STUDIES

POST-GROWTH UTOPIAS FROM THE GDR

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

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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*

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.

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

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[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.

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[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-

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[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, 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

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[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

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

humanity was a global eco-dictatorship along the lines of "real socialism" – but without its aspirations for a better supply of luxury goods for the population. Harich wrote:

> At the present stage of the development of the productive forces, I consider the immediate transition to communism to be possible, and in view of the ecological crisis, it seems to me to be urgently necessary. However, I no longer believe that there will ever be a communist society living in abundance, a communist society drawing on unlimited resources, as we Marxists have striven for up to now. On this point we must correct ourselves.[14]

In order to achieve the goals of the Club of Rome, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the realization of communism were the only options. Harich wanted to manifest the "dictatorship of the proletariat" – originally envisaged in Marxism-Leninism only as a transitional phase to communism – now as a historical final state under ecological auspices. This meant a renunciation of the withering away of the state in the later phase of communism. Harich also was opposed to the ideology of the SED in another central point, in that he also considered a direct transition from Western capitalism to eco-communism possible. SED socialism as a self-proclaimed construction stage would thus become obsolete. In this way, the philosopher negated the claim to progress of the "real-socialist" rulers. He also sacrificed the prosperity-promising future perspective of communism in favor of preserving life-sustaining conditions for humanity on this planet.

For Harich, democracy and market-based instruments were contrary to any efforts to secure ecological conditions for survival. The SED leadership, however, was not very enthusiastic about his proposals but did not know how to deal with them. For the philosopher, like other opposition figures, openly called the human rights violations by their name – even if he welcomed them and considered them necessary for ecological reasons. It was misplaced praise. Instead of criticizing the dictatorship, Harich called for its global expansion and reconstruction. By eliminating competition on the world market, he believed that production locations should be determined in an ecologically compatible way. A central administration would coordinate all this: "There would be a world economy plan worked out by the World Economic Council with its quota requirements for all industrial products, and for the individual there would be ration cards, ration coupons, and that would be it."[15]

Nevertheless, Harich did not consider his concept to be a prison-communism in which man would be a subjugated being. Taking up the French social utopian Gracchus Babeuf (1760-1797), he relied on a statist model in which the common good and the happiness of the individual would merge and be realized:

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[14] Harich, *Kommunismus ohne Wachstum?*, p. 32 ff.

[15] Harich, *Ibid.*, p. 167.

> Communism will emerge from the victory of the proletarian world revolution as a global system of centrally controlled mutual aid and satisfaction of needs, freed from the exchange of goods, competition, trade balances, etc., and oriented solely towards the optimum benefit for all.[16]

For the implementation of his ideas, which were addressed to Brezhnev and Honecker, Harich relied on transformation from above, whereby he assumed a voluntary subordination of the people to the collective will out of an understanding of the ecological necessity. To Harich, such an ecological communism with a renunciation of the material West would have represented a real alternative. Selling it to the people as a more attractive model than present-day capitalism would remain a matter for those in power. In his conception, Harich took the view that a transition to communist eco-dictatorship as quickly as possible could save more freedom for the people in the long term than capitalism with its "bourgeois freedom," which in the course of the intensification of growth's contradictions could not be maintained anyway, so that in the end the danger of eco-fascism loomed. He preferred eco-communism instead.

The apparent contradiction in Harich's biography results from the fact that in 1956 he was sentenced to ten years in prison for reform-communist efforts to de-Stalinize the GDR.[17] However, 25 years later, the resolution of ecological problems was far more important to him than the struggle for democratization of the GDR. After 1989, Harich dissociated himself from the concept of eco-dictatorship and, in this regard, took up the search for an ecological-democratic communism.

Anarcho-communism on a Technical Basis: Robert Havemann's *Morgen* (Tomorrow)

Robert Havemann approached the environmental question quite differently. Unlike Harich, he was not a philosopher but rather a natural scientist. Born in 1910, he was already able to look back on an eventful life after the Second World War: he was already considered a recognized researcher and had also been active in the communist resistance within Nazi Germany. In the process, Havemann was arrested and sentenced to death before a People's Court (*Volksgerichtshof*). Only good connections and his scientific knowledge saved his life, as he was sent to Brandenburg Prison to carry out research that was "important to the war effort." In the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ), or the new GDR, Havemann was a well-adapted scientist and SED functionary. At the beginning of the sixties, he got into a conflict with Ulbricht and was made into an oppositionist. Artists and oppositionists critical of the system soon gathered around the

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[16] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

[17] On Harich's concept of the state and the explanation of this contradiction, see Andreas Heyer, "Wolfgang Harichs Staatsbegriff," in Wolfgang Harich, *Schriften zur Anarchie: Zur Kritik der revolutionären Ungeduld und die Baader-Meinhof-Gruppe, Schriften aus dem Nachlass Wolfgang Harichs,* vol. 7, ed. A. Heyer (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2014), pp. 9–90.

outcast Havemann, and he became "enemy of the state no. 1." Despite all the shielding, Havemann managed again and again to smuggle texts into the West in which he called for a democratic socialism – on either side. After the expatriation of his friend Wolf Biermann in 1976, Havemann became increasingly lonely. He now expanded his thinking to include the great questions of humanity of his time.

With his utopia *Morgen. Die Industriegesellschaft am Scheideweg* (Tomorrow: Industrial Society at the Crossroads) from 1980, he attempted to overcome his previous focus on the SED and dissidence and write his magnum opus. He now focused on the economic and ecological fiasco that was in the offing should no fundamental change in humanity's thinking and action occur. Havemann deplored the arms race, global social inequality with Western wastefulness on the one hand and hunger in the Third World on the other, as well as a fixation on luxury and the squandering of resources, which ultimately lead to enormous mountains of trash. Similarly to Harich, he was of the opinion that capitalism could not solve the global crisis because, if it wanted to continue to exist, it was doomed to grow. However, Havemann considered not only capitalism but also "real socialism" as unsuitable for solving the problem. He did not see any inevitability for communist development having to go through the misguided development of socialism after the October Revolution. Havemann therefore wanted to draft a communist utopia of the third way, which was to serve as a "sketch" and inspiration. He called it "The Journey to the Land of Our Hopes" – a clear reference to Ernst Bloch's *Prinzip Hoffnung*.[18]

In Havemann's utopia, science and technology serve man and provide happiness without side effects. Women are freed from the shackles of patriarchy, natural resources are used sensibly instead of being wasted (for example, cars are almost completely dispensed with) and in general there is a marked environmental awareness. The entire society places a high value on knowledge and education. Cities, in earlier times structural manifestations of human alienation, no longer exist and have been replaced by decentralized forms of settlement. In general, Man has thrown off the shackles of industrial society and now devotes himself to his personal development. In Havemann's hedonistic draft of the future, the arts are cultivated, a world language enables global communication, no one is forced to work, and there is no more money. Without the old way of working and sharing, travel by car or plane is also no longer necessary because there is no longer any rush. People can now discover the world in a slowed-down and relaxed way. All energy is generated by small fusion and hydroelectric power plants,

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[18] The archive holdings of the Robert Havemann Society contain publisher's folders from the collection of the *Morgen* publisher Ernst Piper. In a letter written on 9 April 1980, Havemann submitted title proposals for the book to him: it is remarkable that – in contrast to the final name – he did not want to include utopia in the subtitle, but in the title: "Terra Utopie. Die Hoffnung zu überleben" was his suggestion. He thus deliberately wanted to write a political utopia and explicitly state this in the title. Cf. Amberger, *Bahro – Harich – Havemann*, p. 230 for further details.

showing the technological direction of Havemann's thoughts, so unlike Bahro's and Harich's. Overall, much less is consumed (and needed) through good planning.[19]

Havemann saw the realization of humanity's movement towards such a utopia only as coming through a broad radical change in social conditions. He questioned whether such a chance of realization existed and analyzed its present form. From a Marxist perspective, he came to the conclusion that the current conditions of production were increasingly becoming a stumbling block to the developing productive forces and consequently class contradictions were rising and revolution was ripening. In classical Marxist terms, he held onto the proletariat as motor of the transformation. Havemann, a natural scientist, regarded the negative consequences of technology as secondary contradictions that could be solved through research and development. He even did not reject nuclear energy, insofar as its use would be linked to a general change of consciousness. As early as the 1950s, Havemann, then still one of the leading natural scientists of the GDR and an SED official with many functions,[20] had protested in West Berlin against the atomic bombs of the USA. At the same time, however, he welcomed and defended the communist use of nuclear energy.[21] Until the end of his life in 1982, he considered it to be a good technology if it was in socialist hands.

Havemann's anarcho-communist draft is not only in the tradition of Bloch in terms of utopia and the history of ideas, but is also reminiscent of models of economic democracy from the 1920s, the Yugoslavian attempts at council communism, ideas of workers' self-administration, and other reflections on the goals and paths of a democratic socialism or a socialist democracy. As a direction forward, he oriented himself by such socialist greats as Eduard Bernstein, Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci or the Austro-Marxists.

Out of the "Megamachine": Rudolf Bahro's *Alternative*

Rudolf Bahro was born in 1935 in Bad Flinsberg (today the Polish town of Swieradow-Zdroj). After the war, the family had to leave his place of birth. Bahro lost his mother and siblings on the run and grew up as a half-orphan with his father. Unlike Harich

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[19] Cf. Havemann, *Morgen*, p. 120 ff., cf. also Amberger, Jacobsen, "Ökologische Planwirtschaft bei Harich, Bahro, Havemann – und Malm," pp. 76–90.

[20] Numerous books have been published on Havemann's biography, most of them by people from his circle, e.g.: Bernd Florath (ed.), *Annäherungen an Robert Havemann. Biografische Studien und Dokumente* (Berlin: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016); Florian Havemann, *Havemann* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007); Katja Havemann, Joachim Widmann, *Robert Havemann oder Wie die DDR sich erledigte* (Munich: Ullstein, 2003).

[21] This can be read, for example, in an article by Havemann in the *Tägliche Rundschau* of July 8, 1954, in which he expressed his delight at the first civilian nuclear power plant in the world to go on line in the Soviet Union. Cf. Dieter Hoffmann, „Physiochemiker und Stalinist," in Dieter Hoffmann et al. (eds.), *Robert Havemann: Dokumente eines Lebens* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1991), pp. 65–115, p. 111 ff.

and Havemann, he came from a petty-bourgeois background and, because of his age, belonged to the first generation of young cadres trained in the GDR. In the early 1950s he began studying philosophy in Berlin and subsequently made a career as a socialist official. The suppression of the Prague Spring changed Bahro's world view: he now no longer believed in the SED's narrative, but looked instead for the causes of that undesirable development of "real socialism" and for ways out of the deadlocked system.

In his work *Die Alternative. Zur Kritik des realexistierenden Sozialismus*[22] (*The Alternative in Eastern Europe*), published in 1977, he considered the transition to a "real socialism" as feasible only through an intellectual and cultural revolution.[23] He was concerned with the active and conscious influence of people on the course of history. Bahro pleaded for emancipation:

> The whole type of expanded reproduction that European civilization has produced in its capitalist era, this avalanche-like swelling expansion in all material-technical dimensions, is beginning to present itself as untenable. The success we have had with our means of mastering nature is threatening to destroy us and all others whom it mercilessly draws in its wake.[24]

Bahro opposed – contrary to Havemann – the belief in the East and the West that the problems of industrial society could be solved through technical progress. Rather, he saw this as "one of the most hostile illusions of the present day."[25]

Communism, in Bahro's sense, means thoughtful, regulated, sustainable, and harmonious growth and life. This requires a balance between Man and Nature, which in turn would make the "leap into the realm of freedom" possible. In order to bring this about, the hierarchical structure of society had to be overcome, which Bahro identified as the main pillar of the vertical division of labor – that is, the inequality and hierarchization within work processes. Not asceticism, but a turning away from the consumerism of industrial society characterizes Bahro's utopian design. The basis of his model, which

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[22] Rudolf Bahro, *Die Alternative: Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus* (Köln and Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1977), in 2020 the book first appeared in Czech under the title *Alternativa. Ke kritice reálného socialismu* (Prague: Filosofia, 2020). The editor is Stanislav Holubec.

[23] The most comprehensive Bahro biography is by Guntolf Herzberg and Kurt Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro: Glaube an das Veränderbare* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2002).

[24] Bahro, *Die Alternative*, p. 310. The passage recalls Friedrich Engels' warning against the consequences of working on and destroying nature: "Let us not flatter ourselves too much with our human victories over nature. For every such victory, nature takes revenge on us. In the first place, everyone has suffered the consequences we have counted on, but in the second and third place, it has quite different, unforeseen effects, which all too often cancel those first consequences." Friedrich Engels, "Dialektik der Natur," in *MEW*, vol. 20 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), pp. 307–572, 452.

[25] Bahro, *Die Alternative*, p. 311.

is not infrequently reminiscent of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Back from the Year 2000*[26], was a very high level of general education, based on a different educational system. Bahro's book ultimately contains elements of both the statist and the anarchist utopian schools and in this respect lies between the texts of Harich and Havemann. Bahro also oscillated between democracy and dictatorship in the later course of his life. He was arrested after the publication of *Alternative* and sentenced to a long prison term. Only a few months later, the SED granted him permission to leave the country. Once in Western Germany, Bahro joined the Green Party and gained experience in grassroots democracy and communal projects. After the fall of the Wall, he moved back to Berlin, took on a chair in social ecology and caused political consternation with demands for a "green Adolf" and esoteric right-left, cross-frontal efforts in favor of preserving the environment. Bahro died in 1997.

Concluding Remarks

All three authors refer positively to Lenin and his concept of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Their utopias represent other, alternative, readings that were opposed to the ossified Leninism of the SED. They referred to the democratic elements in the works of the Russian revolutionary leader. The fact that his dictatorship of the majority was also a dictatorship over the minority was accepted by each in his own way. Although all three were convinced anti-Stalinists, they had just as little time for Western democracy. If they had not been critics of the SED, their persons and thoughts would hardly have made it into the most important media of the Federal Republic (of West Germany). They appeared there regularly in almost all the major newspapers and magazines, in news magazines, and on radio and television. Much of what they said would have been better off in the SED central (news) organ "Neues Deutschland" and, once printed there, would have become completely uninteresting for the Western media. If their utopian texts had first appeared in GDR publishing houses, hardly anyone on the other side of the Iron Curtain would have taken any notice of them. Through the actions of the SED leadership, however, their utopias were able to find their effect and achieved resonance.

All three authors criticized the existing situation and pointed out a theoretical alternative that extrapolates present trends. Normative statements are made on the forms of settlement, architecture, and the concept of the common good, and questions about the fields of work, science, and technology are discussed in detail. Thus they fulfill the most important criteria of political utopias. In addition, such "soft" political themes as women, family, child education, art and culture also come to the fore, even if not as central categories. There is room for the role and necessity of a "New Man" for the respective future construct, as well as the role and function attributed to future elites for the transformation and/or the functions of their respective utopias.

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[26] Cf. Alexander Amberger, "Wieviel Bellamy steckt in Rudolf Bahros *Alternative*? Ein utopiegeschichtlicher Vergleich," *Berliner Debatte Initial* 26 (2015), no. 2, pp. 111–122.

On the other hand, the question of the transformation concept and subject was answered differently: while Bahro's "cultural revolution" was based on a long process with progress and setbacks which placed intellectuals at the center, Havemann held on to the proletariat as the transformative engine. Although he also had a long process in mind, he trusted the "masses" more than Bahro. For this reason, he rejected Bahro's conspiratorial strategy of a "League of Communists" within the "real socialist" world of states. Despite these differences, Bahro and Havemann envisaged a transformation "from below." Whether workers or professionally underchallenged intellectuals: they were to replace the rulers in the course of the transformation process. Harich, on the other hand, designed his path to "communism without growth" "from above."

All three authors were concerned with internal critiques of the system, which could not be discussed openly in the GDR. They did not question the GDR, nor the existence of a leading communist party. However, they saw too clearly the contradictions that the SED was trying to whitewash by means of its ideology and did not come to terms with them. They fulfilled their role and identity as intellectuals by actively advocating change.

Finally, a few words about the validity of the three utopias: at the time of their publication, they were relevant, achieved respectable book editions,[27] and their content were also discussed. The period and the society in which they were written have come to an end, but apart from the reference to the GDR's present, their content, the questions about ecology and growth they posed are still relevant, at least in part. The crises they address are still present (military conflicts, the North-South problem, world hunger, climate change, scarcity of resources, and so on). And the genre of utopia was and is always most productive in times of crisis. That is why it will also have a future, beyond the "end of history" propagated in the nineties.

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[27] *Kommunismus ohne Wachstum?* was printed 11,000 times in West Germany and was also published in Swedish and Spanish. *Die Alternative* reached a circulation of about 300,000 copies and was published in several languages and in 1990 also in the GDR. Havemann's *Morgen* was also translated. Its first edition was published by Piper and 25,000 copies were printed. Since then, the book has been reprinted twice. None of the books appeared in the GDR before the autumn of 1989.