen prison, Harich was in solitary confinement for a long time, and only from 1963 on was he allowed to read selected books again.

When he was released from prison, the Stasi made it clear to him that political and philosophical statements from him were no longer desirable. Nevertheless, he did not leave the GDR, but remained in "his" Berlin until its demise – always hoping to see divided Germany reunited. Harich did not abide by the ban on writing. He worked, without his name ever being mentioned, at the Akademie publishing house on the new Feuerbach-Ausgabe (one of the most important Marxist publishing projects in the GDR). Above all, he quickly produced his own texts, published and unpublished. His commitment to literary studies, philosophy, and criticism of the present age during these years is still known today: Let us recall his great book on Jean Paul (the only monograph he was able to publish in the GDR), as well as his reflections on the GDR's understanding of heritage, and, closely related, his own understanding of culture oriented towards the classical period and against modernist tendencies. In this last area one can see a point of convergence between the philosophies of the three most important figures who inspired his own approach, and whom he held in high esteem: Nicolai Hartmann, Georg Lukács, and Arnold Gehlen.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Harich began to work intensively on the ecological issue. In 1975 he published his highly controversial book *Communism without Growth?* (*Kommunismus ohne Wachstum?*), a pioneering Marxist monograph on ecology. At the end of the 1970s, Harich realised that the GDR was completely refusing to address the ecological question and, against all his convictions, he asked to leave the GDR. This at first appeared to be out of the question for the SED, but on the initiative of Erich Honecker Harich was granted a permanent visa, which he used to promote his ecological

concept from 1979 to 1981 in Austria, the German Federal Republic, and Spain in the ranks of the emerging Green and Alternative movements there.

The central thesis of *Communism without Growth?* is that only a worldwide communist state can halt and reverse the industrial growth of humankind. For only communism possesses sufficient means to enforce critical measures: from one-child marriage to the resettlement of entire population segments, from rationing to the renunciation of the exploitation of nature. During his years in the German Federal Republic, Harich not only got to know many leading ecologists of the time; he also realised that he had to expand his state-centred model to include individual and cooperative components, and he realised that ecology was far more fundamental than he had thought. It also meant the emancipation of all people, especially women. And it meant peace and equality – without exception. At the end of 1981, Harich returned to the GDR.

In the 1980s, Harich worked intensively on his studies on Nicolai Hartmann and waged a fierce battle against the preoccupation with Nietzsche in the GDR. Ecology took a back seat, to some extent, in the process. After the collapse of the GDR and German unification however, Harich was able to return to his main topic. In December 1989 he wrote, among other things, a “Draft Programme for the Green Party of the GDR” which, however, did not gain acceptance. His last major publication on ecology was a review written in 1991 of the most recent report of the Club of Rome. This article is reproduced below, translated for the first time.

Harich spent the years until his death committed to the social, ecological, and left-wing shaping of German unity. He died in Berlin on March 15, 1995 as a result of heart trouble that worsened when not treated during his years in prison. One of his last letters on ecology was written on June 14, 1992 to his friend, the Polish philosopher Adam Schaff. It says: “Admittedly, I no longer like the word ‘socialism’. I spent my childhood and youth under ‘National Socialism’ [...]. ‘Real socialism’ is compromised by the Gulag, etc., and socialists like Kreisky, Mitterrand, González, Palme have certainly not overcome capitalism. On the other hand, communism has never existed anywhere, nor has anyone ever claimed to have realised it anywhere, and if it is true that, on a world scale, the overcoming of commodity production (and not only of capitalist ownership structures) is on the agenda, then why not strive for a ‘El Comunismo de Futuro’¹ right away?”

Translated by Julian Schoenfeld

¹ In (slightly incorrect) Spanish in the original. (Editors’ note)

WORLD REVOLUTION NOW

On the Latest Publication of the Club of Rome*

Wolfgang Harich

Until only three years ago¹ the Club of Rome did not consider it to be at all judicious to speak with one voice. “Although we are united in our common concern for the future of mankind, the origins, ideologies and approaches to the solution of problems are so diverse among our members that the effort to reach a consensus would inevitably have to lead to an insubstantial, even fatuous, compromise in the assessment of the world situation.” Thus wrote Sir Alexander King in his introduction to the report *Beyond the Limits of Growth*, which in 1988 Eduard Pestel, as usual, had submitted to the Club, but without claiming to speak in its name. In the meantime, the (now) one hundred members have changed their minds. For the first time, they are all united behind the latest report, *The First Global Revolution*,² which has just been published. The precarious world situation has made them “look beyond their differences on individual issues to agree on a common analysis and proclaim common goals”.

Common goals – this is also something that, in principle, is new in terms of content. This means a lot. At the very least, it will help put an end to those prophecies of doom that – seemingly – sound like Cassandra’s. For Cassandra predicts *unstoppable* doom. The reports to the Club of Rome, on the other hand, have always only rung the alarm bells about what might happen if nothing is done to address the fears that are expressed in the reports. In this, their authors resemble the biblical prophets calling for conversion, whose – to speak with Ernst Bloch – “*activating* thunder sermon” is not so much a prediction of fate as an instruction on how to avoid it, and consequently has an almost “anti-Cassandra effect” (for which the most suitable symbolic figure would be Katrin playing her drum in Brecht’s *Mother Courage*). Systems-Analytics prognostics speak,

* Translated with permission from, Wolfgang Harich, “Weltrevolution jetzt. Zur jüngsten Veröffentlichung des Club of Rome”, *Schriften aus dem Nachlass Wolfgang Harichs*, vol. 8: *Ökologie, Frieden, Wachstumskritik*, ed. Andreas Heyer (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2015), pp. 290–301. First published in *Z. Zeitschrift für marxistische Erneuerung* 2, no. 8 (1991), pp. 63–72. Thanks to Tectum Verlag for permission to translate the text.

¹ That is until 1988, which Harich notes that Pestel submitted his report to the Club of Rome. Pestel’s report itself was published in 1989. (Editors’ note)

² Harich cites the German text: Alexander King and Bernard Schneider, *Die globale Revolution: Bericht des Club of Rome 1991* (Hamburg: Spiegel, 1991).

more prosaically, of “alternative assumptions in the model”, of which, according to Pestel, “procedures of the type ‘If ... then’ or the type ‘What ... if’ are used”. In addition to such non-fatalistic foresight, there is now an appeal to purposeful intention and action that knows how to take influenceable factors into account. And people can be influenced, because they are not bound by instinct, and because on top of that they are capable of learning, while at the same time constantly maintaining their instinct for self-preservation.

Through both of these new “facts”, the main point, which is reflected in the title to the book, is given its full weight. As late as 1988, Pestel, then Minister of Education in the CDU-ruled state of Lower Saxony, gave a retrospectively scathing rejection to those who thought in the 1970s that “the world was ripe for a revolution”. At the time, the demand for zero growth, imputed (!) to the Club, to the detriment of the cause, “came in extremely handy as free ammunition against the establishment”. This was probably directed against Manfred Siebker’s views, for example, and certainly meant the idea of some sort of growthless, homeostatic world communism, derivable from premises such as those contained in the attention-getting 1972 MIT study *The Limits to Growth* by Dennis Meadows and others. Now, in 1991, the Club *in corpore* apparently considers the world to be “ripe for a revolution”. How else to understand its expectation of a “great revolution on a global scale” – obviously “world revolution” would be just another word for it – and its warning on the very next page about the devastating consequences that “would result from the unchanged continuation of economic systems and human behaviour” should the capitalist economic system continue to exist.

Leftist attitudes are met, consciously or unconsciously, with further insights: market mechanisms alone would not solve global problems “if they require a long-term strategic approach or if they are problems of distribution”. Moreover, the forces at work in a market economy could have “dangerous side effects because they are not based on the general interest”, with international financial speculation being “a particularly striking example of the excesses of a capital market” that is “dominated by the insane principle of profit at any price”. The market does not care “about long-term consequences, about the well-being of future generations or about resources that are common property”. It promotes self-interest and greed. If left unchecked, its brutal effects lead to “exploitation, neglect of social tasks, destruction of the environment” and the waste of goods that are vital for the future. The Club similarly exposes the problems of the common overestimation of pluralistic democracy. It is not a panacea, does not get everything under control, and does not know its own limits. “The complexity and technical nature of many of today’s problems do not always allow elected representatives to make competent decisions at the right time.” The activities of political parties revolve too much around election dates and rivalries, governments too short-sightedly favour solutions that yield the most obvious benefits at the expense of long-term perspectives. “Governance degenerates into regularly recurring crisis management, into stumbling from one emergency into another.”

The Club's historical understanding of its own genesis proceeds along the same lines. The "great turning point" was 1968. Coinciding with the end of a long post-war period of rapid economic growth in the industrialised countries, with social unrest and student revolts, with signs of alienation and cultural-critical protest, with "the first beginnings of a broad, publicly articulated environmental consciousness", a group of independent thinkers came together precisely at that time to complement the work of public organisations by addressing more long-term and fundamental problems. This must sound blasphemous to some, who, having too narrow an epochal consciousness or an anti-communist resentment, would prefer to reserve the term "great turning point" for 1989, the most representative date for the collapse of "actually existing socialism" in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

The Club of Rome, on the other hand, soberly puts into perspective the significance of these events by stating that until recently the CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) countries had not played a major role in the world economy. On the other hand, the Club, without a sense of triumph, recognises the ambivalent nature of the CMEA's debacle, as it holds opportunities but also risks: the risk not only of destabilising this part of the world, but also that of a further deterioration of the situation of the developing countries in the South, and at the same time the opportunity for "truly global commitments", especially regarding disarmament. It is "unlikely that history will offer us another opportunity as comprehensive and promising as this one, and it is therefore crucial that humanity uses it wisely". Conditions are "extremely fluid", there are hardly any more constraints, and from their consolidation could eventually grow "the restructuring and renewal of a much larger region and perhaps the entire world system".

Whether the world revolution ever had a basis in real socialism is more than doubtful today, even for non-Trotskyists. It seems certain that in the future it will have to completely and definitively renounce such a basis in the form of some other "socialism in one country". The question is how, with what concrete task, the revolution will now have to be set in motion anew, as it were *ab ovo*, if the spontaneity of the processes objectively driving it – or to be stopped by it – is not to lead to total, worldwide chaos. The Club of Rome estimates that the schizophrenias of the current state of the world are so enormous, entangled and threatening that it is actually necessary to "grab a thousand bulls by the horns at the same time". However – and followers of Lenin may see themselves almost confirmed here in their familiar doctrine of the "main link in the chain" – it singles out three areas from the entire world problem that must be tackled immediately: 1) "Swords into ploughshares", that is, disarmament with transformation of the production of all military-industrial complexes into a civilian economy. 2) Stopping the climate catastrophe, especially global warming, while dealing with the related energy problems. 3) Overcoming world poverty and the glaring differences between countries, not least with the aim of stopping the population avalanche in a morally legitimate, humane, and dignified way.

In this context, the sequence enumerated above does not represent differentiated priorities. One is as urgent as the other. The most fundamental importance is in fact attached to the second area. But since, for example, saving the remaining forests – namely the tropical rainforests in the poverty zones of the South, which are of enormous importance for stabilising the climate – presupposes that the most pressing need of the population living there is quickly remedied, for which in turn the budgetary resources of all states spent on armament purposes are needed, there can be no question of an order of priority for the requirements that are interlocked in this way. Or, putting it the other way: because the conversion of armaments, which is so indispensable for the lasting preservation of peace, would only cause even greater economic and ecological damage if, “instead of tanks automobiles were built, instead of warships and submarines merchant ships and tankers”, the proper approach to the first task depends on the constant consideration of the second.

The “central link in the chain”, therefore, is already complexly interwoven. Even with a strict selection of the most urgent issues, it is no longer possible to concentrate on a single, absolutely central concern. Lenin’s tactically wise advice therefore needs contemporary enrichment. And those “thousand bulls” do indeed show up, as soon as one grabs the three wildest from among them firmly enough by the horns. Maybe like this: the necessary aid for the former Third World is joined by that for the former Second; mass migrations will otherwise be on their way from the East and South. Or: behind the ecologically highly recommendable closure of even most civilian-oriented engine plants, with the inevitable consequence of closed petrol stations and car repair shops, the problem of ever more widespread unemployment looms large. Or: general and complete disarmament will foreseeably not only meet with resistance from the corporations profiting from the production and sale of weapons, but, hardly less risky, will again affect numerous workers and, moreover, highly qualified scientists of little renown, whose prestige, not to speak of income, is based on “success in the competitive struggle within an isolated profession”. And so on and so forth. One thing always leads to another.

The Left, the Green one as well as the Pink and the Red ones, including communists of Stalinist and Trotskyist origin, can undoubtedly politically affirm the three aforementioned core tasks of the global world revolution with the best of consciences. It should therefore find its way out of navel-gazing, despondent lethargy, and mutually exclusive disputes over direction in order to place itself, ready for unity of action and a policy of alliances, devotedly at the service of these three tasks, and thus going on the attack again. Of course, it will only succeed in this if it grasps the meaning of the “new thinking” in its full scope, recognises it, takes it seriously and brings it to bear in its own actions. This includes: the subordination of special interests to more general ones, especially proletarian interests to general human interests – which, however, are certainly not identical with the hyperspecial interests of the big bourgeoisie. Furthermore, it includes the resolute renunciation of violent methods of struggle and, among

many other things, the rejection of any theories of dictatorship of an undemocratic kind. The last-mentioned point must be particularly emphasised here insofar as the said idea of a growthless, homeostatic communism – in its original, only known version – was contaminated from 1974 onwards with the idea of an eco-dictatorship, and the reference to the Club of Rome's understanding of democracy suggests the (erroneous) suspicion that it is still being adhered to here.

Within “actually existing socialism”, Brezhnev and Honecker were naively wooed by the suggestion, which appealed to their sense of responsibility, that they could use the instruments of power at their disposal, and even justify them if they used them, rejecting Western consumer norms as a precaution against the deadly dangers of the future; yet they never even considered the suggestion, whether because they could not or did not want to. They have suppressed, persecuted, and slandered that offer like they would any other dissident action. After their system collapsed, anti-democratic concepts, detached from their non-capitalist socio-economic basis, could only encourage imperialist, possibly extreme right-wing, dictatorship. It is possible to conceive the fascistic distorted image of an eco-dictatorship which, with the help of short-lived technological pseudo-solutions, would create a nature reserve, still thriving at best in the medium term, as a pretty environment for the master race, which, entrenched behind walls and barbed wire, would keep at bay a flood of people desperately surging forward from the South and East, if necessary by nuclear genocide. No thank you!

The idea of an eco-dictatorship was, by the way, inspired by a historically insufficient memory of the beginning of the Second World War. From one day to the next, on September 1, 1939, food and other consumer goods were strictly rationed in Hitler's Germany, car owners were forbidden to drive their cars; they also no longer got any petrol. If the population accepted such restrictions – and they were the only bearable, not to say pleasant, things about the war at that time – in order to achieve goals of criminal aggression, then it hardly seemed absurd to ask for analogous measures from a red dictatorship, one that was committed to goals that were the polar opposite of the brown Nazi dictatorship, in view of the ecological crisis and so that the self-destruction of *Homo sapiens* would be stopped. Even today, the Club of Rome itself declares that people need “a common motivation, a common enemy” as an incentive; that new enemies, no less real than the earlier ones, now “threatened the whole of humanity” and that these enemies were “environmental pollution, water scarcity, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy and unemployment”. The association of a (world) saving “war communism”, including a dictatorship, to be deployed against these adversaries of human welfare may once again suggest itself.

But thinking like this is fundamentally wrong. Even the historical starting point is wrong. The British in their war of 1939 – an exceptionally just war at that – imposed the necessary restrictions upon themselves in a broad consensus of Conservatives, Labour, and Liberals without abolishing democracy, and the Club of Rome is urging democratic

consensus-building of all political forces to rid ourselves of the rising threats of global catastrophe. Leftists may find it repulsive when Pestel even brings up, in this context, the paternalistic consensus-building tradition in Japan, which he suggests should be extended to the environmental challenges. In any case, it should be acceptable to leftists that the authors' collective of the *Global Revolution* says: "Different value and moral concepts exist everywhere in society, and we must also conclude here that only through an overriding common ethic of the survival of humanity and our planet can divergent interests be harmonised or at least mutual tolerance be achieved."

Old communists will hardly find this completely unfamiliar; younger ones, connoisseurs of their party history, will know it. Democratic consensus against fascism was once the aim of the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern. Admittedly, the policy of the People's Front initiated by it was quite heavily and damagingly burdened with Stalinism. It came far too late to have been able to thwart Hitler's rise to power in Germany. Afterwards, restrained by Soviet foreign policy, it blocked the movement's promising transition to socialism in France and even more so in Spain. This class betrayal, in turn, was secured internally in the Soviet Union by Stalin with bloody, pre-emptive terror against the Trotskyists and their followers. And when all his misjudgements and wrong decisions, together with the crimes that flanked them, boomeranged terribly on the Popular Front, it was to remain paralysed for almost two years by the Hitler-Stalin Pact. This much is unfortunately true.

Nevertheless, from 1935 onwards, communists all over the world had achieved much in terms of their policy of making alliances and working cooperatively in partnerships, exactly as Pestel means, which would be very beneficial to them today as comrades-in-arms of the global, world revolution if they would remember this lesson and restrain any ulterior motives for hegemony. "New thinking" may inspire them to do so, all the more so as they no longer need to take into account the constricting imperial interests of a "fatherland of all workers". The global character of the three cardinal tasks ahead could give new impetus to their internationalist tradition, giving it a new, more dignified quality in keeping with the signs of the times. Communists would be able to leave their moping motives behind, and their cooperation would be in demand, ever and again.

Who should be the subject of the global revolution? Answer: Everyone! Because the existence of all is at stake, it must be possible to bring each individual to the point where his or her elementary egoism sees itself challenged and can thus be won over and mobilised for a "globally enlightened and common self-interest" of humanity as a whole. For most people, this egoism is now "not limited to their own lifespan, but extends to that of their children and grandchildren, with whose existence they identify", which is why it is not *a priori* hopeless to work "egoistically" towards conditions that will enable future generations to have a dignified and truly human existence". The class interest of the ruling classes may not be specifically addressed in this argumentation of the Club of Rome, but it definitely does not put forth the illusion that it can be ignored. To take

ruling class interest into account without illusion, to consider it capable of the worst, to see how it is conditioned according to laws given by the capitalist system, and to bring it to its concept, is something that Marxist thinking is at liberty to do.

The social analysis of Marxism, rightly understood – namely in a Leninist way – has never led to fatalism, and therefore the appeal of the Club is perfectly compatible with it, which demands that any special interest that contradicts the preservation of life on earth, the salvation of human society, be confronted with the accusation of being secretly sworn to the most diabolical, most vile of all ulterior motives, the “devil-may-care” maxim. It is easy to see that there cannot be a more effective method of forcing capitalism to make an admission of failure with scientific justification. And this is exactly what the logic of “new thinking” demands. The offer of consensus in partnership and cooperation to all, including the most reactionary and destructive forces, leaves them no choice, as things stand, either to turn back or to show an absolutely fatal moral weakness. Probably, as a prelude to raising awareness of this alternative, a worldwide referendum would need to be organised, putting to the vote the continued existence of human beings and their flood-inducing addictions and habits.

The global challenges have undeniably been increasingly diverted from public attention by the events of the last few years. The resurgence of nationalism was and is probably the most responsible for this. Much as the Club of Rome, that Aeropag of noble humanists and cosmopolitans, disapproves of it, it is not discouraged by it. It is a sign of its wisdom that, in this context, it even sees good sides to the powerful ethnic egocentrism that is stirring up, despite its often not at all unrecognisable narrow-minded features, because it seems to it to favour the shift of political responsibility away from the centralised nation-state to the local base, in the sense of the second part of its slogan: “Think globally, act locally!” In a vertical upward direction, the Club also wants to see competencies that affect global survival problems shifted away from the nation state and up to a newly organised United Nations. Almost all of the statements on this subject, including the thoughts regarding more modern qualifications for politicians, are extraordinarily clever, meaningful, and helpful. The creation of a UN Environmental Security Council is suggested, in which “not only the members of the existing UN Security Council, but also the developing countries should be strongly represented”. (Presumably the postulated body would have vetoed the Gulf War, perhaps with the successful result that there would be no burning oil wells in Kuwait).

Other proposals include world development conferences, perhaps along the lines of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades) tariff reduction rounds, a “comprehensive world project for the development of alternative energies”, to be organised along the lines of a network, which would be preferable to the “usual bureaucratic inflexibility of a conventional international centre”, and studies regarding the energy problem in agriculture, with the aim of reducing its energy consumption and its emissions of greenhouse gases. In flexible and dynamic institutions – often only provisional and temporary, elastic rather than stable, capable of adapting to changing demands

– a policy of new ethical and adaptive quality should come into play, enlightened by interdisciplinary scientific knowledge, motivated no longer by the enjoyment of power and the privileges that go with it, but by “the satisfaction of being allowed to serve society”.

According to the Club, these and other virtues should be embodied in the Secretary-General of the United Nations above all other public figures, an office which, incidentally, it is hard to see why it has always been entrusted only to men: women have not even been considered as candidates for it. A first, faint hint of feminism is perceptible here, but this can in no way be regarded as sufficient. The biological link between motherhood and worries about the future, the different role of women in the diverse cultures of the interdependent world, the programme and perspective of a general feminisation of society, the advantages of a new matriarchy are topics for which the book regrettably fails to muster any interest.

It is to be hoped that the Club of Rome would be inspired by such reflections as those already made by Françoise d’Eaubonne in the 1970s and, accordingly, would decide to include disputatious feminists among its members. Another deficit to be criticised is the lack of a cultural-political dimension. It would be urgent to remedy this in the future in view of the questions of a meaningful life raised by unemployment and the reduction of working hours. Philosophy and the humanities, poetry, fine arts and music, enjoyed receptively, actively pursued, discussed with ambition and a willingness to learn, the mass acquisition of classical humanistic education in interaction with the development of the creative potentials of the individual, could turn the bleakly depressing agony of the feeling of being superfluous, not needed, into a joyfully affirmed leisure for higher activities and purposes and, on top of that, help to push back the compensatory needs that are usually coupled with material demands and can hardly ever be satisfied without wasting raw materials and a polluting behaviour. And what could be more suitable to teach us to imagine and understand the poverty and barrenness of a universe in which the earth, uninhabitable for humans, would drift along its elliptical orbit around the central star of our planetary system, what could most inspire us to not allow this under any circumstances, at no price, than an intimate familiarity with the crowning achievements of high culture! (We owe it to the galaxies of the cosmos that Raphael and Rembrandt, Shakespeare and Goethe, Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, Aristotle and Hegel, Balzac and Tolstoy should not ultimately have lived in vain, that we should do everything we can to ensure their continued effect until the sun cools off.)

To these objections, I would like to add a final consideration that globally-oriented thinking might consider too specific to be the basis of justified objection, but which is nonetheless missing in the book. It concerns the revolutionary auspices of the national dilemma of today’s Germany. There is no doubt – and the Club of Rome states this with thankfully ruthless frankness – that the solution of the world problem will demand many material sacrifices from the present generation of Germans, especially in the industrialised and affluent regions. The initiative to awaken the necessary readiness for this and to provide a model for it is to be hoped for above all from the now reunified

Germany, and this for the simple reason that the West-East prosperity gap persists here in a state whose constitution prescribes equality of living conditions in all its parts, to be established not in two or five or ten years, but immediately.

But all efforts to overcome this deplorable state of affairs by raising the standard of living in the territory of the former GDR to West German levels are diametrically opposed to the intentions of the Club of Rome. It would be correct and sensible, in accordance with its advice, to take the opposite path: that of a downward levelling, with drastic material losses for the old federal states, combined with more social security (at an equally modest level) and improved *quality* of life for all. This would be along the strategic line of the life-saving global revolution and would also be revolutionary in the traditional sense: peace to the huts, war to the palaces (non-violent “war” of course)! For what would be the consequence of imposing patriotically justifiable renunciation on the less well-off masses of the people in West Germany, where, according to wealth statistics, 40 billionaires and almost 90,000 millionaires reside, where the rulers draw salaries and the members of parliament get allowances of shameful immoderateness?

To ask the question is to answer it. If Germany were to achieve this revolutionary feat instead of an ecologically undesirable economic miracle in the East based on the model of the 1950s, then those who were too rich would rightly lose out, but the rest of the world would be done a service that cannot be valued highly enough: it would experience that it is possible to proceed in this way, and this would once again set a precedent everywhere. Only then could the international community forgive the Germans for all that Hitler’s fascism did to it during the darkest twelve-year period of German history.

Seen in this light, Germany has a key role to play in the global, world revolution. The German left is therefore advised first and foremost to devote itself to a thorough study of this new publication of the Club of Rome, to develop the teachings and proposals in it its own way and to link them with the indispensable, enduring, time-transcending truths of the Marxist tradition, in order to put the synthesis of both achievements of the human spirit into practice as soon as possible. And if the Club of Rome realises its plan to set up national associations in about thirty countries on five continents – and perhaps it has already done so – then here in particular the left must not allow itself to be outdone by anyone in establishing associations with it, in seeking its advice on an ongoing basis, in bringing to the Club the issues that are driving the left.

Translated by Julian Schoenfeld