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Reflections on *Gewalt*

Violence

A: al-ʿunf, al-quwwa. – G: Gewalt. – F: violence, pouvoir. – R: nasilie, vlast'. – S: violencia, poder. – C: 暴力 , 权力

The paradox of Marxism's relationship to violence is that, although Marxism has made a decisive contribution to understanding 'the role of violence in history' – more precisely, to understanding the link between forms of domination and exploitation (primarily capitalism) and the structural modalities of social violence, and the necessity of class struggles and revolutionary processes – and has thereby contributed to defining the conditions and stakes of modern politics, it has nonetheless been fundamentally incapable of thinking (and thus confronting) the tragic connection that associates politics with violence from the inside, in a unity of opposites that is itself supremely 'violent'. This connection has come to light in different periods in, for example, the work of historians and theorists like **Thucydides**, **Machiavelli** or Max **Weber**, in a way that it has not in Marxism. There are several reasons for this. One is the absolute privilege that Marxist theory assigns to one form of domination (exploitation of labour), with other forms appearing as epiphenomenona; this leads Marxist theory to ignore or underestimate the specific contribution that these others forms make to the economy of violence and cruelty. A second reason is the anthropological optimism at the heart of the conception of 'progress' defined as the development of the productive forces of humanity, which is the basic postulate of the Marxist conception of the history of social formations. The last reason, finally, is the metaphysics of history as the concrete realisation of the process of 'negation of the negation' (or of the alienation and reconciliation of a generic human essence), which transmits to Marxism the theological and philosophical scheme of the conversion of violence into justice.

The co-existence of these two closely interlinked aspects – recognition of extreme forms of social violence and their role, on the one hand; failure to recognise the specifically political problem that they pose, on the other – in the thought of **Marx** and his successors (albeit with widely varying degrees of intellectual profundity) has not failed to have formidable consequences in the history of the social movements and revolutionary processes that have officially identified with Marxism, and whose leading or dissident forces have sought tools in **Marx**'s work to 'master' them. This co-existence is more palpable than ever in the context of the current phase of globalisation of capitalism and the search for alternative policies that its contradictions inspire. This built-in limitation of Marxism has not impeded striking intellectual attempts from being made in the course of Marxism's history over the past two centuries to take the measure of violence and describe the stakes involved in it; quite the contrary.

In the following exposition, we will not attempt to give an exhaustive presentation of Marxian and Marxist formulations on the question of violence, but we will try to analyse some of the foremost texts and episodes that illustrate the issue we have raised.

The exposition will be structured in the following way: we will proceed by taking as our starting point a rereading of a text that can be considered the exposition of a 'classical' Marxist doctrine on the question of violence: **Engels**'s posthumous booklet *Die Rolle der Gewalt in der Geschichte* (1895) [usually translated into English as *The Role of Force in History*]. Despite

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its unfinished character, this text has a degree of coherence and theoretical precision that is much higher than most of the other texts that we will be led to refer to, including in **Marx**'s own work. It can, therefore, be no accident that it raises some of the basic problems that the Marxist approach poses, and, for this reason, has given rise to several discussions and critiques to which we are still indebted. This has not prevented some readers from seeing it as a simplification, or others as an extension and transformation, of **Marx**'s formulations.

After having characterised its orientation, therefore, we will have to proceed to a dual displacement. On the one hand, we will be obliged retroactively to return to the most significant conceptions of violence that **Marx** himself had sketched out in various conjunctures and contexts, and try to comprehend the insoluble problems that they contain: formulations according to the schema of 'permanent revolution' on the basis of an 'activist' philosophy of praxis (before and after the 1848 revolutions); formulations in the framework or area of the critique of political economy (in this connection, we will see that some very singular implications can be found in the theory of 'commodity fetishism'); and, finally, dilemmas of 'proletarian politics' in the context of clashes with other tendencies of nineteenth-century socialism. On the other hand, inversely, we will have to sketch the trajectory and make a diagnosis of the doctrinal oppositions deployed in post-Engels 'Marxism', necessarily (given the scale of the material) in summary fashion.

These oppositions are, of course, inseparable from strategic orientations that played a decisive role in the political history of the last century. They correspond to two major cycles of social movements and events, temporarily out of phase but, in the end, superimposed on each other: the cycle of class struggles and anticapitalist revolutions, and the cycle of anti-imperialist, anticolonial and then postcolonial struggles. Although these cycles in their classical form have today essentially come to an end, a large share of the questions to which they gave rise still manifest themselves in the current historical conjuncture, which we can connect to the fundamental phenomenon of 'globalisation'. This is why the 'heresies' of Marxism that are fuelled, among other things, by divergent positions on the nature and political functions of violence (or, perhaps, even constituted on the basis of a divergence on this point, as can be seen in exemplary fashion in the mutual opposition of Bolshevism and Social Democracy on the issue of violent revolution, proletarian dictatorship and civil war) are very likely to resurface and find inheritors in contemporary debates on crises and alternatives to the 'world order' now taking shape, even if not necessarily in the name or language of Marxism. This is, of course, why rereading Marxism's texts and interpreting its history is important; otherwise, they would have a purely archaeological significance.

Equipped with these three sets of references, we will able, in conclusion, to try to make explicit the problem that seems to us to underlie the whole of this history, a problem that the 'real catastrophes' of the twentieth century (in which Marxism was simultaneously the agent and the victim) have brought to a point of no return: not the problem of a choice between reform and revolution, as Marxists have tended to believe, but rather the problem (decisive for them without their realising it) of how to 'civilise the revolution [*Zivilisierung der Revolution*]', which, probably, determines on the other hand the real possibility of 'civilising politics' and the state itself. In this sense – starting from a question that we personally consider is not *one* specific question among others, but rather *the* constituent question of politics – our task is to set out a critique of Marxism on both the theoretical and ethical levels, on which will depend the possibility of making use of Marxism in the future.

1. *The Role of Force* [*Gewalt*] *in History* – The booklet known under the title *The Role of Force in History* has a complex and revealing history. It was one of **Engels**'s attempts to extract an autonomous work from the 'theoretical' chapters of his *Anti-Dühring* (1875), which would demonstrate the originality of the materialist

conception of history and its dialectical method and at the same time resolve the problems of doctrine, organisation and strategy of the workers movement, which, from that time, was united under the leadership of 'Marxists' (at least in Germany and, to all intents and purposes, in other countries whose parties would later make up the 'Second International'). But, unlike his booklet *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*, **Engels** never finished the work on the historical role of violence [*Gewalt*], which he began working on in about 1887. The text published by **Bernstein** in *Die Neue Zeit* in 1895–6, and then corrected by the Russian editors of **Marx**'s and **Engels**'s works in 1937, only included a part of **Engels**'s initial project. The initial project, as outlined in **Engels**'s notes, was meant to have three parts: first, a reworking of the chapters of *Anti-Dühring* entitled *Gewalttheorie I, II, III*, devoted directly to refuting the conception of violence put forward by **Dühring**; then a reworking of the earlier chapters (Part I, Chapters 9 and 10) entitled *Moral und Recht / Ewige Wahrheiten – Gleichheit* [Ethics and Law/Eternal Truths – Equality] (ultimately put aside); and, finally, a completely new essay (left incomplete) on the Bismarckian policies that had just culminated by unifying Germany in the form of the Prussian Empire. All this was to be preceded by a preface, of which we have only a rough sketch of the argument. The whole work would thus have given a complete treatment (for which **Dühring** furnished the pretext) of the question of 'politics' from a Marxist standpoint, both from a theoretical perspective (relationships between superstructures and the economic structure of society) and a practical perspective ('applying' the theory to the issue that immediately determined the characteristics of European politics and radically modified, at least apparently, the prospects for socialist revolution: 'Let us now apply our theory to contemporary German history and its use of force [*Gewaltpraxis*], its policy of blood and iron. We shall clearly see from this why the policy of blood and iron was bound to be successful for a time and why it was bound to collapse in the end' (*MECW* 26, 453).

This reconstruction of the author's intentions leads us immediately to a remark on language and terminology that is fundamental to our further argument. In German (the language in which **Marx**, **Engels** and the first Marxists wrote), the word *Gewalt* has a more extensive meaning than its 'equivalents' in other European languages: *violence* or *violenza* and *pouvoir, potere, power* (equally suitable to 'translate' *Macht* or even *Herrschaft*, depending on the context). Seen in this way, 'from the outside', the term *Gewalt* thus contains an intrinsic ambiguity: it refers, at the same time, to the negation of law or justice and to their realisation or the assumption of responsibility for them by an institution (generally the state). This ambiguity (which is naturally to be found in other authors) is not necessarily a disadvantage. On the contrary, it signals the existence of a latent dialectic or a 'unity of opposites' that is a constituent element of politics. In a sense, **Engels** only made this explicit, and this is what we will have to try here to make the reader understand. To do this, we will have to conserve the indeterminacy that the term *Gewalt* [violence/force] possesses, to all intents and purposes, in every context (for example in the idea of 'revolutionary force/violence' – *revolutionäre Gewalt* – or the 'revolutionary role of force/violence in history' – *revolutionäre Rolle der Gewalt in der Geschichte*), but on the other hand have recourse to a foreign language in order to indicate a stress put on the 'destructive side' of *violence* (which, after passing through Sorel and his *Reflections on Violence*, recurs in Germany in Benjamin's essay *Zur Kritik der Gewalt*), or in order to indicate a stress on the institutional or even 'constitutional' side of *power* (which has tended to prevail in the construction of the single-party states of 'really existing socialism' and the interpretation they made of the notion of 'dictatorship of the proletariat').

Engels's intention also draws our attention to the fundamental importance, in interpreting the theses that would constitute the main reference point for 'Marxism' as well as its critics, of the conjuncture in which they were formulated and assembled: that is, the *Gründerperiode* of the German Empire from 1875 to

1895. This period, we may note, was also the time in which **Nietzsche**, a critic of **Dühring** from a standpoint diametrically opposed to **Engels**'s, was attempting to define philosophically a 'grand politics' that could be an alternative to the Bismarckian institution of the *Machtstaat* (*Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morals* were published respectively in 1886 and 1887). The period's end coincided moreover with the publication of Max **Weber**'s first essays in 'applied politics', which were attempting precisely to found a post-Bismarckian idea of a 'national-social' state (*Der Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik* [*The National State and Economic Policy*], academic inaugural address, 1895; *Zur Gründung einer national-sozialen Partei* [*Towards the Founding of a National Social Party*] (1896)) while taking up several of the themes that **Dühring** had used for his metaphysical critique (such as the 'diabolical' character of power). This is why, just as it is necessary before returning to **Marx** to have some idea of the results of **Engels**'s 'Marxist' interpretation of his work, we must begin our reading of **Engels**'s booklet with its political 'conclusions'.

1.1 Present-day historians (e.g. **Winkler**, I: 178 et sqq.) still attach the greatest importance to the analysis **Engels** made of the 'revolution from above' (an expression adopted if not coined by **Bismarck** himself), the means by which the dream of German unification was 'fulfilled' at last. This analysis poses several, closely interlinked problems: the problem of **Engels**'s limited enthusiasm for Bismarckian *Realpolitik*, the question of the validity of his thesis that the bourgeoisie was politically incapable of acting on its own, and, finally, the problem of the causes of the incompletion of German unification.

Engels's enthusiasm was evoked essentially by the capacity that **Bismarck** showed in **Engels**'s eyes to impose a policy on the German bourgeoisie 'against its will' that was effective in defending its interests (in particular, **Bismarck**'s military policy, but also the establishment of universal suffrage). In this sense, **Bismarck** falls once again under the Bonapartist model of 1851, though going still further in the direction of throwing idealistic justifications overboard (such as the 'right of peoples to self-determination', a principle that Louis-Napoleon championed). In a quasi-Schmittian description of the 'de facto dictatorship [*tatsächliche Diktatur*]' that allowed **Bismarck** to cut through the contradictions that the German bourgeoisie, caught between the various 'historic roads' capable of leading to the national unity to which it aspired, had gotten bogged down in, **Engels** closely associates the idea of *Realpolitik*, which destroyed the moral and juridical 'self-deceptions [*Selbsttäuschungen*]' with which the bourgeoisie's 'ideological representatives' were impregnated, with the idea of 'revolutionary [that is, exceptional or unconstitutional] means' in the service of a 'revolutionary goal': the formation of a modern state, which dynastic interests and 'games with statelets [*Kleinstaaterei*]' had delayed in Germany for a long time. **Engels** thus takes up a position opposed to liberal thought in two ways: by describing parliamentary principles as so much ideological mummery expressing historical impotence (at least in a situation in which the 'problem' posed by history, the achievement of 'impossible' German unity, can only be solved by means of force); and by treating the Prussian militarism that **Bismarck** incarnated (at least until the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1) as a progressive rather than reactionary force.

But **Engels**'s enthusiasm has its limits. One might even think that **Engels** went so far in praising the 'Iron Chancellor' precisely in order to make the limits of his enthusiasm visible. By showing the bourgeoisie that it needed a master, as **Kant** would have said, he is preparing for the collective actor (the proletariat), which will prove to be the master's master, to take the stage, and demonstrating to the bourgeoisie that politically it amounts to nothing. (One is reminded of General **de Gaulle**'s 1945 remark: 'Between the Communists and us, there is a vacuum.') He phrases this proposition precisely in terms of force [*Gewalt*]: there are only two 'forces' that truly make history, the state and the people ('In politics there are only two decisive powers [*entscheidende Mächte*]: organised state power [*Staatsgewalt*],

the army, and the unorganised, elemental power of the popular masses' (*MECW* 26, 479)); one of them must inevitably pick up where the other leaves off. This will happen because national imperialism, once it has reached its goal, *becomes* reactionary, incapable of managing the consequences of its own actions (as seen in **Bismarck**'s policy of annexations *against* the will of the populations concerned, and in his police methods domestically), and because from this point on (unlike in 1848) the working class 'knows what it wants'. The working class will thus be able to turn the same weapons against the state that the state uses to control them. Nevertheless, this correction that **Engels** made to the historic function of the 'great man' (that his very realism will ultimately land him in illusions) does not remove all ambiguity. This can be seen clearly by analysing the two other questions we have mentioned.

Is the political incapacity of the bourgeoisie a structural characteristic of this class, or is it a conjunctural phenomenon linked to the 'backwardness' and 'blockage' of historical development in Germany? Here, **Engels** adapts the analyses of Bonapartism in *Class Struggles in France* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* ('autonomisation' of the state apparatus and the 'will' that embodies it due to the way in which the forces of the contending classes neutralise each other), and runs up against the difficulties that **Marx** had as well. **Engels** seems to privilege the thesis of German exceptionalism, the *Sonderweg*, but this thesis is apt to capsize. In fact the history of the obstacles to German unity is a capsule version of the whole of European history from the Wars of Religion on. By comparison, it is really rather the model of the French Revolution, which the *Communist Manifesto* privileges, that comes across as an exception that was not susceptible to repetition: it was a singular moment, situated 'neither too soon nor too late' for the bourgeoisie to effectively mobilise the proletariat, the 'popular masses [*Volksmassen*]', for a violent overthrow of feudal domination, and thus 'take power'.

All at once, the very notion of revolution becomes problematic. Is a 'revolution from above' a revolution? Is not the term 'revolution' irremediably equivocal, precisely to the extent that it embraces references to several kinds of force, which cannot all be included in the same schema of class struggle? We will see presently that this difficulty is equally at the heart of the 'theoretical' developments borrowed from the *Anti-Dühring*. But, here, already it enables us to understand better what kind of obstacles ultimately led **Engels** to interrupt his work of composition.

Why did this text (like so many of **Marx**'s texts) remain unfinished? A first hypothesis is that **Engels** was not entirely able to 'believe' his own analysis of the Bismarckian empire, which misses some key aspects. The allusive reference that his sketch makes to 'social reform shit [*Sozialreformscheisse*]' is revealing. Even more than **Napoleon III**, **Bismarck** invented a model of the co-optation of class struggle, an avatar of the 'national-social' state. Any judgement of the chances that either imperialism or the working class had of emerging victorious from their confrontation (to which the Anti-Socialist Laws gave dramatic form) depends on the degree of effectiveness attributed to this invention, which **Engels**, like most Marxists, manifestly underestimated. Similarly, the spontaneist description that he proposes here in order to characterise proletarian politics ('the unorganised, elemental force [*Gewalt*] of the popular masses') is logically necessary to mark the turning point constituted by the working class's entry onto the historical stage as the agent of its own history, but contradictory to the perspectives of building a political party that **Engels** is in the process of working out. Like **Marx** a few years earlier, he finds himself caught between anarchist- (Bakuninist) and statist- (Lassallean) type formulations, without being genuinely able to maintain a specifically Marxist discourse.

As in earlier theoretical chapters, the 'direction of history' supplies the criterion that determines the significance of *Gewalt* and the conditions in which it can be used: the question is how *violence* and *power* play their role in the course of world history, either by 'accelerating' it or by trying to 'block' it. But this historical direction is itself defined on the

basis of an a priori hierarchy of forms of force. The fact that the 'solution' of the national question (and, more generally, the formation of modern bourgeois societies in the form of national states) constitutes a necessary moment in world history is no more than something that is empirically/speculatively postulated. And the idea that modern militarism, by introducing the popular masses [*Volksmassen*] into the apparatus of state power [*Staatsgewalt*], creates an 'eventual' contradiction that necessarily ends in its overthrow risks being no more than an assertion of what was to be demonstrated.

1.2 Yet **Engels**'s dialectical construction in the three chapters of his *Theory of Force* [*Gewalttheorie*] (*MECW* 25, 146–70) forms an astonishingly coherent whole. We can characterise it as the 'turning upside down of the turning upside down'. The conception of force [*Gewalt*] that **Dühring** had put forward had two fundamental characteristics. On the one hand, it turned the schema of historical materialism 'upside down' by postulating that economic structures, or more precisely relations of appropriation and exploitation, derive from the 'first-order facts', the *Gewalttaten*, that is, the phenomena of subjugation [*Knechtung, Unterwerfung*] and domination [*Herrschaft, Beherrschung*] imposed by force – a perspective that put the whole history of social forms and property relations under the heading of *injustice*. On the other hand, **Dühring**'s conception traced everything back to a metaphysical category of force [*Gewalt*], defined in an abstract or ahistorical fashion, but, above all, situated *short of* oppositions between 'exploitation of human beings' and 'exploitation of nature', 'politics' and 'economics' (**Dühring** speaks of 'possession by force [*Gewalteigentum*]'). This explains the profoundly Rousseauean tone of his argument, which **Engels** rightly emphasises. **Engels**, by contrast, tends to return to the Hegelian conception of a negativity that 'overcomes' or 'raises up [*aufhebt*]' its own destructive power throughout history in order to bring about the realisation of a substantial human community.

Engels's concern is primarily to bring 'force' down from the heaven of metaphysical ideas in order to analyse it as a *political* phenomenon, included in a history of the transformations of politics. In several different passages, a pure and simple equivalency between the two notions seems to be posited: 'That was an act of force [*Gewalttat*], hence a political act [*politische Tat*]' (*Anti-Dühring*, II, 2; *MECW* 25, 147). The true relation between them is, rather, that one is a subset of the other: politics includes force [*Gewalt*], but cannot be reduced to it. Or, rather, force is an integral component of any politics, so that it is illusory to imagine an effective political action that does not have recourse to it. One might even say that this element of force always plays a decisive role, whatever the social forces or classes at work, and thus in proletarian politics as well – even if the difficult question must then be posed as to whether a specifically proletarian modality of violent action (distinguishable from war, for example) exists. Yet politics cannot be reduced to force, which, in this sense, is never 'naked' or 'pure'. Not only does it presuppose the economic means necessary to exert it, but it includes as well an element of 'conceptions [*Vorstellungen*]' (bourgeois liberal ideas, or socialism) and 'institutions [*Einrichtungen*]' (parliamentarianism and universal suffrage, popular education, the army itself).

Here, we see the multiple significations mentioned earlier of the term *Gewalt,* which **Engels** takes advantage of to sketch a dialectic internal to the history of politics. In fact, on the one hand, force, reduced to organised *violence* (and to war, in particular, whether foreign war or civil war), only constitutes part of the system of political instruments; on the other hand, it includes all the effects of *power* and is overdetermined by other terms that also connote political action. Following a tradition of Saint-Simonian origin, **Engels** sometimes seems to think that politics has a tendency – taken to its logical conclusion by the socialist movement – to civilise itself, by decreasing the military element and replacing it with an institutional element. But his main line of argument is aimed instead at showing that class struggle, of which politics is only the form taken, tends towards an ultimate, necessarily violent, confrontation between the con-

tending forces (bourgeoisie and proletariat), which is also a confrontation between two antithetical modalities of political *violence.* Or, more precisely, the argument shows that this confrontation expresses a necessity immanent in economic development [*ökonomische Entwicklung*], which tends to transcend the forms of exploitation and subjugation [*Herrschafts- und Knechtschaftsverhältnisse*, an expression derived directly from **Hegel**].

Engels's line of argument is dictated by his taking up a logical schema that previously played the central role in the Hegelian dialectic of history: the schema of *means* (or of 'human' *material*) and historical *ends* (see **Hegel**, *Reason in History*). This schema implies that the actors' (individuals and above all peoples or 'collective individuals') specific actions and intentions can be read at two different levels: in an immediate, conscious way, they appear to be contingent, but, in an indirect (and, albeit unconsciously, decisive) way, they are necessary, at least to the extent that they contribute to the attainment of the end that Spirit [*Geist*] is working towards in history (that is, its own rationality). But **Hegel** goes further, and, on this point, is in fact *already* the theoretician of the 'role of force in history': he states that the apparent *irrationality* of human actions, the use they make of passions, conflict and violence, is in fact the *phenomenal, contradictory form* in which the objective power of reason manifests itself. This explains the 'realism' of **Hegel**'s politics, which is entirely indissociable from his 'idealism'. In **Engels**'s work, the teleology of reason becomes the teleology of the economic development of humanity, going by way of the dissolution of the 'primitive' communities and the successive forms of private property before reconstituting a higher community, which capitalist 'socialisation' of the productive forces is creating the conditions for. This explains his insistence on the fact that political force (and state force [*Staatsgewalt*] in particular) is effective/actual [*wirksam/wirklich*] only to the extent that it is *functional* from the standpoint of the economic development of society (**Engels** speaks of the exercise of force's 'social function [*gesellschaftliche Amtstätigkeit*]', *Anti-Dühring*, II, 4; *MECW* 25, 167) and to the extent that it follows the direction of economic development (as was the case with the French Revolution). It also explains his ingenious theory of the *inversion of appearances* in the political sphere as compared to the underlying economic logic, which allows him to take account of a number of things: how political history and economic history can be 'out of phase' with each other; how political ideas, forces and institutions can acquire their own dynamic, autonomous from the fundamental class struggle; and even the incapacity of economically dominant classes to become politically dominant as well (here, we link up with the issue of Bonapartism or Bismarckism, that is, the issue of the defeat of 'popular revolutions' or 'revolutions from below' and their supersession by the nineteenth-century 'revolutions from above'). But an inversion of this type can never be anything but transitory; or, better expressed, it must represent the *form of its transition* towards being put rationally on its feet once more, without which the logic of means and ends would be strictly speaking abolished.

1.3 It would nonetheless be mistaken to believe that **Engels** could be content to 'translate' a Hegelian schema from the language of mind [*Geist*] to the language of economic development. The specificity of the problems that interpreting the relations between force and class structures (in **Marx**'s sense) poses obliges him to invent an original line of argument. But, here, the logic of means and ends tends to bifurcate into profoundly different interpretations, each of which gives rise to specific problems. The first interpretation, which emphasises the *immediate dependence of all organised violence on its material resources,* and therefore on the economic means of production of these resources (technology, level of industrial development, the state's financial capacities), essentially concerns wars of conquest. It leads, in particular, to sketching out a history of forms of military tactics as a function of revolutions in armament technology. The second interpretation, by contrast, emphasises the *social forms of the masses' incorporation*

into the structures of institutional violence, and concerns the incidence of class struggle within the force of the state itself. One could (and this is, probably, what **Engels** seeks to do) consider the two interpretations as complementary; but it seems more fruitful to us to counterpose them, not only because of their later divergent histories, but also because of the completely different signification that they confer on the notion of 'economic determination in the last instance'. The first interpretation leads to a technological version of the primacy of economics over politics, which reduces the autonomy of politics further, but it has the advantage of introducing a crucial discussion on the historical parallels between the development of *means of production* and the development of *means of destruction* (weapons), or even a dialectic of *productive forces* and *destructive forces* in the history of humanity (which **Engels** resolves in an 'optimistic' way by upholding the primacy in the last analysis of the productive forces). The second interpretation is more decisive to determining whether the notion of 'revolution' can be applied *in the same way* to all processes of transition to a new mode of production.

It must be acknowledged that **Engels** swings back and forth here in an astonishing way between two extremes: after having maintained (in *Theory of Force* [*Gewalttheorie*], I) that the process of the bourgeoisie's economic elimination of feudalism is being repeated in identical fashion in the proletariat's economic elimination of the bourgeoisie, he then turns (in *Theory of Force* [*Gewalttheorie*], II) to analysing the history of the successive forms of the people's incorporation into modern armies (from the American and French Revolutions up until Prussian militarism) as an unprecedented process of mass political education, which contains in embryo the transformation of the force of the state into 'the force of the popular masses' and the revolutionary withering away of the repressive state machine ('as soon as the mass of the people… *will have* a will [*einen Willen* hat]… the machine refuses to work and militarism collapses by the dialectics of its own evolution', *Anti-Dühring*, II, 3; *MECW* 25, 158). In order for the revolutionary transformation of the capitalist mode of production to be possible, class struggle must thus not be enclosed in the infrastructure, but must rather penetrate into the very heart of the functioning of the state and subvert it. **Engels** does not dare to prophecy this outcome in a categorical way, however. In the last lines of the same chapter, rather, he presents the collapse of militarism and revolution as the two terms of an alternative.

What the economic/political dynamic that **Engels** invents retains from **Hegel**, at the end of the day, is only (but this may be the essential thing, in terms of his 'conception of the world [*Weltauffassung*]') the idea of an historical process that can be understood as a 'conversion [*Konversion*]' of force into rationality (which, in **Hegel**'s work, means the institutional rationality of the state, while, for **Engels**, it means the rationality of economic evolution leading to socialism), in such a way that force is not only not 'external' to the effective process of rationality's emergence, but that it is precisely, in fact, its 'extreme' forms that do justice to the power of the rational, and to the way in which the actions of individuals (or of masses, which, in **Engels**'s work, take the place of individuals) are incorporated into the objective development process. What is manifested here is a sort of force beyond force, which coincides with the necessity of its own transcendence. (The expression is virtually present in **Engels**'s text, particularly when he wants to show how the immanent process of history puts limits to the very political forms it has made use of: 'it [the bourgeoisie] did not in any way will this result of its own actions and activities – on the contrary, this result established itself with irresistible force [*unwiderstehlicher Gewalt*], against the will and contrary to the intentions of the bourgeoisie' (*Anti-Dühring,* II, 2; *MECW* 25, 153).) **Engels** is here, admittedly, far removed from a metaphysics of violence as an unavoidable or indestructible 'radical evil', which **Engels** thinks he detects in **Dühring**; but it is not clear that he is far removed from a *metaphysical concept of violence,* as a principle of interpretation of historical/political processes that brings about the transmutation of irra-

tionality into rationality, or the 'inversion of appearances' – that, in this way, makes the 'forcing' of rationality possible within reality, at the risk of failing to recognise the most unyielding 'excesses' (even in the long term).

This must, thus, be the starting point, on the one hand for a re-examination of the extent to which **Marx**'s analyses can be incorporated without anomalies or contradictions into this dialectical theorisation (which made its popularisation and organised political usage possible), and, on the other hand, for an examination of the way in which the encounter with real history progressively determined the displacement and bursting apart of doctrinaire 'Marxism', with all its orthodoxies and heresies, over the course of a century, without for all that making the initial question purely and simply disappear.

2. *Marx: historical moments and structures of extreme violence* – **Engels**'s systematisation constantly evokes several of **Marx**'s formulations (in particular from the *Communist Manifesto*, which the two friends had written in collaboration with each other). But it depends, above all, on two citations from *Capital*, which, for this reason, have acquired a particular significance, independent of their context. The first comes from Chapter 24 of Volume I (*MECW* 35, 582–3) and does not contain any explicit reference to force, but rather to the 'internal dialectic' of the transformation of private property based on exchange of equivalents into private property founded on the unpaid appropriation of labour. The other citation comes from Chapter 31 of Volume I, devoted to the 'so-called primitive accumulation' (*MECW* 35, 739); here, **Engels** displaces **Marx**'s description of the organised state violence required for the primitive accumulation of capital into a thesis on the 'revolutionary role of force', which **Dühring**, and those in general who adopt a moral position on violence, fail to recognise. The passage includes the famous messianic metaphor (which **Engels** transposes to the feminine gender) of the 'midwife [*Geburtshelferin*]', which later provided a point of departure notably for Hannah **Arendt**'s critical reading in *Between Past and Future*: 'Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power [*Die Gewalt ist der Geburtshelfer jeder alten Gesellschaft, die mit einer neuen schwanger geht. Sie selbst ist eine ökonomische Potenz*]'.

In both cases, we are thus faced with a paradox. **Engels** has 'reduced' a twofold distance: the distance that separates the (provisional) Marxian hypothesis of the origin of private property in individual labour from an historical analysis of its real conditions; and the distance that separates the 'historical exception' constituted by primitive accumulation from the other exception constituted by revolutionary force 'from below' (which **Marx**, later in *Capital*, refers to as 'expropriation of the expropriators', *Capital* I, 32; *MECW* 35, 750). **Engels** can thus construct a typical 'line' of development that coincides with the very movement of the conversion of force in the history of class struggle. But, to discuss the relevance of this line of argument, we must try to take stock of the complexity of the interlocking perspectives on *Gewalt* in **Marx**'s work, which certainly cannot all be traced back to a single argument.

For our part, we think that we can distinguish at least three different perspectives, in relation to 'problems' posed in different ways. But we also think we are able each time to discern a very strong tension in **Marx**'s thought between two approaches to comprehending the status and effects of extreme violence. One approach attempts, if not to 'naturalise' extreme violence, then at least to incorporate it into a chain of causes and effects and treat it as a process or a dialectical moment of a process of social transformation of which the contending classes are the agents, precisely so as to make intelligible the conditions of 'real politics [*wirkliche Politik*]' (as opposed to moralising or idealised politics). The other approach uncovers in some extreme or excessive forms of violence, which are both structural and conjunctural, both spontaneous and organised, what one might call 'the reality within politics [*das Reale in der Politik*]', that is, the unpredictable or incalculable element that confers a tragic dimension on politics, a dimension that

politics feeds on even as it risks annihilating politics. (This is indicated in the formula that Rosa **Luxemburg** attributed to **Engels** in her 1916 *Junius Pamphlet*: 'Capitalist society faces a dilemma, either an advance to socialism or a reversion to barbarism', *Junius Pamphlet*, 269; GW 4, 62).

These two modes of thought are like two sides of the same coin, parts of the same attempt to give 'meaning' to the imbrication of force and social practice. Perhaps the two approaches cannot be reconciled, but neither (at least in **Marx**'s work) can there be any watertight separation between them. This probably has in the last analysis to do with the ambivalence of the very model of 'class struggle' as the essential characteristic and 'motor' of the transformation of human societies. This model is indissociable (as **Foucault** 2003 has recently reminded us) from the generalisation of the social relationships characteristic of the model of war and its 'utmost use of force [*äußersten Anwendung der Gewalt*]' (**Clausewitz** 102), *and* meant to translate even the most savage destruction, processes of extermination and enslavement – which ensure, in the words of a French publicist cited by **Marx**, that 'capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt' (*Capital*, I, 31; *MECW* 35, 748) – into the rational logic of conflicts of interest. This involves us in the difficulties of interpretation that **Marx**'s formula (in French) in his polemic against **Proudhon**, and generally against the 'progressive' conception of history – 'It is the bad side [*le mauvais côté*] that produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle [*en constituant la lutte*]' (*Poverty of Philosophy, MECW* 6, 174) – has always raised. We can read this formula as a dialectical thesis reaffirming (following **Hegel**) that the historical process always ends up converting suffering into culture (by carrying out 'a negation of the negation'). But it can also be read as an indication of the fact that there is no guarantee that history really does 'move forward', except perhaps towards horror.

2.1 *Significance of Marx's revolutionary 'catastrophism'*. – The schema that associates the final collapse of capitalism with the emergence – for the first time in history – of a possibility of collective liberation, whose agent is the revolutionary proletariat, is a model of interpretation of the 'historical tendency' that can be found in **Marx**'s work. He applies it both (as in 1848 in the *Communist Manifesto*) to the imminence of the present and (as in the concluding chapter of *Capital*, [Volume I], on the 'expropriation of the expropriators') to the indefinite future implied by the contradiction between capitalist property and the socialisation of the productive forces, which nonetheless never disappeared from his thought. Nevertheless, it was in the conjuncture of the revolutions of 1848, with the radicalisation that it brought about in the Marxian critique of politics (leading to the 'first' concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat), which made its consequences most perceptible. In the wake of an intensification of his concept of social revolution, which accentuated its antinomic characteristics, **Marx** closely associates the idea of a final crisis that would mean the 'dissolution' of bourgeois society with the idea of an 'alternative' between the extreme forms of counterrevolutionary violence and the extreme forms of consciousness of the masses, who are determined to 'take human emancipation to its logical conclusion'. He is then able (even if the term no longer appears explicitly in his terminology) to give a theoretical content and historical referent to the unity of opposites that, in the 1845 *Theses on Feuerbach*, the philosophical notion of 'praxis' designated: a consciousness that arises immediately from contradictory social relations and that, without going through the mediation of 'ideological' representations, metamorphoses into collective action capable of changing the world.

Marx's thought is henceforth dominated on the political level by an ultra-Jacobin conception that, without explicitly addressing the question of Terror, turns the proletariat into the 'people of the people', capable of rescuing the demand for liberty, equality and community from its imprisonment in bourgeois limits, and reasserting the full timeliness of the perspective for action that **Robespierre**

expressed in the watchword, 'No revolution without revolution' (speech of 5 November 1792; cf. **Labica**, 56) – the revolution cannot stop halfway. And, on the economic level, **Marx**'s thought is dominated by a pessimistic interpretation of **Ricardo**'s theory, according to which the antagonism between capitalist 'profit' and workers' 'wages' leads to the absolute immiseration of the mass of the population, that is, to wages' falling below subsistence level. After having described the proletariat's living conditions (in *The Holy Family* and *The German Ideology*) as a 'self-dissolution' of bourgeois civil society [*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*], he arrives in the *Communist Manifesto* at the conclusion of his analysis of the 'simplification of class struggle' and polarisation of society. He concludes that capitalism, unlike earlier modes of production, includes a nihilist dimension: the logic of the bourgeoisie's mode of exploitation leads it to destroy the living conditions and reproduction of the very people who enable it to live, and thus destroy its own conditions of existence. This catastrophe, whose imminence is shown by industrial crises, was sufficient as a basis for the necessity of a proletarian revolution that could only take the form of a 'violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie'.

But the bloody (and disappointing) experience of the failure of the 1848 revolutions led **Marx** (in *Class Struggles in France* (1850) and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852)) to give proletarian revolution an even more dramatic form. What determines the general crisis of the capitalist mode of production is not the proletarian revolution directly, as 'the conquest of democracy' by the new ruling class, but rather a going to extremes in which revolution and counterrevolution ('dictatorship of the proletariat' and 'dictatorship of the bourgeoisie') constantly reinforce each other until the moment of their decisive confrontation. This confrontation will be between, on the one hand, the autonomised, swollen 'state machinery [*Staatsmaschinerie*]', which 'concentrates organised violence' and which the proletariat must manage to 'break', and a process of 'permanent revolution [*Revolution in Permanenz*]', which expresses the proletariat's capacity to extend direct democracy to the whole of society.

The messianic dimension of this way of representing the revolutionary moment and the 'praxis' that must lead to its achievement is obvious. It will reappear periodically in the history of Marxism, particularly each time that the conjuncture lends itself to being seen as a final clash on which the very future of the world and civilisation depends (as in Rosa **Luxemburg**'s work in 1914–16 when she described the choice between war and revolution), and even in the work of post-Marxists (for example in the form of an alternative, in one kind of contemporary 'political ecology', between destruction of the planetary environment and destruction of capitalism). It explains the antinomic character that the idea of revolutionary force takes on here, simultaneously concentrating the destructive powers of the old world and introducing an absolute, creative positivity. But its modality cannot be understood well without also linking it to **Marx**'s pronouncements about the *uncertainty* of the combat's outcome, beginning with the enigmatic phrase in the *Communist Manifesto* about the possibility of 'the common ruin of the contending classes' (*MECW* 6, 482) and continuing with **Marx**'s recognition after 1852 of capitalism's capacity for further development, which will reproduce the same antagonisms on an indefinitely enlarged scale.

2.2 *The violence of economics, the economics of violence*. – The theme of force [*Gewalt*], if we look carefully, is so persistent in *Capital* (particularly in Volume I), that this whole work could be read as a treatise on the structural violence that capitalism inflicts (and as a treatise on the *excess of violence* inherent in the history of capitalism), described in its subjective and objective dimensions, of which the critique of political economy provides the red thread. This has, first of all, to do with the fact that the exploitation of the workers – the source of accumulable surplus-value [*Mehrwert*] – seems indissociable in capitalism from its tendency to *over-exploitation*, which is not content to extract a surplus from labour-power over and above the value necessary to

its own reproduction by taking advantage of the increased productivity that makes the industrial revolution possible, but rather constantly stakes (and endangers) the very *conservation* of this labour-power, insofar as it is embodied in *living* individuals. At the end of Chapter 15 ('Machinery and Modern Industry'), **Marx** describes the production process as a 'process of destruction', and concludes, 'Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology, and the combining together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth-the soil and the labourer' (*MECW* 35, 507–8). But, because of its own resistance and a 'modernisation' of society leading to systematic annihilation of precapitalist ways of life and culture, this destruction of living productive forces necessarily takes extremely violent forms (concerning on the one hand processes that we would today call ethnic cleansing or genocide, and on the other a *dismemberment* of the human body or of the individual psychic/physical 'composite').

In **Marx**'s eyes, there is no exploitation under capitalism without over-exploitation. This is the lesson of the various comparative arguments devoted to the various 'methods' of producing surplus-value, which all have to do with pushing back the limits of overwork, without which capital would fall victim to its own tendency to a falling rate of profit. Let us note the importance of the fact that **Marx** went in search of this observation, not in the work of economists, but at least indirectly (by the medium of the *Factory Reports* in the service of English labour) among the workers themselves (Michel **Henry**, in particular, rightly stresses this point). On the side of 'production of absolute surplus-value', we see, for example, an indefinite extension of the working day, women's work and above all child labour, which leads to various forms of modern slavery and frenetic speculation by capital on the costs of workers' food, housing and health. On the side of 'production of relative surplus-value', we see an intensification of the tempo of work and an accelerated exhaustion of the 'human instruments'; a division of labour counterposing manual and intellectual ability; repressive factory discipline; and 'repulsion and attraction of workpeople' in the industrial revolution, that is, use of forced unemployment as a constraining 'regulator' of the value of labour-power. In all these cases, **Marx** is bent on showing that the different forms of over-exploitation depend on a general *condition of violence* [*Gewaltverhältnis*], inherent in capitalism, which he calls collective 'enslavement [*Hörigkeit*]' of the working class by the capitalist class (*MECW* 35, 609), which leaves the legally 'free' workers nothing but the chance to sell themselves on the conditions laid down by capital. But **Marx** wants to show as well that each of them includes a specific form of violence, corresponding to an entire phenomenology of suffering (to the point of 'torture': *MECW* 35, 426).

His analysis of over-exploitation results in a dialectic of resistance, of conflict, of interaction between violence and institution. It is surprising that **Engels**, although, as we have seen, he cited two essential moments of this dialectic, simplified its complexity to the extent he did. This may relate to the fact that, in the last analysis, it does not result in a one-way historical 'direction', but, rather, in a multiplicity of possible paths of development, which **Marx** himself, and, in any event, his successors, found it an enormous chore to choose between.

Some of the arguments in *Capital* [Volume 1] (supplemented here and there between the first edition in 1867 and the second edition in 1872 thanks to the repeal of the English laws against workers' combinations) describe the class struggle between capital and the working class, in the first stages of organising itself, over working conditions (and later wage levels etc.). The state intervenes in this struggle (though in an imperfect way, and partially to the benefit of the bourgeoisie, whose long-term interests it defends at the expense of its immediate profits) as the agent of 'that first conscious and methodical reaction of society against the spontaneously developed form of the process of production' (*MECW* 35, 483). Describing this history as one of a 'protracted civil war, more or less dissembled, between the capitalist class and the working-class' (*MECW*

35, 303), **Marx**'s analysis culminates here in a proposition in which the multiple meanings of the word *Gewalt* are fully evident: 'Between equal rights force [*Gewalt*] decides' (*MECW* 35, 243). The sentence is all the more remarkable inasmuch as it echoes, with slight variations, the sentence that **Marx** used in 1849 to describe the conflict between the Frankfurt National Assembly and the Prussian monarchy: 'only power [*Gewalt*] can decide between two powers [*Gewalten*]' (*MECW* 8, 324). *Violence* lies at the root of *power*, which, inversely, is exercised in order to control it. In the revolution, violence [*Gewalt*] had 'decided' between the 'powers [*Gewalten*]'; in the social struggle state power [*Gewalt*] (legislative *Staatsgewalt*) will 'decide' between two forms of violence [*Gewalten*].

These forms of force can all be situated on one side of the process of *normalisation* of capitalism's conditions of functioning (and incorporation of class struggle into the political institutions of bourgeois society). They do not in any way abolish the violence of exploitation, but they restrain its 'excesses' and postpone (perhaps indefinitely) the outbreak of a confrontation between the proletariat and the state itself (which, we can imagine, is rendered useless by the growth of the organised political power of the proletariat, if only the bourgeoisie does not 'put up a fight').

The dynamic is completely different in the passages devoted to 'the so-called primitive accumulation', which, by contrast, concern the relationship between force and capitalism as it was established in the 'transition period', *prior* to any possibility of 'pacifying' the social conflict. In opposition to the liberal myth of the origins of capital in individual merchant property, **Marx** describes in these passages, as we have seen, a 'process of forcible expropriation of the people' (*MECW* 35, 711), necessary to the process of transferring the mass of workers from one form of 'servitude [*Knechtung*]' (*MECW* 35, 706) to another. The best-known moment in this transition is the practice of 'enclosures' in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. But, in fact, capital employed all legal, pseudo-legal and illegal means (massacres, expulsions, more or less induced famines as in Ireland, colonisation, 'bloody legislation' organising the expulsion or imprisonment of vagrants, etc.) coordinated by 'the power of the state [*Staatsgewalt*]' (*MECW* 35, 726) in order ultimately to get its hands on the means of production and 'free' a proletariat without any resources of its own. Here, *Gewalt* in its multiple meanings does not serve to repress extreme violence through the functioning of state institutions, but, on the contrary, to multiply and intensify violence through the cruel use of state institutions.

Although they thus develop in opposite directions, the different ways in which capitalism is linked with the historical phenomenon of 'class warfare' reflect equally the same fundamental anthropological reality (which **Marx** had attempted to elucidate in speculative fashion in the chapter of *Capital* on the 'fetishism of commodities'): the objectification of human labour-power as a 'commodity'. This objectification, which the 'normal' process of capitalist production presupposes, even though the free worker's 'personal' juridical status masks it, is ultimately *impossible*; this is why it must be constantly *forced*, in face of workers' individual and collective resistance, by means of a more or less transitory complex of terrorist institutions and practices. These practices insert destruction into the sphere of production itself, in a sense far removed from what political economy later called 'creative destruction', seeing it as the mainspring of industrial innovation (**Schumpeter**).

But what can be the outcome of this unstable combination? The Marxist tradition after **Marx** is profoundly divided on this point, in relation to divergent 'tactics' within the workers' movement. What we will examine here in conclusion are the extensions of **Marx**'s analysis that highlight the *unshakeability of the phenomenon of extreme violence* as a structural determination of capitalism, thus making it necessary to pose the question of revolution, not only in terms of seizure of power and transformation of the mode of production, but also in terms of 'civilisation'. This can be done in different ways.

The path that Rosa **Luxemburg** illustrated (in her 1913 work *The Accumulation of Capital*,

in particular Chapters 26–9 on colonisation) consists in showing, starting from **Marx**'s definitions and the contemporary history of imperialism, that violent 'primitive accumulation' does not constitute a transitory phenomenon characteristic of the 'prehistory' of modern capitalism. On the contrary, capitalism needs permanently (for the most part *outside* the 'central' region where industrialisation took place) to form markets and reserve labour supplies for itself by means of exterminationist violence. The question of the 'law of population', which **Marx** linked to the cycles of accumulation and to the economic necessity of an 'industrial reserve army', lies at the heart of this problematic. There can be no capitalism without excess population, and no excess population without violence, whose targets are above all non-European peoples. Capitalism is, in this sense, always still 'archaic', or, rather, it presents the entirely modern violence that it imposes on the whole world, which is forced little by little to enter its space of reproduction, as an archaism.

In an astonishing text (*Results of the Direct Production Process* [*Resultate des unmittelbaren Produktionsprozesses. VI. Kapital des Kapitals*]), published in 1933 in Moscow and again in 1969, **Marx** had himself sketched out another path, which left deep traces in the discussions in the years 1960–70, particularly among representatives of Italian 'workerist' Marxism (*Quaderni Rossi*, **Tronti**, **Negri**), on the formation of the 'mass worker' in advanced capitalist society. The hypothesis here is that there is an ultimate stage in the subjection of labour-power to the commodity-form, corresponding to a complete commodification of workers' consumption and a conditioning of their training with a view towards their immediate incorporation into mechanised production, what **Marx** refers to as 'real subsumption [*reale Subsumtion*]' of labour-power under capital. **Marx** may have considered this deeply nihilist hypothesis incompatible with revolutionary perspectives for a progressive radicalisation of class struggle in the course of capitalist development; this was perhaps the reason that he ultimately failed to include this chapter (really a section) in the published version of *Capital.* The hypothesis does not necessarily lead, let us note, to extenuating violence as a form of 'voluntary servitude'; or, rather, this is only its utopian, bourgeois form. More likely, it corresponded (and corresponds) to a situation of endemic, anarchic or anomic violence (a 'molecular' civil war, **Enzensberger** would say), which capitalism tries to control by incorporating a multiplicity of apparatuses of control and 'risk management' (in Robert **Castels**'s phrase) into its social-policy toolkit.

2.3 *The aporia of 'proletarian revolutionary politics'.* – Rereading the analyses in Volume I of *Capital* on the question of the violence inherent in the development of capitalism as a 'mode of production' and in the evolutionary tendencies that take shape within it enables us to view in another light the question of why *Capital* was left unfinished, as well as the ambiguities of revolutionary 'strategy' that **Marx** continually ran up against during the life of the First International and after its dissolution, before and after the bloody episode of the Paris Commune (a new 'solo' and 'swan song' of the European working class, to use **Marx'**s expression in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* – *MECW* 11, 193). They both originate in the last analysis in the aporia of the constitution of the working class as a political subject, or of the relationship between the 'subjectification' of the proletariat and the capitalist 'socialisation' of the productive forces. But this relationship itself is profoundly troubled by the phenomenon of extreme violence, which can be considered, depending on circumstances, either as a residual irrationality which the 'normal course' of historical evolution must ultimately put an end to; or, as the element of dialectical negativity that precipitates the overthrow of domination by means of revolution ('accelerating' the course of history); or, finally, as the added factor that risks blocking the 'resolution' of social contradictions or even perverting their modalities from within. (The invention of the category of 'subproletariat' or *Lumpenproletariat*, reduced by impoverishment to a domain where poverty coexists with criminality, is a striking symptom in this respect. We know that **Marx** never

completely gave up the idea that **Louis Napoleon** owed the success of his coup d'état to a mobilisation of the *Lumpenproletariat*, and that **Louis Napoleon** himself was its political representative). In any event, the notion of a simple *division* of violence [*Gewalt*] between the terrain of politics and the terrain of economics (or of 'society', structured by economic relationships) cannot be sustained. Violence [*Gewalt*] *circulates*, in a way that is fundamentally uncontrollable, between politics and economics.

Perhaps the reason why *Capital* remained unfinished, after the publication of Volume I in 1867 and its various later editions, is (bearing all historical and biographical circumstances in mind, incidentally) that the process of violent 'consumption' of labour-power, whose causes, forms and social effects it describes, does not make it possible to choose in a *conclusive* way between several possible outcomes. **Marx** may have preferred to let 'real' history settle the issue, and left the exploited masses the task of inventing a 'strategy' in which one option would prevail over the others.

Probably in the chapter entitled 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation', the apparent 'conclusion' of the work [Volume I], **Marx** himself chooses a dialectical route in order to make the 'leap' from science to politics. He repeats the catchphrases of 1848, according to which the proletariat is 'the only revolutionary class', that is, the subject of history as the history of human emancipation, while basing them now, not on a catastrophist schema, but, rather, on a theory of the ineluctable tendency to the socialisation of production and the constitution of a 'collective labourer'. This process is supposed to unfold with the necessity of a 'natural process', in which the violence at its end, though inevitable, can no longer be compared with the violence at its origin. These are the formulations that orthodoxy has clung to.

But the course of the book had opened up other possibilities, which it would still be possible to take up without abandoning 'Marxist' reference points. There is the possibility of a process of *reforms*, imposed on society by the state under the pressure of increasingly powerful and better organised working-class struggles, which would force capital to 'civilise' its methods of exploitation or innovate constantly in order to overcome the resistance of 'variable capital'. There is the possibility of *exporting* over-exploitation to the 'periphery' of the capitalist mode of production, in a way that perpetuates the effects of 'primitive accumulation'. (Rosa **Luxemburg** worked this idea out in great detail, while always imagining that the process would ultimately run up against its limits, 'because the earth is round' – whereas one can also imagine intensive dimensions, in the form of 'colonisation of the life-world' [*Lebenswelt*] (in **Habermas**'s words) or development of the bio-economy, in which human life itself would become a raw material consumed by industry.) Finally, there is the possibility, suggested in the 'Unpublished Chapter' and taken up by certain theorists of contemporary 'mass culture', of a 'society of control' (as **Deleuze** calls it) accompanied by a coercive normalisation of individual producers, consumers and reproducers: a normalisation of which physical as well as psychic violence would be both the means and the permanent material. In these various hypotheses, the proletariat would no longer figure as the predestined subject of history, and the force that it experiences or exerts would not bring history to a 'natural' end. The subjectification of the working class, that is, its transformation into a revolutionary proletariat, would then be a continually receding horizon, an unlikely counter-tendency, or even a miraculous exception to the course of history.

Mentioning these competing, explicit or latent 'outcomes' in **Marx**'s analyses enables us to understand, better than **Marx** himself and his contemporaries, the reason for the aporiae that mar his attempts to define an autonomous 'proletarian politics', with its strategy, its institutions, its 'worldview' and its own discourse on the transition from class to classless society, as they were deployed after 1870. **Marx** is caught between the anarchist (Bakuninist) thesis, which demands above all the 'destruction of (state or party) authority', and the statist, nationalist (Lassallean) thesis, which sees organising society as 'legitimate

functions' of the state (see *The Civil War in France*, *MECW* 22, 332). He never succeeds in overcoming this symmetry, despite the new definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat drawn from the model of the Paris Commune or **Engels**'s remarkable efforts to theorise the political function of the 'masses' insofar as they cannot be reduced to the abstraction of classes.

All these difficulties crystallise around the question of the formation of a 'class political party', seen as neither an element nor a mirror image of the bourgeois state apparatus. They come down to the fact that it is just as difficult to conceive of revolution as a 'revolution from above' as it is to conceive of it as a 'revolution from below'; that is, as a proletarian 'appropriation' of a pre-existing force developed by the ruling classes, or a 'metamorphosis' of the historical figures of force, or a 'return of the repressed': a popular, spontaneous force specific to the masses themselves. Force [*Gewalt*] is undoubtedly not 'available [*verfügbar*]' to the proletariat. Always exceeding the proletariat's ability to control it, whether as *violence* or as *power*, far from forming the direct province of its political subjectification, it 'deconstructs' (as **Derrida** would say) the proletariat's claims to subjecthood.

3. *Marxism and post-Marxism between 'Gewalt' and civility*. – By speculating on the crux of revolutionary subjectification, socialisation and force, we have anticipated the lessons that can be drawn from a describing the development of Marxism starting from the work of its founders. These lessons now bring us to sketching out a critique of Marxism in which the aporia of its relationship to the significance and use of force will be the guiding thread. It would of course be desirable for a critique of this kind to be presented as a *self-criticism*, in which Marxism would find the means to understand its own setbacks and overcome its historical limits, so as to reopen the perspectives of a revolutionary 'transformation of the world'. Unfortunately, we know that nothing of the kind is about to happen, fundamentally because of the incapacity that Marxism has manifested to analyse the *real catastrophes* of the twentieth-century history (quite different from the 'final catastrophe' of capitalism that **Marx** prophesied), in which it was both agent and victim: fascism and Nazism, 'really existing socialism' and its exterminationist aberrations, the mutation of anti-imperialist struggles into ideological/military dictatorships, the combination of ethnic or religious racism with absolute impoverishment and devastation of the earth's environment, etc. This means that a critique of Marxism is at the same time an 'exit' from its problematic or a relativisation of its point of view. But this in no way means that all the analyses it has put forward or the questions that it has raised are lacking in contemporary significance.

It is appropriate, first of all, to describe the dispersion that occurred during the twentieth century in the field of Marxist discourses and show its linkage with the problem of force and the 'choices' that it impelled. Our thesis is that this problem constitutes precisely the red thread of the *split dynamic* that is typical of historical Marxism, making it impossible to attribute a simple 'position' to it in political affairs (even though the successive orthodoxies of the Second and Third Internationals tried to give credence to the opposite standpoint). But the splits themselves evidently cannot be explained only on the basis of theoretical choices. They must be traced back in an intrinsic way to practical conjunctures, which appear to us in hindsight as falling under two major *cycles of political struggles* whose dynamics Marxism attempted to grasp, two cycles that have been superimposed on each other without purely and simply intermingling. The first is the cycle of anticapitalist class struggles whose protagonist has been the working class with its historical organisations (parties, trade unions, associations); the second is the cycle of anti-imperialist struggles whose protagonists have been movements for national independence and/or movements resisting the unequal exchange that is blamed for underdevelopment. In both cases, the discourses that we need to take account of have not always been unanimously recognised as 'Marxist', or, in some cases (**Sorel**, **Fanon**), have not even identified completely with Marxism. But this

is a secondary issue; it expresses, in fact, the impossibility of unifying the Marxist problematic and thus of marking any hard-and-fast boundaries for it. What matters to us is these discourses' historical/theoretical relationship with the problems that **Marx** and **Engels** raised.

3.1 *The anticapitalist cycle and institutional 'Gewalt'*. – The anticapitalist cycle (which has for the most part unfolded in Europe, at least as far as its major innovations go, though of course it has extended over the entire world) began in the trade-union movement and the socialist parties of the Second International. It pivoted around the Great War of 1914–18, the Russian Revolution and the confrontation with fascism between the two World Wars. It concluded, after a long period of immobilisation in the structures of the 'Cold War', in the mass revolts of 1968 and subsequent years, when a certain resurgence of the councilist tradition combined with the growth of revolutionary movements and revolts against other forms of 'power' or 'domination' besides capital (family, school, 'disciplinary' institutions in **Foucault**'s sense and 'ideological state apparatuses' in **Althusser**'s sense).

The habit has taken hold since the debates inside German Social Democracy and the 1917–20 split of classifying the different positions present during the first period in line with the simple formula *reform or revolution*, with the advocates of a gradual, 'peaceful' evolution from capitalism to socialism (the English Fabian Society, **Bernstein, Jaurès**) on one side and the advocates of an immediate overthrow of capitalism by means of revolutionary violence (**Lenin**, Rosa **Luxemburg**, **Pannekoek** etc.) on the other, with the defenders of Marxist 'orthodoxy' (like **Kautsky**) trying for their part to uphold an intermediate position. From the theoretical point of view that we are putting forward here, it is more interesting to organise the debate directly around the most original positions, in the works of **Sorel**, **Bernstein**, **Lenin** and **Gramsci**.

Combining **Proudhon**'s legacy with **Marx**'s, **Sorel** attempted to theorise the tactic of the 'general strike' that French revolutionary syndicalism had adopted after leaving behind its anarchist phase, in which notably the idea of 'propaganda of the deed' or anticapitalist criminality had been widespread. The red thread of his celebrated 1908 work *Reflections on Violence* is the distinction between two antithetical 'social powers', bourgeois institutional *force* and spontaneous proletarian *violence*. In light of this distinction, he rereads **Marx**'s texts that Social Democracy had made canonical, and sifts through the tactics of the contemporary workers' movement, denouncing in particular the coexistence of revolutionary phraseology and parliamentarist practice in the parties of the Second International. For him, proletarian violence is an extrapolation of the rebellions inherent in the condition of exploited producers, which leads to the mobilising 'myth' of the general strike and foreshadows socialism as an association of free men. On a political as well as ethical level, it can be distinguished from the perspective of a civil war between classes organised into opposed 'camps', and repudiates the model of Terror or permanent revolution inherited from the Jacobin tradition.

Although **Sorel** (probably under **Nietzsche**'s influence) exalts the model of the 'useless' (anti-utilitarian), heroic warrior, he makes antimilitarism the touchstone of proletarian morality. But what complicates his position (and at least partly explains how both a revolutionary tradition and **Mussolini**'s fascists could make use of his work) is precisely this category of 'myth', whose philosophical foundations he borrows from **Bergson**'s theories of intuition and life force [*élan vital*], and which he counterposes to both the abstract 'utopias' of the socialist movement and the 'magic' of the state. Referring to both an ideal totality of social struggles and an affective capacity for mass mobilisation, his 'myth' seems destined in practice to a perpetual *fuite en avant*. This is probably why **Sorel** soon felt obliged to divide the notion of 'general strike' into two forms, one authentically proletarian, the other perverted by its political co-optation (a stratagem that is also to be found in **Benjamin**'s work) – though this would not prevent him from throwing his lot in with the most mutually antagonistic parties himself.

Bernstein, whose 1899 book *The Preconditions of Socialism* set off the 'revisionist' controversy, was also an acerbic critic of Social Democracy's institutional 'double language'. Contrary to a tenacious legend, he was not at all an 'opportunist' in the French sense, an exclusive champion of the parliamentary road and of political alliances with 'bourgeois' parties. In 1905, he joined Rosa **Luxemburg** in defending the 'mass strike'. But he sought to draw a demarcation line within the revolutionary tradition (including in **Marx**'s and **Engels**'s work) between two radically dissimilar traditions: an archaic tradition, an expression of the survival of utopia within Marxism itself, which tried 'dialectically' to combine the image of a capitalist collapse [*Zusammenbruch*] with the terrorist tactic of the seizure of power (transmitted by way of **Blanqui**, the probable inventor of the expression 'dictatorship of the proletariat'); and a genuinely modern tradition, which tried to link socialisation of the economy to democratisation of society by generalising associative and federative forms of self-management [*Selbstverwaltung*]. ('Democracy is both means and end. It is a weapon in the struggle for socialism, and it is the form in which socialism will be realised', *Preconditions of Socialism*, 142; *Voraussetzungen*, 154). This explains his famous formula declaring that 'what is usually termed the final goal of socialism is nothing to me, the movement is everything' (*Preconditions of Socialism*, 190), closely linked to a critique of the 'accelerating', 'creative' function that part of the Marxist tradition attributes to force.

> Earlier, Marxists had, from time to time, assigned force [*Gewalt*] a purely negative role in contemporary society, but nowadays an exaggeration in the opposite direction is in evidence; force is given what amounts to a creative omnipotence, and an emphasis on political action [*Tätigkeit*] seems virtually the quintessence of 'scientific socialism' – or even 'scientific communism', to use the expression as 'improved' by a new fashion, not exactly with any advantage to its logic. (*Preconditions of Socialism,* 203; *Voraussetzungen,* 212–13).

This also explains his rehabilitation of *law*, or more accurately of *citizenship* (whose German name, *Bürgertum*, refers to the history of civil and political liberties; this is why **Bernstein** criticises the tendency to substitute the expression 'civil society' – 'bourgeois society [*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*]' – for the expression 'capitalist society [*kapitalistische Gesellschaft*]'.) He thought that citizenship was increasingly indissociable from forms of *economic democracy*, not in the form of an egalitarian organisation of work – utopian in his eyes – but, rather, in the form of trade-union representation in the management of firms and the growth of consumer co-operatives (in other words, a regulation of the 'free market'). It explains, finally, **Bernstein**'s emphasis on the necessity of *educating the working class*, which it must set itself to in order to become capable of taking on 'responsibility [*Verantwortlichkeit*]' for society as a whole.

This brings us to **Lenin**'s position. Through the two Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and then the Civil War, **Lenin** never stopped trying to grasp the relationship between anti-capitalist social transformation and the political transformation of the autocratic régime. His approach has often been reproached with 'voluntarism'. But its force is not due only to his conception of a party of 'professional revolutionaries' (which as early as *What Is to Be Done?* in 1902 goes together with the idea of the proletariat's mission of joining together the emancipatory aspirations of all classes of society), nor to his elaboration (on the basis of the whole international debate of the years 1910–14: **Hobson**, **Hilferding**, **Luxemburg**, **Bukharin**, etc.) of a theory of imperialism that leads to seeing the revolutionary conjuncture as a boomerang effect of capitalism's global contradictions and the violent forms that its expansion inevitably assumes. It is due more profoundly to his original treatment of the relationship between force and the temporality of politics, which can be illustrated both with his conception of 'transforming the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war'

in 1914–17 and with his reformulation of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' at the time of 'war communism' and the NEP. His famous 1917 pamphlet *State and Revolution*, in which he rereads all of **Marx**'s and **Engels**'s texts on the transition from capitalism to communism in order to justify insurrection and define the goal of the seizure of power as the destruction of the state machine, is located in time right between the two. It has a clearly more scholastic character than other works like his 1915 *Collapse of the Second International*, his 1917 *April Theses* or his 1920 *'Left-Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder*.

The slogan of transforming the imperialist war into a revolution was not **Lenin**'s purely individual idea. On the contrary, after the failure of the European socialist movement's attempts to prevent the World War, the idea was shared by the different left-wing factions resisting the politics of patriotic unity in their various countries, which defined their common platform at the conferences in Zimmerwald (1915) and Kienthal (1916). But, while most left-wing leaders and theorists saw the slogan as an *injunction*, accompanied by a feeling of living through an apocalyptic moment of 'choice' between salvation and damnation – either revolution will reverse the course of events, or the war will reduce civilisation to ruins – **Lenin** reasoned in the opposite direction. He treated the war as an overdetermined historical *process* whose nature would necessarily be gradually modified, and which at the 'opportune moment' would make room for an intervention combining the 'objective' conditions with the 'subjective' conditions for revolution.

Lenin provided a philosophical foundation for this standpoint by rereading conjointly the works of **Hegel** (mainly his *Logic*) and **Clausewitz** (*On War*), as can be seen in the *Philosophical Notebooks* that he wrote during the same period (provided one does not expurgate them, as their Soviet publishers did). His reading led him to surprising applications of **Clausewitz**'s dictum that 'war is the continuation of politics by other means'. The extreme violence of the process of mutual extermination of peoples set in motion by their respective governments is presented in **Lenin**'s analysis under the heading of the subjective factor, which must gradually induce the masses to turn against their governments and bring about a resurgence of class politics at the expense of patriotism in the soldiers' state of mind. At the same time, **Lenin** subjects the historical incidence of the national question to analyses that lead to the idea that every revolutionary process is an 'uneven' combination of heterogeneous factors, whose conflict engenders a specific duration and determines conjunctures of concentration and dispersion of contradictions, of strengthening and weakening of state power. By this route, **Lenin** introduces a new idea into Marxism: neither the 'conversion' of force into historical rationality, nor its use (or rejection) as a revolutionary 'means', but rather a genuine *politics of violence* aiming at its transformation.

A related issue can be found at the heart of **Lenin**'s theoretical conceptions *after* the October Revolution. He worked them out in the midst of incessant (national and international) polemics in the fraught conditions of exercising power, waiting for and observing the defeat of the world revolution, and clashes among revolutionary currents. In reality, they do not contain any final synthesis (**Stalin** would take on the task of synthesis, in his own way). As we have argued elsewhere, ('Dictature du prolétariat', in *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme*), **Lenin** in fact invented a *third* concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat (following **Marx**'s concept of 1848–52 and **Marx**'s and **Engels**'s of 1872–5). The necessity of insurrection is part of **Lenin**'s concept, naturally, but he relates it very specifically to the changing *conditions* of the revolutionary process, which cannot be the subject of a 'decision'. (Even in *State and Revolution*, where he writes, 'The necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with *this* and precisely this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the *entire* theory of Marx and Engels' (*LCW* 25, 405), **Lenin** finds a way to remind his readers that the forms of the seizure of power depend on circumstances.) On the other hand, the necessity of insurrection is only a prelude to a dialectic specific to the 'transition period',

which requires a clear distinction between the question of *power* and the question of the *state apparatus*. Here again, the issue is how to define a political practice in conditions of violence, which, in a sense, turn political practice against itself (just as the state must be turned against its traditional function so as to become a state that is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word). The distinction between power and apparatus comes from **Marx**, but, from now on, it serves to help comprehend the uneven development of the revolutionary process: for the proletariat, exercising power (through the intermediary of its representatives) does not in any way mean controlling the state apparatus, and still less controlling the effects of using an administrative and political machine that the ruling classes 'built' in order to block the masses' access to political practice.

From this point on, the alternative of 'bourgeois dictatorship' or 'proletarian dictatorship' takes on another meaning. It implies that the bourgeois 'dictatorship' can be reproduced inside the revolutionary process, not just starting from the resistance of the revolution's adversaries, but starting as well from its own political institutions. This requires a specific sort of (class) struggle, until the time when the conditions for the 'withering away of the state' foretold by the theoreticians of socialism are finally in place. In relation to the issue of *violence*, however, this idea proves to be particularly ambiguous, as historical experiences of 'socialist revolutions' on the Leninist model have repeatedly illustrated. It evokes the idea of an *intensification of class struggle* during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which **Lenin** frequently described as a 'relentless life-and-death struggle between two classes, two worlds, two historical epochs' ('A Publicist's Notes', 1920; *LCW* 30; 355), as well as a prolonged undertaking in which the proletariat does its *apprenticeship in direct democracy and economic management* (symbolised by the initiative of 'communist subbotniks': see 'A Great Beginning', 1919; *LCW* 29, 409–34). In principle, the party has the task of resolving this tension or carrying out the synthesis between the contradictory 'tasks' of the communist revolution, but **Lenin**'s works are silent about how this is supposed to be accomplished. History has shown that tends to happen instead is that the contradictions reproduce themselves within the party itself, and that no ideological purity can immunise it against its own internal violence.

In the following period, **Gramsci**'s thought, in which we today see a desperate effort to overcome the effects of Stalinised Bolshevism on the Communist movement and thus hoist it to the level necessary to confront fascism, can be considered an attempt at a synthesis of elements from these three traditions. Starting from the inspiring and tragic experience of the revolution of the Turin factory councils and from a voluntarist philosophy influenced by **Sorel**, this Communist leader, prisoner and martyr, whom the Comintern had abandoned to his fate, had undertaken to rethink all the elements of the Marxist and Leninist problematic while returning to a concept of politics of a Machiavellian type. In this way, he sought to take up ideally *both* a standpoint *from above* (defending the necessity of a revolutionary party that would function like a 'modern prince', as both a collective intellectual and strategist) and a standpoint *from below* (defending the necessity of an 'intellectual and moral reform' that would enable the masses to become the agents of their own history and leave behind the 'subaltern' condition to which capitalism confines them by raising themselves to a 'hegemonic' position). Here, we only keep hold of the following idea from his conception of revolution as a 'war of movement' that prepares *within capitalism itself* the conditions for proletarian power: in the last analysis, not only is there never a 'pure' revolution, but also any revolution that is active as a 'praxis' of transformation of social relations is an alternative that the ruled invent in face of a 'passive revolution', that is, a strategy of the rulers to perpetuate their domination by adapting to new historical conditions. (The classic example is the postrevolutionary construction of a French nation; and the question posed at the time **Gramsci** was writing was whether US 'Fordism', with its project of 'rationalisation of the nation's demographic composition', should be interpreted in the

same way.) On this account, although **Gramsci** does not ignore violence [*Gewalt*], he is less a theorist of violence than of 'forces [*Kräfte*]' and 'relationships of forces [*Kräfteverhältnisse*]', which cultural processes are as much part of as violence [*Gewalt*] is, and which always necessitate analysing state structures in a relationship of reciprocal determination with the organisation of civil society.

These theoretical paths mapped out during the first half of the twentieth century in a time of war and revolution essentially remained the reference points of an enlarged Marxism, resisting a dogmatic ice age, until the upheaval of 1968. At that point, a new 'great debate' began about the forms and functions of revolutionary violence (including *terrorist* forms, in the case of the Italian Red Brigades and German Red Army Fraction). The most interesting debate theoretically was probably the divergence that opened up within Italian 'workerism [*operaismo*]', which had profoundly renewed analysis of the political dimension of conflicts in the modern factory and of the labour force's refusal to submit to 'capitalist planning' (or the 'socialised workers' refusal to let themselves be reduced to the status of 'mass workers'). This problematic relaunched the discussion of the relationship among forms of power (above all the 'state-form', understood on a model derived from the Marxian analysis of the 'commodity-form') and processes of political subjectification. But while Mario **Tronti**, under the influence of his reading of Carl **Schmitt**, defended the notion of 'the autonomy of the political', observing that any form of organisation of capitalist labour presupposes state action, and asked how political antagonism is established when the state is no longer a state of the classical liberal type but rather a state of the Keynesian 'interventionist' type or the Christian-Democratic 'consensual' type, Antonio **Negri**, by contrast, started from the thesis of a structural crisis of the 'planner-state'. **Negri** saw the autonomy of the state as a fictional mediation of social conflicts that conceals the generalisation of repressive practices. Under the rubric 'workers' autonomy', he theorised a permanent insurrection of the collective worker against the dictates of capital, which he argued aimed at recomposing labour while at the same time destroying any 'institutional mediation'.

It would be even more interesting to compare these theorisations systematically with the conception of 'power' that Michel **Foucault** began to develop at the same time, in particular in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). **Marx**'s analyses in *Capital* concerning capitalist violence, inasmuch as it aims to transform the worker's body into a production tool, are incorporated in **Foucault**'s work in the more general framework of 'disciplinary' mechanisms of domination in modern societies, and – taking the work of Frankfurt-school researchers like **Rusche** and **Kirchheimer** in a different direction – of a theory of the 'strategic' function that the use of revolts and illegality has in the functioning of the state. In this way, the anthropological foundations of the Marxist theorisation of class struggles and economic and political force are, in a certain sense, put in question. Marxist historians such as **Hobsbawm** had taken the risk of questioning the boundary between political violence ('revolt') and criminal violence ('delinquency') only in dealing with precapitalist societies, but not in dealing with 'developed' forms of class struggles – such was the power of the taboo inherited from the debates with anarchism.

4. *The anti-imperialist cycle and the 'really existing catastrophes'.* – In a text written in 1959, 'The Meaning of Working through the Past [*Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*]', **Adorno** posed the problem of the 'survival' of National Socialism in Germany as a psychic structure rooted in the objectivity of a certain economic order and in the defence mechanisms that the fear of historic catastrophes elicits.

> One wants to break free of the past: rightly, because nothing at all can live in its shadow, and because there will be no end to the terror as long as guilt and violence are repaid with guilt and violence; wrongly, because the past that one would like to evade is still very much alive. National

> Socialism lives on, and even today we still do not know whether it is merely the ghost of what was so monstrous that it lingers on after its own death, or whether it has not died at all, whether the willingness to commit the unspeakable survives in people as well as in the conditions that enclose them. (89–90.)

The text goes on to combine two types of approach to this structure of 'terror', which is capable of perpetuating itself beyond the conditions in which it emerged and of being an obstacle to any democratisation of politics. The text is, on the one hand, a critique of social alienation, inspired by the Marxian problematic of 'commodity fetishism', extended since **Lukács**'s work to the entire process of reification (or desubjectification) of society: 'Using the language of philosophy, one indeed could say that the people's alienation from democracy reflects the self-alienation of society' (93). On the other hand, it is a recourse to Freudian ego psychology (as in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* and *Civilisation and Its Discontents*) that had already been set in motion in 1950 in *Studies in the Authoritarian Personality*: 'Authoritarian personalities are however altogether misunderstood when they are construed from the vantage point of a particular political-economic ideology; the well-known oscillations of millions of voters before 1933 between the National Socialist and Communist parties is no accident from the social-psychological perspective either. […] Authoritarian personalities identify themselves with real-existing power *per se*, prior to any particular contents' (94). These two explanatory factors are subsequently joined together in a single matrix of subjection to the force of circumstances (or, to borrow **La Boétie**'s celebrated expression, 'voluntary servitude'):

> The economic order, and to a great extent also the economic organization modelled upon it, now as then renders the majority of people dependent upon conditions beyond their control and thus maintains them in a state of political immaturity. If they want to live, then no other avenue remains but to adapt. […] The necessity of such adaptation, of identification with the given, the status quo, with power as such, creates the potential for totalitarianism. (98–9.)

The same terms are invoked in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* in an attempt to approximate the 'elements of anti-Semitism': a 'false social order', in which individual subjectivity as such is repressed, spontaneously engenders a 'will to destruction' or a hatred that becomes inseparable from the organisation of production, which it defines as 'natural'. This hatred is then integrated into a compensatory portrayal of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and projected on historically existing groups that incarnate for modern (European) civilisation 'the other' in its midst. This hatred is thus also very much self-destructive.

One could, of course, discuss each of the elements of this analysis, and, above all, the nature of their interconnection, the explanation of whose mysteries [*Auroren*] requires no less than an entire metaphysics. Two thrusts of **Adorno**'s discourse seem particularly noteworthy. On the one hand, he calls the irreversible fact that has turned our view of politics upside-down (including, and perhaps most particularly, the phenomena that the Marxist tradition as an expression of the workers' movement had developed) a (both real and symbolic) 'catastrophe'. On the other hand, he does not hesitate, as his argument unfolds, to couple the threat associated with the spectre of Nazism with the threat that national-liberation movements may embody, to the extent that they too base themselves on glorification of the 'folk community':

> Today the fascist wish-image unquestionably blends with the nationalism of the so-called underdeveloped countries, which now, however, are instead called 'developing countries'. Already during the war the *slogans* about Western plutocracies and pro-

> letarian nations expressed sympathy with those who felt shortchanged in the imperialist competition and also wanted a place at the table. […] Nationalism today is both obsolete and up-to-date. […] But nationalism is up-to-date in so far as the traditional and psychologically supremely invested idea of the nation, which still expresses the community of interests within the international economy, alone has sufficient force to mobilize hundreds of millions of people for goals they cannot immediately identity as their own. […] Only in an age in which it was already toppling has nationalism become completely sadistic and destructive. (97–8.)

We do not think that these formulations can be interpreted as expressions of contempt for Third-World liberation struggles. Rather, they take a critical look at how extremes can meet at a time when, at least in Europe, the discovery of anti-imperialist struggles, as well as the possibility of viewing their global significance in an enlarged Marxist framework (prepared by classical theories of imperialism) had contributed for many revolutionaries and 'left-wing' activists to hiding the elements of antinomy inherent in very idea of a politics of violence.

4.1 The first point that strikes us as important is that while the intensive theoretical work that liberation struggles gave rise to before and after the Second World War admittedly widened the field of application of reflections on force considerably, by giving them a more and more central place in political thought (with the same justification as the theory of 'development'), it did not fundamentally modify the definition of this category. One might even think that it returned to the same dichotomy between the institutional and spontaneous aspects of force that so many efforts of post-**Engels** Marxist theoreticians (particularly in **Lenin**'s work and above all **Gramsci**'s) were directed against. In a situation characterised by massive forms of absolute impoverishment and harsh (colonial or semi-colonial) political domination, arisen in a civilisation suffused with racism towards non-European humanity, which had for centuries not hesitated in the end to resort to extermination, the various currents each tried in their own ways to take note of the fact that violence is not truly a choice but rather a constraint. The only possibility available seemed to be to rearrange it and reinvent its modalities. There was only one apparent exception in this respect: the politics of 'non-violence' carried out by **Gandhi**, to which we will return.

On the one hand we have thus theories of revolutionary armed struggle, such as 'people's war' (**Mao** in China) or 'guerrilla war' (**Castro** and Che **Guevara** in Latin America). Their mutual opposition gave rise at the time to intense ideological debates, with different and clashing conceptions of the link between vanguard and masses, the primacy of the political (meaning ideological) factor and the military factor, nationalism and internationalism. There can be no doubt that these debates defined an era in *military thought*, putting in question in particular the distinctions between war and revolution that had been the foundation of the classic definitions of politics (as can also be seen in the reception they got in Carl **Schmitt**'s counterrevolutionary essay *The Theory of the Partisan*). But it is all the more striking to note that, whatever the subtlety of the class analyses that they give rise to (clearer in **Mao**'s work than in **Guevara**'s or Régis **Debray**'s), they are always conceived according to a *strategic model*, in which the only actors are the appurtenances of 'forces' and 'masses' shifting in space and over time. This is probably why they have an intrinsic need to compensate for their objectivism by referring to complementary *ideal states*, particularly eschatological prospects of the coming of the 'new man' once the process of liberation is accomplished.

Faced with this objectivism, we have the extreme subjectivism of a discourse like Frantz **Fanon**'s (whose amplification by **Sartre** in the form of a sort of exorcism of extreme colonial

violence ensured its lasting, universal repercussions). Here, the subject is no longer force as organised *power* or *force*, but *force* as an 'absolute praxis' that itself, immediately, *effects* the spiritual liberation of the colonised at the same time that it turns the accumulated capacity for terror against the coloniser:

> At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect. […] When the people have taken violent part in the national liberation they will allow no one to set themselves up as 'liberators'. […] Yesterday they were completely irresponsible; today they mean to understand everything and make all decisions. Illuminated by violence, the consciousness of the people rebels against any pacification. From now on the demagogues, the opportunists, and the magicians have a difficult task. The action [*praxis*] which has thrown them into a hand-to-hand struggle confers upon the masses a voracious taste for the concrete. (**Fanon** 94–5.)

This great gap has in fact never been bridged. This may be what has intellectually disarmed anti-imperialist movements in face of counter-revolutionary strategies – and, in the last analysis, in face of their own authoritarian and totalitarian lapses as well.

4.2 By comparison, one could say that more theoretical creativity, if not political effectiveness, has been apparent in the *discourses of crisis* that tried throughout the fascist period in Europe to interpret 'negatively' the genesis of extreme violence and its capacity to wipe out the space for politics (including by turning revolutionary identities upside-down), by combining Marxist analytical categories with Nietzschean theses on 'cruelty' or Freudian theses on *thanatos* (the death drive) and its role in collective identification (as we have already seen in **Adorno**'s work). The theorists who developed these discourses resolutely refused to conceive of class struggles within the confines of a progressive, productivist anthropological horizon, as the classical Marxists had. We would say that this was the case with Wilhelm **Reich**'s attempts in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), Georges **Bataille** in 'The Psychological Structure of Fascism' (1933–4), and Walter **Benjamin** in the whole formed by his 1921 essay 'Zur Kritik der Gewalt' ('Towards a Critique of Violence') and his 1940 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' – with all the differences that distinguish these works from each other.

Reich – despite the dubiousness of his sometimes raving naturalist biologism – points insistently at Marxism's blind point (the 'irrational' libidinal structure of mass gatherings and movements that are responsible for 'making their own history') as well as the parallel blind spots of Freudianism, which ought to make it possible to comprehend the trans-individual material of politics (denial of the state's repressive function linked to forms of the patriarchal family). Almost a half-century later, **Deleuze** and **Guattari** would take this as their starting point in *Anti-Oedipus* and, above all, in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980).

Bataille describes the state, not just as an apparatus of power in the service of specific class interests, but as an institution that tends to shelter the 'homogeneous part' of society centred on productive utility from the boomerang effect of its 'heterogeneous part', that is, from the inassimilable forces which bring together the opposed figures of the sacred and disgust, as well as the forms of individual or collective violence that serve as the erotic foundation of sovereignty and more generally of mastery. He suggests that **Mussolini**'s and **Hitler**'s fascist formations were not able to mobilise the oppressed masses without bringing the heterogeneous element of social life back to the foreground, and redirecting it against victims banished from society. **Bataille** also dares to suggest that the proletariat or people can only triumph over fascism if they mobilise the same elements (returning, in a certain way, to the Marxian conception of the

Lumpenproletariat, but, in contrast to the original conception, in order to value it positively).

Benjamin, finally, in his youthful work (explicitly influenced by Sorel) shows that any institutional (*legal*) force takes the form of a *monopoly* and consequently of an *excess of power*, which points as required to its own targets in society by setting the boundaries of legality and illegality. He then contrasts it with the extra-legal and therefore revolutionary figure of 'divine violence', which refounds the institution while destroying it, but which is inherently divisible into state violence and redemptive violence. This formulation is close to the one that **Bataille** would arrive at later (the two of them have the reference to 'sovereignty' in common), except insofar as it presents the ambiguity of extreme violence as an aporia and not as a solution.

Much later, after living through the experience of fascism and encountering Marxism, in the 1940 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' that put an end to his unfinished work, **Benjamin** portrays Spartacism as the heir of the Blanquist tradition that joins 'hatred' of the exploiters with the 'spirit of sacrifice' (Thesis 12). But, above all, he draws an absolute demarcation line between the violence of the rulers and the violence of the ruled, the 'generations of the downtrodden', whose unlikely triumph through liberatory violence – comparable to the arrival of a messiah – gives meaning to the century-old accumulation of rubble and opens up the possibility of a different kind of history.

All these formulations undeniably have a partly mythical (or mystical) character. But they also share the way in which they point towards *the existence of another scene* (to speak like **Freud**) in which, in a sense, 'behind the back' of class struggles and relationships and forces and even more of 'class consciousness', a conjunction or metamorphosis of forms of objective violence (structurally implicated in mechanisms of domination and exploitation) into subjective violence (or even ultra-subjective violence, resulting from identification and fascination with an imaginary, collective 'omnipotence') takes place. An idea of this kind, even if expressed in a speculative way, has the advantage of ruling out as a matter of principle any possibility of thinking of history as a 'conversion' of violence, let alone any possibility of *mastering violence* without a *boomerang effect* on those who use it, whether they are the powers of the state or those of the revolution.

4.3 Criticising the illusion of a tactical or historical mastery of violence (in opposition to all the Marxist theoreticians, with the possible exception of some of Rosa **Luxemburg**'s remarks on the Russian Revolution – see *Schriften zur Theorie*, 180 et sqq.), without for all that believing in the possibility of eliminating it or doing without it, thus does not necessarily mean eliminating the question of a politics of violence. On the contrary, it means relaunching a politics of violence on a different basis. Neither does it mean making history anew. But it may mean re-opening debates that have been evaded or closed too rapidly. To mention only one such debate, which we think is fundamental: one of the great 'missed appointments' in the history of Marxism seems to have been an encounter between the Leninist politics of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and the politics of 'non-violence' and 'civil disobedience' theorised and practised by **Gandhi** in India – the other great form of revolutionary practice in the twentieth century (with results that were equally decisive and, in the long term, equally problematic). For Gandhian non-violence is not (or rather not only) an ethics, but primarily a politics, with its own conception of the social conflict between oppressors and oppressed and its own way of gradually turning around the relationship of forces by initiating a 'conversion of means and ends' (see **Bondurant** and **Chandra** (1988), the only great Marxist-trained author to have ventured in this direction).

This fictional history never took place. But it could take place in people's minds in the twenty-first century, as they face the development of a global economy of violence and the concomitant crisis of representation and sovereignty. It has the advantage of drawing our attention, not only to the necessity of civilising the state, but also to the necessity of

civilising the revolution. The latter is no easier than the former, but it is a precondition to recovering a Marxist theoretical heritage that has progressively discovered its multiplicity at the same time that it has discovered its fragility.

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Anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, arbitrariness, Bonapartism, civil war, class struggles, coercion, Cold War, coup d'état, crime, criminality, despotic socialism, despotism of capital, destruction, destructive forces, dictatorship of the proletariat, end of history, exterminism, extremism, final solution, Fanonism, Fidelism, French Revolution, Gandhianism, general strike, genocide, just war, *Gewaltstaat*, Gramscianism, guerrilla, Guevarism, gulag, Holocaust, injustice, Jacobinism, Leninism, left radicalism, liberation, Machiavellianism, Maoism, machine breaking, markets of violence, mass strike, mass worker, militarism, military, military coup, NEP, nihilism, objectivism, oppression, people's war, pogrom, Pol-Potism, power, primitive accumulation, putsch, radicalness, rape, resistance, revolt, revolution, right to resistance, semi-state, separation of powers, Sorelianism, struggle, subjectivism, subjugation, torture, total worker, tyranny, unequal exchange, victim, voluntarism, war communism, war and peace, wild capitalism, withering away of the state, workerism, workers' education.

Absterben des Staates, Anarchismus, Anarchosyndikalismus, Arbeiterbildung, Aufstand, Befreiung, Bonapartismus, Bürgerkrieg, Despotie des Kapitals, despotischer Sozialismus, Destruktivkräfte, Diktatur des Proletariats, Ende der Geschichte, Endlösung, Exterminismus, Extremismus, Fanonismus, Fidelismus, Folter, Französische Revolution, Gandhismus, Generalstreik, Genozid, gerechter Krieg, Gesamtarbeiter, Gewaltenteilung, Gewaltmärkte, Gewaltstaat, Gramscismus, Guerilla, Guevarismus, GULag, Halbstaat, Holokaust, Jakobinismus, Kalter Krieg, Kampf, Klassenkämpfe, Krieg und Frieden, Kriegskommunismus, Kriminalität, Leninismus, Linksradikalismus, Machiavellismus, Macht, Maoismus, Maschinensturm, Massenarbeiter, Massenstreik, Militär, Militarismus, Militärputsch, Neue Ökonomische Politik, Nihilismus, Objektivismus, Operaismus, Opfer, Pogrom, Pol-Potismus, Putsch, Radikalität, Revolution, Sorelismus, Staatsstreich, Staatsterrorismus, Subjektivismus, Tyrannei, ungleicher Tausch, Unrecht, Unterdrückung, Unterwerfung, ursprüngliche Akkumulation, Verbrechen, Vergewaltigung, Volkskrieg, Voluntarismus, Widerstand, Widerstandsrecht, wilder Kapitalismus, Willkür, Zerstörung, Zwang.