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Contributors: **Author:**Felix Baum & Jacob Blumenfeld
Edited by: Beverley Best, Werner Bonefeld & Chris O'Kane
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Felix Baum Jacob Blumenfeld

If the Frankfurt School, as Alfred Sohn-Rethel maintained, 'derived from the German revolution that never happened', which after the First World War 'should have occurred and tragically failed' (Sohn-Rethel, 1990: 10; 1978: xi et sq.), then certain affinities with German–Dutch council communism are to be expected. Council communism emerged in the post-war turmoil as an attempt to avert the failure of the revolution, which brought it into opposition not only to social democracy, but also to Bolshevism shortly thereafter. Following a brief period of mass appeal, council communism shrank to a theoretical enterprise, which, like the Frankfurt School, was still capable of critically comprehending the catastrophic course of history, yet could no longer intervene in it. Like the critical theory from Frankfurt, council communist critique became a message in a bottle. Its guiding principles – rejection of Leninism and all purportedly socialist regimes, self-activity of the proletariat, the construction of a society without wage labour and the state – gained importance again around 1968. Even if a councilist revolution in the form envisaged a hundred years ago is not to be expected, many reflections of its advocates still hold true.

Council communists rarely appear in literature on the Frankfurt School. One exception is Slater (1977), according to whom one may ask, 'not without some justification (…) whether Council Communism could perhaps be a concrete embodiment of many of the principles of the Frankfurt School' (73). As a follower of Lenin, Slater does not mean this as a compliment. He depicts the council communists as blue-eyed spontaneists, who 'similar to Horkheimer (…) did not point out the soviets' own responsibility for the collapse of the revolutionary wave of 1918–19'. The Frankfurt School, like the council communists, 'did not affirm the Leninist concept of the party (…) absolutised the soviet-system, and waited for a new revolutionary upsurge'. However, closer cooperation failed due to the 'idealism' (75) of the Frankfurt School.

Although biased and partly just wrong – the council communists did not idealize the actual councils and the Frankfurt School did not outright reject Lenin's concept of the party –Slater strikes upon an affinity also reflected in their interactions. In the 1930s and 1940s, Paul Mattick[1] and Karl Korsch,[2] the two driving forces behind International Council Correspondence (ICC),[3] a council communist journal published in America, often dealt with the exiled Institute for Social Research (IfS) and wrote smaller contributions for the Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung (ZfS). Korsch even hoped with good reason to collaborate on the book about dialectics planned by Max Horkheimer, which eventually became Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944). Ultimately, however, the Institute always kept their distance from the left-wing radicals. Nevertheless, Horkheimer's (1940) essay 'Authoritarian State', a summary of council communist views enriched with reflections on the philosophy of history, testifies to their influence. The fact that this remained an intermezzo was not due to any Frankfurt 'idealism', but to the further course of history. In the early 1940s, the mass murder of European Jews became the centre of reflection for the Frankfurt School. While bourgeois democracy appeared as a refūge for freedom, their hopes for proletarian revolution vanished. Twenty years later, the paths of the two tendencies crossed again when Mattick started a controversy with Herbert Marcuse over his book One-Dimensional Man (1964).

In the following, the council communist current from 1918–19 until the 1970s will be presented. The Frankfurt School enters at the point when they come into contact with them. Finally, a few general considerations about the relationship between the two tendencies are made.

Councils as Reality and as Programme

Appearing for the first time in the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, workers' and soldiers' councils shook the German Reich from November 1918 onwards. Starting in Kiel, where sailors refused to fight in a hopeless battle, the councils soon seized the entire country, briefly wielding de facto power; the German Empire collapsed. But as easily as the councils gained power, so could the social democrats wrench it back again. Their representatives had the majority in the councils, which already in December 1918 renounced power in favour of electing a National Assembly. The councils were integrated into the state as industrial committees with a mere right to co-determination.

For the left radicals who later became known as council communists, the councils still held out p¯r omise for a revolution that would not be carried out by workers' organizations as a political seizure of power, but by the workers themselves. Not by decrees of nationalization, but by means of collective direct action they attacked the system of property; it became conceivable to abolīshthe separation of producers and means of production, not just juridically but factually. Established on the basis of production, but capable of managing all of society, the councils thus pointed beyond the separation between politics and economics, characteristic of bourgeois society and the labour movement within it. They were considered a bridge to a future in which an egalitarian-horizontal system of directly elected and recallable delegates would replace the state (Pannekoek, 1947: 44–50). What had remained embryonic in the Paris Commune seemed to have gained a much more favourable foundation in the age of large-scale industry.

With this programme, the council communists went far beyond the actual council movement. Emergent council communism was never a mere reflection of actual practice; rather, it wanted to overcome the movement's weaknesses. The council communists attributed the councils' voluntary renunciation of power to a lag of consciousness behind what had become possible and necessary. Although large parts of the proletariat had demonstrated an ability to act autonomously, '[p]arliamentary and Trade Union traditions' were still too strong (Canne Meijer, 1938: New Conceptions, para 3). They had to be attacked.

The conflict between new forms of struggle and traditional ones also came to the fore at the founding congress of the KPD, the Communist Party of Germany, at the end of December 1918. Against the will of Rosa Luxemburg, the delegates decided to call for the withdrawal from the trade unions and boycott the elections to the National Assembly. They counted on the nascent autonomous factory organizations to be the incubators of a council revolution. The spokesperson of this line was Otto Rühle,[4] later one of the most famous council communists. However, under the growing influence of Moscow, the KPD leadership rapidly distanced itself from the left radical consensus and in autumn 1919 excluded those adhering to it, thus losing about half its 80,000 members. In April 1920, the excluded members founded the Communist Workers' Party of Germany (KAPD).

With initially 38,000 members, the KAPD already marked the international zenith of the councilist movement. Together with its smaller sister party KAPN in the Netherlands, it briefly tried to form a left radical International in opposition to Moscow – with little success. The party was a manifestation of the fact that a relevant minority of workers wanted to push the social-democratically pacified revolution of 1918 further. The revolutionary factory organizations, which in 1920 formed the General Workers' Union (AAUD) closely linked to the KAPD, temporarily included 300,000 workers. There were frequent revolts and short-lived 'council republics', for instance, in Bremen and Bavaria. Not by chance, the KAPD was founded immediately after the Kapp-Putsch of March 1920, during which the workers, mobilized by the trade unions to a general strike, continued the struggle in places even after the defeat of the anti-Republican putschists. The 50,000 armed workers of the Red Ruhr Army had to be put down by the armed forces of the Weimar Republic in tough street battles.

Council communism was the culmination of a critique of the old workers' movement that can be traced back to the era before 1914. Some of its leaders, such as Anton Pannekoek,[5] Hermann Gorter[6] and Rühle had already been active in pre-war social democracy, increasingly pushing against its organizational form, without questioning social democracy as such. Pannekoek, in a debate with Karl Kautsky, the head of the Marxist centre in German Social Democracy, advocated combining mass strikes and extra-parliamentary actions on the one hand, and participation in trade unions and parliament on the other (Pannekoek, 1912). It was only under the impact of war and mass unrest that this position radicalized into a rejection of the old organizations. Though maintaining that trade unions and parties generated an elite stratum closely interwoven with the bourgeois state and hence interested in the continuity of order, hostile towards any action beyond legality, this did not amount to a moral critique of betrayal. Rather, the 'counterrevolutionary potential' of the trade unions 'cannot be destroyed or diminished by a change of personnel, by the substitution of radical or "revolutionary" leaders for reactionary ones. It is the form of the organisation that renders the masses all but impotent […]' (Pannekoek, 1920: part V). Similarly, the rejection of parliamentarianism did not proceed from any immature illusion of quick, easy victory, but from the proletariat's need to emancipate itself from its psychological dependence upon parliamentary representatives – a necessary reaction against the tradition of social democracy – because the way to self-activity could now be seen to lie in building up the council system. (Pannekoek, 1920: part IV)

For the old workers' movement, the growth of their own organizations was synonymous with the advent of socialism; in the council communist perspective, it was exactly the opposite. The councilists noted that Marx, whom they initially considered as an almost infallible authority, had also pursued a democratic-gradualist politics, but at a different point in time. During the ascending period of capitalism that allowed for reforms, such a line was not only possible, but also necessary because the proletariat had not yet grown to a size that would enable it to take revolutionary action. As Gorter noted, the First International, led by Marx, consisted of national organizations that successfully fought for gradual improvements. As a result, over time the 'revolution became theory and reform became practice' (Gorter, 1915: para 51). The nationalism of the working class was based on this exclusive orientation to 'immediate advantages', which extended to endorsing colonial policy and finally culminated in world war (Gorter, 1915: para 110).

Although organized as a party, according to their programme the KAPD was 'not a party in the traditional sense', but aimed at the 'elimination of any policy of leaders' (KAPD, 1920: para 1). This anti-authoritarian orientation, anticipating 1968, did not amount to spontaneism: the power of the old organizations was not due to manipulation by leaders, but adequately expressed the consciousness of the masses. As the KAPD programme stated: 'The psychology of the German proletariat (…) shows very distinct traces of a long-standing enslavement to militarism, and is characterised by a real lack of self-awareness', a consequence of the 'parliamentary cretinism' of social democracy and of the 'absolutism of the union bureaucracy (…). These subjective elements play a decisive role in the German revolution' (KAPD, 1920: para 4).

Contrary to the Bolshevik self-image of being destined to lead the working class by its unwavering adherence to revolutionary principles, the council communists accused the KPD of nothing less than opportunism since it opposed the 'new principles' that rejected parliamentarianism and trade unions in favour of short-term success:

The one current seeks to revolutionise and clarify people's minds by word and deed, and to this end tries to pose the new principles in the sharpest possible contrast to the old, received conceptions. The other current attempts to draw the masses still on the sidelines into practical activity, and therefore emphasises points of agreement rather than points of difference in an attempt to avoid as far as is possible anything that might deter them. The first strives for a clear, sharp separation among the masses, the second for unity; the first current may be termed the radical tendency, the second the opportunist. (Pannekoek, 1920: part II)

The task of the party was primarily to critique and elucidate, while the industrial organizations of the AAUD were responsible for practical class struggle.

This endeavour crashed. After the 'March Action' of 1921, an armed workers' revolt in the central German industrial region around Halle whose expansion miserably failed, left radicalism experienced a rapid decline, with many splits following state persecution. As early as 1920, a dispute broke out about the KAPD's right to exist alongside the unions. A fraction around Rühle saw this as a perpetuation of the classical dualism of party and unions, accusing the KAPD of a 'policy of leaders' with the same vehemence that the KAPD levelled this accusation against the KPD, and thus founded the General Workers' Union – Unitary Organization (AAU-E). In 1922, the KAPD split into two: while the so-called Essen tendency saw participation in wage struggles as a departure from the revolutionary maximum programme, the Berlin tendency held fast to it. Practically, the main difference was that the purist Esseners sank even more quickly into insignificance than the pragmatic Berliners. Due to the stabilization of the economy beginning in 1923 and because of endless sectarian splits, council communism no longer existed as a relevant force by the second half of the 1920s (Bock, 1976).

In the 1930s, council communist discussions primarily centred around the publications of the Dutch Group of International Communists (GIK), who emerged from the KAPN in 1926 and kept contacts with Germany, as well as into the ICC in America, with whom the GIK closely cooperated.[7] The organizational question lost importance. Mattick retrospectively noted that 'all theoretical divergences' over it 'had no practical meaning', since the KAPD, AAU, and AAU-E did not differ in practice, remaining all '"ultra-left" sects' (Mattick, 1978: 107). Henk Canne Meijer8 stated that the unions held 'an idea close to that of revolutionary syndicalism, which looked forward to seeing all the workers join their unions'. But today, 'no longer was the 'organized' class struggle to depend on an organization formed previously to the struggle' (Canne Meijer, 1938: The KAUD, para 2). In the council communist conception of the 1930s, independent groups for 'critique and propaganda' and spontaneous struggles of the class take the place of parties and unions: 'the enterprises, public works, relief stations, armies in the coming war' provided a sufficient basis for organized action (Mattick, 1939: 84–5). As a pole of critique, the groups inherited the KAPD's role rather than the unions'. Nonetheless, the farewell to the party-form was consistent insofar as a party which neither aimed at electoral participation nor at seizing power strictly speaking had no reason to exist.

In contrast, the critique of political economy gained in importance. First of all, a debate developed between Pannekoek, Korsch, and Mattick over the theory of capitalist collapse by IfS member Henryk Grossmann (1929), which was vigorously defended by Mattick; essentially, however, the debate was less concerned with Grossmann's prognosis than its practical significance (Korsch et al., 1973). As Mattick admitted in retrospect, it did not lead 'to any notable result' (Mattick 1973a, 16), since for Pannekoek 'the emphasis on the objective untenability of the capitalist system (…) seemed to diminish the active role of the proletariat' (Mattick 1973a, 13). This role, however, was not disputed by any of the parties. More interesting rather is how Pannekoek himself remained captured by a historical determinism, for he conceived the much emphasized 'will of the working class', as 'not free, but is itself completely determined by economic development' (Pannekoek, 1934: Historical Materialism, para 9). Korsch, who regarded the inevitability of collapse as a 'meaningless question in this generality' and was interested only in 'very limited forecasts sufficient for practical action' (Korsch et al., 1973: 97 et sq.), recognized the futile nature of the dispute. It was only fruitful insofar as Grossman's theory would later serve as Mattick's point of departure for his critique of Keynes (see section 'After 1945: Mattick's Critical Theory').

Furthermore, the break with traditional conceptions of socialism became clearer in the 1930s. The old workers' movement had drawn the message from Capital that, through the growing concentration of capital, culminating in monopoly, the bourgeois mode of production itself led to the threshold of socialism, the realization of which merely required the state takeover of large enterprises thus created. Thus the workers' only role was to bring their own party to power in order to carefully manage the productive forces in the interests of all. As Mattick wrote:

However divided the old labour movement may be by disagreements on various topics, on the question of socialism it stands united. Hilferding's abstract 'General-Cartel', Lenin's admiration for the German war socialism and the German postal service, Kautsky's eternalisation of the value–price–money economy (desiring to do consciously what in capitalism is performed by blind market laws), Trotsky's war communism equipped with supply and demand features, and Stalin's institutional economics – all these concepts have at their base the continuation of the existing conditions of production. (1939: 80)

While the 1920 KAPD programme recalled the list of demands from the Communist Manifesto, the GIK was now thinking about 'another economic system, where the means of production, the products of labour power, do not take the form of "value"' (Canne Meijer, 1938: Communist Society, para 8). Elsewhere, they stressed that communism develops not only when 'the workers have won the power in society' (Canne Meijer, 1935: Class Struggle, para 2), but already in their struggles – for example, in wildcat strikes, which produce new forms of interaction and could lead to the appropriation of buildings and means of production. At the same time, a more concrete blueprint for a new society seemed indispensable to them, the absence of which was now seen as partly responsible for the failure of the council movement. Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution (GIK, 1930) was intended to remedy this shortcoming. Based on Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program, the GIK sketched out a post-capitalist economy, in which the calculation of labour time is pivotal for planning production as well as allocating distribution. They saw the best guarantee for preventing the emergence of a new exploiting class, as in Russia, in the exact calculation of what was due to the individual according to the measure of time worked. The bulk of the text served to prove that producers themselves could precisely calculate this by accounting. Although motivated by egalitarianism, Fundamental Principles restricted Marx's vision of overcoming the logic of exchange in general to areas such as health care and education. For many years, the text remained authoritative for this tendency.

From Red October to Red Fascism

The Russian experience left its mark not only on Fundamental Principles. The confrontation with the October Revolution, Lenin, and Bolshevism takes up much space in council communist literature. In the initial enthusiasm about the Russian revolution, the KAPD tried to join the Third International. When the Bolsheviks supported the course of the KPD and when Lenin sharply attacked Pannekoek and Gorter in 'Left-Wing' Communism: an Infantile Disorder for their anti-union and anti-parliamentary line, this was considered a disagreement that could be settled.

Gorter's (1920) 'Open Letter to Comrade Lenin' accepted the Bolshevik strategy as adequate for Russia, but defended the dissenting council communist line with respect to the different circumstances in the West. While the Bolsheviks were supported by only a small industrial proletariat, a huge impoverished peasantry, and faced a weak adversary, it was precisely the reverse in Western Europe: a much larger proletariat, without allied peasants, opposed a much stronger capitalism. The importance of 'leaders' – whose necessity for Gorter at this point was as clear as that of a disciplined party – was correspondingly less: everything depended on the ability of the proletariat to break away from the deeply rooted bourgeois culture and act independently. Gorter took issue solely with the presumption of the Russian strategy being stipulated for Western Europe as well. When the Bolsheviks insisted on just that at the Second Comintern Congress (1920), demanding the KAPD to unite with the KPD, Pannekoek formulated for the first time the fear that the compulsion to find 'a modus vivendi with the capitalist world' could bring Soviet Russia into permanent opposition with the world revolution (Pannekoek, 1920: Afterword, para 4). After the Third Congress (1921), the KAPD withdrew in resignation.

The GIK later came to a much more negative conclusion. In their 'Theses on Bolshevism' (GIK, 1934), it is no longer about different strategies on the way to the same goal, but about the bourgeois character of the Russian revolution from the very outset. This made the struggle against Bolshevism one of the 'first tasks' of a revolutionary re-orientation (§67):

The economic task of the Russian Revolution was, first, the setting aside of the concealed agrarian feudalism and its continued exploitation of the peasants as serfs, together with the industrialization of agriculture, placing it on the plane of modern commodity production; secondly, to make possible the unrestricted creation, of a class of really 'free laborers', liberating the industrial development from all its feudal fetters. (§7)

Politically, the task of the Russian Revolution was the destruction of the absolutist state in favour of modern administration. But these essentially bourgeois aims had to be enforced precisely against the weak bourgeoisie, who were aligned with tsarism. In the view of the GIK, the Bolsheviks accomplished this as representatives of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. With tactical skill and an absolute claim to leadership, they marched off workers and peasants as foot soldiers for their coup. The GIK determined their interests as contradictory: contrary to the rudimentary communist class politics of the numerically weak proletariat, the peasants wanted only to divide the large estates among themselves as small property owners. This 'two-class basis' of Bolshevism conditioned the independence of the new state power against both. The fact that the result was 'state capitalism', as Lenin temporarily admitted, was historically inevitable, but it also coincided with the Bolshevik ideal of a 'bureaucratically conducted state economy' (§49). The slogan of 'all power to the soviets' was therefore pure tactics; the Bolsheviks regarded the soviets instrumentally 'as organs of insurrection' and not 'as organs of self-government of the working class' (§39).

In light of the repression of all emancipatory efforts of the Russian proletariat, bloodily condensed in the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt in 1921, Lenin's organizational model of the leadership-party was severely criticized by the council communists in countless texts.[9] Yet this was primarily aimed at the debates in the Western workers' movement, because they saw no basis for a revolutionary alternative in Russia itself. Even Trotsky was just a 'failed Stalin' (Huhn, 1973). For the Bolshevists the abolition of the capitalist mode of production is possible only after a certain degree of development, reflected in the proletarianization of the majority of the population. After 1917, their approach shaped the entire twentieth century: it was not through social revolutionary movements in the metropolises that Marxism became effective, but as a legitimation ideology for national movements in the periphery. The GIK already observed how the Bolsheviks tried to export their model in Asia and discovered the 'national question' for themselves (GIK, 1934: §50–6). Forty years later, Mattick criticized the New Left for their identification with anti-imperialist movements of the Third World, whose 'prototype' was Russia and which could achieve 'at best only partial release from foreign exploitation but not the conditions of socialism' (Mattick, 1978: ix).

In the context of the early 1930s, the council communists used terms like 'state capitalism', 'state socialism', and 'state communism' synonymously, to determine the character of the Soviet Union, which they understood as a 'more advanced type of capitalist production' (GIK, 1934: §58–9). In reality, all these categories existed there only in a deformed way (see Aufheben, 1999). Appropriate to the concept of 'state capitalism' was that wage labour continued and was massively expanded; this was politically decisive for the council communists. While bourgeois revolutions produce politics and economics as separate spheres, they both fused in Russia in a way that undermined the law of value as a blind control mechanism. It was precisely this fusion of state and economy that spawned the phenomena which allowed the council communists to speak of 'red fascism'. As Mattick remarked about the Soviet Union: 'By adding control over the economy to the political control of the government the totalitarian rule over all of society emerges in full' (Mattick, 1947: 70). Here, too, the council communists took a position completely marginal in the left: neither was it taboo for them to name the similarities between Bolshevism and fascism, nor did it lead them to swear allegiance to Western democracy in the spirit of totalitarianism theory. Pannekoek wrote on Russia and Nazi Germany:

The similarity of political forms and methods of government (…) strikes the eye at first sight. In both the same dictatorship of leaders, assisted by a powerful well-organized and disciplined party, the same omnipotence of the ruling bureaucracy, the same absence of personal rights and free speech, the same levelling of spiritual life into one doctrine, upheld by terrorism, the same cruelty towards opposition or even criticism. (1947: 179)

Taking into account the chronology, Rühle said: 'Hitler became Lenin's and Stalin's best student. Following the example of the Bolshevik state, he shaped and constructed the fascist state in his own image' (Rühle, 1940: 84 et sq.). At the same time, there was a tendency to mechanistically derive a universal fascization from the growing concentration of capital. According to Mattick, Bolshevism, fascism, and Western capitalism were in 'all essential aspects (…) identical and represent only various stages of the same development' towards 'a "fascist" world economy' (Mattick, 1978: 71). This perspective informed many council communist analyses of the 1930s and 1940s.

Fascism, Democracy and War

When the German workers' movement was defeated without a fight in 1933, the council communists saw their critique confirmed.10 The SPD 'had become only a façade behind which was such a rotten (…) building that it fell into ruins at the first strike of the enemy', as did the 'pseudo-revolutionaryism of the KPD', which turned their adherents into 'blind instruments', while the trade unions tried to 'submit entirely to national socialism' (Pannekoek, 1933: 442–6). Added to this were 'the nationalistic adventures' of the KPD: 'Ten years of competition with Hitler for the title to real nationalism turned the workers themselves into fascists' (Mattick, 1935: 27). The problem, however, was more fundamental. Both wings of the workers' movement had significantly abetted Nazism through their statism: Bolshevism with 'its example of state dictatorship' and social democracy with its – albeit democratically understood – 'idea of State socialism' (Pannekoek, 1947: 157). To this extent, the course towards National Socialism was not set in 1932/33, but already in 1918/19, when its potential opponents were defeated by the Social Democrats in coalition with the right-wing Freikorps, and a 'republic without republicans' arose. In light of 'the growth of martial law and emergency power', Korsch considered this a 'preparatory phase' of National Socialism, which then came to power completely legally (Korsch, 1940a: 13).

It was during these years that the contacts between the Frankfurt Institute and council communism, represented by Mattick and Korsch, were most extensive. 'Horkheimer', Korsch wrote to Mattick in 1938, 'has (…) come very close to my, our political standpoint in recent years' (Korsch, 2001: 683 et sq.). In those years, Horkheimer wrote his most radical texts, which he later distanced himself from. The council communist influence is especially clear in 'The Jews and Europe' (1939) and 'Authoritarian State' (1940), where Horkheimer saw both the Soviet Union (about which he had been ambivalent for a long time) and Nazism as manifestations of a general trend towards statism to which he opposed the anti-authoritarian system of councils. By taking fascism as the necessary consequence of the irreversible bankruptcy of the liberal market economy, he declared meaningless any purely democratic anti-fascism that aims at restoring the status quo: 'To appeal today to the liberal mentality of the nineteenth century against fascism means appealing to what brought fascism to power' (Horkheimer, 1939: 91). While 'a generalizing sociology suffered form the fact that it was practiced primarily by people of the middle and upper middle classes who differentiate too conscientiously', the 'millions below learn through their experience from childhood on that the various phases of capitalism belong to one and the same system. Authoritarian or liberal, society for them means hunger, police control and the draft' (Horkheimer, 1940: 104). The ICC recommended 'The Jews and Europe' as 'the best short exposition of fascism' (ICC, 5.1, 1940: 10).

A text that obviously influenced Horkheimer were the theses by Heinz Langerhans published in ICC in 1935.11 As a student of Korsch and colleague of the Institute, Langerhans represented another bridge between the two currents. In his theses, he stated that capital and the state were being melted 'by the world crises into a single armor-plating, to the end of assuring their continued existence. From the automatic subject Capital with the sponsor State as a special organ has grown the unified state-subject Capital' (Langerhans, 1935: 9). The driving force was the immensely increased productive forces, which already in 1914 could only erupt in war, and would do so again, according to Langerhans' clear-sighted forecast, around 1940, in order to accomplish 'the special work of any crisis: destruction of value' that can no longer be valorized (8). Precisely thereby, 'the presupposition for crisis' is once again placed within the crisis, and competition – internally suspended through cartelization – is transposed onto the international level, therefore producing the 'Twilight of Autarchy' (10). Langerhans spoke here of a general tendency, though he obviously had Nazism in mind when he described how the 'state-subject Capital seizes the monopoly on class struggle. The breaking up of all class organs of the workers is its first accomplishment. A ruthless social-pacification process is introduced with the aim of "organically" incorporating that part of capital represented by wage labor into the new State' (9). Thus, 'the only possible social reform has [been] won against the workers' (12).

In 1935, Korsch objected to Langerhans, claiming that the capacity for pacification was 'damagingly overrated' and the 'sharpened class struggle of the workers' was ignored (Korsch, 1935: 20). A few years later, however, he saw fascism as 'a non-socialist and undemocratic but plebeian anti-reactionary counter-revolution' (Korsch, 1940a: 14), and came closer to Langerhans insofar as he now saw the difference between fascism and traditional reactionaries precisely in its ability to integrate the working class: 'The fascist counter-revolution rather tried to replace the reformist socialist parties and trade unions, and in this it succeeded to a great extent' (Korsch, 1940b: 32). While council communist interpretations of National Socialism were hardly uniform, they mostly went beyond the image drawn by the Third International of a dictatorship of big business over the German working class by taking seriously its efforts to win over workers by means of ideology and social engineering. Even though the deprivation of workers' rights was beyond dispute, the 'national community' was more than a mere propaganda lie. Pannekoek described the pseudo-anti-capitalist features of National Socialism as a 'revolt of German against American capital, against the rule of gold', which masquerades 'as the new reign of labor' with considerable effect. The forced national community meant 'the end of the pitiless fight of all against all, (…) that everybody will have his place assigned, an assured existence, and that unemployment, the scourge of the working class, disappears as a stupid spilling of valuable labor power' (Pannekoek, 1947: 145, 147–8). The Nazi state also curtailed the liberties of private companies considerably and could thus present itself 'as the power that curbs capital' (149).

With regard to the exact relationship between politics and economics in National Socialism, there was as little unanimity among the council communists as there was among the exiled Frankfurt Institute. There, Franz Neumann vehemently argued with Friedrich Pollock, whose thesis that under state capitalist National Socialism, 'the profit motive is superseded by the power motive' (Pollock, 1941: 207) Neumann attempted to refute in his major study Behemoth (1942). Korsch agreed with him: 'Neumann shows that in spite of the transition from free competition to monopolistic rule and an increasing interference of the state, the present German economy has pertained the essential features of a genuine capitalist economy'. It is 'based, now as before, on private ownership in the means of production', and 'it is still the profit motive that holds the machinery together' (Korsch, 1942: 47–8).12 In this sense, he also accused Langerhans of blurring the political-economic differences between Bolshevik Russia and Nazi Germany when he described them as 'not of a fundamental nature' (Korsch, 1935: 20; Langerhans, 1935: 9). Mattick, on the other hand, emphasized more strongly the independence of the state, which had developed 'its own vested interests'. It could 'become the most important monopoly and within the framework of imperialistic rivalries combine all power in society in one hand, and thus begin to "plan" the nation' (Mattick, 1941a: 20). Although he did not deny the continued existence of the profit motive, he basically followed Horkheimer's claim that Nazism means 'the end of political economy' in terms of the further validity of categories such as 'exchange of equivalents, concentration, centralization, falling rate of profit, and so on', once 'the practice of methodical violence' takes the place of blindly operating mechanisms (Horkheimer, 1939: 83). Domination, once disguised, now appeared openly. The fascists

could not help unmasking the exchange relations as the relation between classes – one controlling, the other controlled – because they themselves rose to power by political struggles, not by grace of an economic law. (…) All capitalistic categories today are reproduced not in their fetishistic form but in their actual character. (Mattick, 1941a: 17, 20)

Regardless of such differences, the council communists at that time still shared an astonishing confidence in history. Ruthlessly scrutinizing the decline of the old workers' movement, they were certain that a new, truly revolutionary one would emerge. In this respect, Horkheimer did not follow them even in his most radical writings, but attacked any such confidence with almost existential despair: 'Theory explains essentially the course of destiny'. 'The belief that one is acting in the name of something greater than oneself is bankrupt. Not a few Marxists paid homage to it'. 'As long as world history follows its logical course, it fails to fulfil its human destiny' (Horkheimer, 1940: 109, 112, 117). By contrast, Rühle claimed: 'History does not make mistakes'. He declared that fascism, by eliminating the old organizations, had done the proletariat 'an enormous world-historical service': 'Did not we, since 1918, demand the disappearance of parties, parliament, trade unions, etc.?' (Rühle, 1939: 180). Though less harsh, Pannekoek also drew a certain hope from the fact that fascism, by destroying the 'old party divisions' in the proletariat, had restored its 'natural [!] class unity' (Pannekoek, 1936: 13). Korsch, on the other hand, in the spirit of Horkheimer warned against indulging 'comfortable illusions about a hidden revolutionary significance' of history in a bad Hegelian manner, as expressed for instance in the triumphalist slogan of the KPD: 'After Hitler, Our Turn!' (Korsch, 1940b: 34). But even he was not free from this. Following Langerhans (1940), who had discovered an affinity between the 'shock-troop principle' and the council principle, Korsch wrote that out of the 'fear of the emancipatory effect that a total mobilization of the productive forces' in military form 'would be bound to have for the workers', the rulers were afraid of unleashing a truly 'total war'. This demonstrates 'the impasse from which capitalism cannot escape even in its present rejuvenated fascist and counter-revolutionary form' (Korsch, 1940b: 35–6, 41).

It was presumably this historical confidence that prevented the council communists from perceiving the full extent of Nazi barbarism. This is where their path diverged from the exiled Institute, for whom from the early 1940s onwards the unprecedented aggressiveness of Nazi antisemitism became far more important than all questions concerning the relation between the state and economy. In August 1940, Adorno wrote to Horkheimer that he could 'no longer ignore thinking about the fate of the Jews (…). It often seems to me as if all that we have been accustomed to seeing in the proletariat has now been transferred onto the Jews in terrible concentration' (Adorno, 1940: 764). In 'The Jews and Europe', Horkheimer had still derived antisemitism from the alleged liquidation of the sphere of circulation, understood it as an 'economic expediency' and predicted its 'end', since it belonged to the 'ascendant phase of fascism'. Even 'the hope of the Jews, which attaches itself to the Second World War' seems 'miserable' to him, since this war would only lead the world 'further into authoritarian-collectivistic ways of life' (Horkheimer, 1939: 89–92). In Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944), by contrast, Adorno and Horkheimer conceived of antisemitism as a delusional ideology, in which the national community projected the exploitative essence of the system onto 'the Jews' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1944: 153). As the dimensions of the German policy of extermination became clearer, Horkheimer's emphasis on the continuum between authoritarian and liberal forms of capitalism from his left radical writings of 1939/40 faded away. Without illusions about the motives of the Allies, several members of the Institute practically supported the American war effort.

In council communist texts, antisemitism appeared on the margins, at best. Korsch remarked how in fascism a 'rational goal-directed state practice' combined with 'a completely irrational state mythology (represented by the nation, the race, and the mass)' (Korsch, 1932: §1.3), and that the repressed class struggle is presented as the work of an 'interested band of Jewish or other racially foreign agitators' (Korsch, 1935: 19). But such remarks remained marginalia. Pannekoek, who unlike Rühle, Mattick, or Korsch had lived under German occupation himself, came closest to grasping the particular features of National Socialism. In Workers'

Councils, largely written during the war, and published for the first time in 1947, he devoted a separate chapter to National Socialism as a form of fascism 'far more important' than the Italian variant, and recognized its 'central doctrine' in race theory, which aimed at the 'deliberate extermination' of the Jews (Pannekoek, 1947: 154). In general, he had an eye for distinctions. The bourgeois freedom of the individual, 'to be sure, often was no more than an ambiguous form, but it was something. National socialism took away even this semblance of liberty. (…) So it had to disappear; without liberty man cannot live' (158). However, just as Pannekoek had already pointed out the beginning of the persecution of the Jews in 1933, but had rejected calls for a boycott against Germany as a path to 'another 1914' (Pannekoek, 1933: 449), such insights had no practical impact.

In the Second World War, the council communists rejected Trotsky's demand that Stalinist Russia be defended as a merely 'degenerated' workers' state. 'Anti-fascism' served the international alliance policy of Russia, which stifled the class struggle – and had been realized in the Spanish Civil War as a suppression of the social revolution through 'Moscow fascism' (Mattick, 1937). In any case, world politics was quicksand: it was impossible to figure out who would ally with whom against whom. Central to the council communists was the assumption that the era of liberal-democratic capitalism had come to an end, and that the war would also turn the last democracies fascist. Yet while just as in the First World War it was necessary to refuse taking any side, the constellations had changed. 'None of the revolutionary slogans of the last war can be immediately applied', noted Korsch in 1941. The former call for 'transformation of the capitalist war into a civil war' was now obsolete, since the 'present war (…) has been a veritable civil war on both a European and a world-wide scale'. 'Down with the imperialist war!' now fitted 'perfectly with the tendencies of the bourgeois appeasers and isolationists'. 'Defeat of one's own country!' had become 'a practical policy of that substantial part of the ruling class in various European countries that preferred the victory of fascism to the loss of its economic and political supremacy' (Korsch, 1941: 2–3). Mattick soberly realized that the 'question as to what the "labor movement" should do in regard to the war' is 'artificial (…), for there is no labor movement which could raise it in actuality' (Mattick, 1941b: 61).

After 1945: Mattick's Critical Theory

The feared universal fascization did not take place either. Instead, after 1945, the Western world experienced a period commonly known as 'the three golden decades'. The thesis of an unstoppable monopolistic liquidation of democratic-liberal capitalism, temporarily shared also by Horkheimer, Pollock, and Neumann, too, proved to be wrong. Already in Workers' Councils, Pannekoek was implicitly moving away from the thesis of fascization; he now understood bourgeois democracy as 'the adequate political form for rising and developing capitalism' and described not any fascism, but 'American democracy' as 'still the strongest force of capitalism' (Pannekoek, 1947: 133, 135).

The upheavals around 1967/68 brought greater interest to council communism once again. It had a strong influence on the restless Situationist International (1957–72), for example. Its internationally renowned representatives were now Mattick and former GIK member Cajo Brendel.[13] Brendel carried on classical council communism unaltered, leaving no doubt until his death that the future belonged to the self-emancipating working class. He reacted to the disappearance of the councils – they appeared one last time in Hungary in 1956 – by equating them with wildcat strikes: through them, 'spontaneous resistance (…) enters more and more onto the historical stage' (Brendel, 2001: 8). Mattick took another path. His remark that 'workers' self-initiative and self-organization offers no guarantee for their emancipation' could also be directed against Brendel (Mattick, 1978: xi). In his post-war writings, the historical optimism receded. While Pannekoek's or Gorter's Marxism sometimes displayed features of a world-view, for Mattick only the critique of political economy was relevant. Marx had 'talked a lot of nonsense, not because he was a babbling idiot, but because he lived in another world with other problems (…) In Marx, I really only care about this one idea, the discovery of immanent contradictions in the capitalist system of production' (Mattick, 2013: 105).

Starting from these contradictions, Mattick in his main work, Marx and Keynes, tried to conceptualize the post-war constellation, which though far from a universal fascism, no longer corresponded to classical liberalism. Already during the 'golden decades', Mattick debunked the idea that the 'mixed economy' guaranteed stability through clever political management. He showed that the public demand propagated by Keynes does not provide a solution to the problem of declining profitability, but is itself dependent on the private economy, as it is financed by taxes or by the anticipation of future taxes in the form of growing public debt. Though state intervention can compensate for economic downturns in the short term, it remains impotent against the fall of the rate of profit, rooted in the rising organic composition of capital. Prosperity after 1945 was not due to some new Keynesian expertise among those in power, but to the gigantic destruction of capital caused by the Depression and World War, which enabled capital to expand again along the same old cycle of recovery, boom, and crash. But for the same reasons, according to Mattick, this prosperity could not last. The return of crisis in the 1970s proved him spectacularly right.

This assessment also underlies Mattick's critique of Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man. By no means did Mattick contradict Marcuse's gloomy picture of a state-pacified 'society without opposition', but rather agreed 'with all his observations' on ideology in advanced industrial society. This even extended to Marcuse's notion of an integration of the proletariat: 'Marx says somewhere that "the proletariat is revolutionary, or it is nothing". Presently it is nothing and it may well be that it will continue to be nothing' (Mattick, 1972: §XII, para 12). To Mattick, however, this was not settled. His objection, therefore, was kindled by Marcuse assuming this constellation to be permanent, which led him to declare marginal groups in the metropolises and movements in the Third World as the spearheads of liberation. Though with a critical intention, Marcuse reproduced the belief in a crisis-free capitalism, which could secure mass loyalty through constant technical progress. Following his argument in Marx and Keynes, Mattick rejected this assumption and expressed doubts about the revolutionary potential of marginalized groups: 'The sporadic rebellions of despair by small minorities are easily handled by the authorities representing the smug majority, which includes the mass of the proletariat' (Mattick, 1972: §XII, para 14). Only the proletariat's change of heart in the wake of renewed crises offered a faint hope: 'If there can be no working class revolution, there can be no revolution at all' (Mattick, 1972: §XII, para 25).

Nevertheless, Mattick took One-Dimensional Man to be 'one of the most important and most beautiful books written in recent times' (Mattick, quoted in Roth, 2015: 275), while Marcuse considered Mattick's objections as 'the only solid and real criticism' of his book. In letters to Mattick, however, he essentially reaffirmed his position. Even if the post-war conditions were only 'transitory' ('but how long is transitory?! A la fin on y meurt …'), it seemed that 'a (for the system) tolerable balance' between the state and private economy would also be possible for the long-term. And since only 'plain misery' drives people to revolution, 'the end of the system' will not be ushered in by the industrialized countries, but rather by 'the life and death struggle with the backward neo-colonial countries, whose people are today really the heirs of the proletariat – the only ones who have nothing to lose but their chains'.14

Against the fetishization of the old working class, Mattick also emphasized the changed character of the proletariat: 'The industrial proletariat of a hundred years ago has meanwhile swollen to an amorphous mass of wage-receiving occupations and professions, all of which are dependent on the vicissitudes of market events' (Mattick, 1972: §XII, para 19). This social condition, not industrial employment, essentially defined the proletariat, which had grown immensely since the time of Marx. More clearly than in earlier council communist writings, Mattick called for the 'abolition of the proletariat' and not its victory, and also distanced himself from the old GIK conception of socialism (Mattick, 1972: §XII, para 30). As early as 1938 Korsch had already confessed to him that he thought 'worse and worse about the "Dutch" socialization program', in which he recognized an abstract idealization of the capitalist law of value; the calculation of the consumption quota due to the individual would 'soon lose all meaning without exchange and wage labour!' (Korsch, 2001: 651, 657). In his introduction to a reprint of Fundamental Principles, Mattick (1970) now saw a 'weakness' of the GIK model in that the calculation of labour time should also be applied to distribution. The GIK's appeal to Marx holds true 'only insofar as that thought is applied to a phase of socialist development within which the principle of the exchange of equivalents still prevails, a principle which will come to an end in socialism' (Mattick, 1970: para 17). In light of the high development of the productive forces in industrialized countries and the fact that 'more than half of all capitalist production as well as the unproductive activities associated with it (…) only make sense in the irrational economy of capitalist society', communist production enables a surplus in which 'any calculation of their individual shares of average socially necessary labor time would be superfluous' (Mattick, 1970: para 19). In Marx and Keynes, Mattick regarded such calculation as 'ridiculous', and emphasized that the development of socialism was not a matter of 'an always greater equality in "exchange"' (Mattick, 1969b: 331).

While Mattick here belatedly took up Korsch's position, their fundamental understandings of Marx increasingly diverged after 1945. Korsch regarded Marx's critique of political economy as valid, but less and less decisive. This difference had already occurred in the debate over Grossmann's theory of capitalist collapse in the early 1930s, in which Korsch advised against searching 'for a "revolutionary" crisis theory per se, just as in the middle ages one searched for the philosopher's stone' (Korsch, 1933: §I, para 1). Korsch was more interested in contemporary proletarian action than future forecasts of how capital would evolve according to its own laws. From his point of view, what Marx's thought had gained over time in 'scientific character' had been lost in the orientation to practice. He noted this defect already in the 1930s and 1940s: Marx's relationship to the state had remained ambiguous, and the 'umbilical cord between Marxism and Jacobinism was never cut' (Korsch, 1939: §VI, para 1). In 1950, Korsch radicalized this criticism with his 'Ten Theses on Marxism Today' in which he called for a break from the 'Marxism which claims to monopolize revolutionary initiative as well as theoretical and practical direction', and insisted on recognizing other currents like anarchism as equally important. In addition, he urged to let go of Marx's 'overestimation of the state as the decisive instrument of social revolution' as well as his 'mystical identification of the development of the capitalist economy with the social revolution of the working class' (Korsch, 1950: §7). In line with council communism, Korsch maintained the goal of the 'control of the workers over the production of their own lives' just as firmly as he held to the critique of Bolshevism as a mere 'ideology' (Korsch, 1950: §10). But he detected the seeds of this ideology already in Marx himself.

In a late reply, Mattick saw little value in this critique. What Korsch dismissed as 'mystical', he judged as the strength of Marx's theory. Developed during the ascending phase of capitalism, when a proletarian revolution had not yet been possible, Marx had already envisaged the self-abolition of the proletariat. Bolshevism for its part did not suffer from a 'mystical identification' of capitalist development and revolution, but, on the contrary, attempted to skip this development through putschist means. It was not Marx who 'whisks away from the present movement the real emancipation of the working class and puts it back into the indefinite future' (Korsch, 1950: §7). The movement itself had shown no revolutionary intentions, and so contrary to Korsch, it was precisely 'the "pure theory" of social revolution, alienated from practice', to which later radical movements could connect (Mattick, 1973b: 198). For the failure of those movements after 1918, however, Mattick could not point to any 'objective' reasons either. He could only note the 'unwillingness' of the masses for revolution, and draw a 'truly sad record' of the workers' movement in the twentieth century (212).

Conclusion

Starting off as revolutionaries, the council communists soon involuntarily became isolated critics, whose mockery as reclusive-purist 'friars of Marxism' is strikingly reminiscent of the accusations made against the Frankfurt School's 'ivory tower' (cf. Brendel, 2008: 34). Both shared a growing distance to all currents of the established workers' movement; they preferred the lack of practicality to a false practice. In the face of world-wide counterrevolution and the foul peace of the post-war era, both council communists and the Frankfurt School adhered to the basic principles of Marx's critique against its misappropriation as the halo of state-socialist despotism. On the Frankfurt side, this is especially true for Adorno after the Second World War, who noted in 1968 that although 'the system's resilience has been confirmed' in Keynesian state interventions, 'so, indirectly, has the theory of its collapse' (Adorno, 1968a: 123). Furthermore, he regarded the 'harmony' between classes as probably 'not so permanent' as is pretended 'by the assured obsolescence' of Marx's critique: 'In crisis situations, social conflict may be realised as one of classes; whether once again in the forms of the administered world remains to be seen' (Adorno, 1968b: 186). This coincided with Mattick's views. Marcuse's new left approach to anti-imperialist movements in the Third World was by no means representative of the Frankfurt theorists, who were no longer a closed 'school' at this point. Similar to the council communists, Adorno recognized nationalism above all in such movements.

Despite all the similarities before, during and after Fascism, however, both currents reacted differently to the failure of the revolution. The leitmotiv of the council communists was the potential power of the class, while for the Frankfurt School it was more and more the real powerlessness of the individual. But as Mattick's broad agreement with Marcuse's diagnosis of the times shows, this is not an insurmountable contradiction, but rather aims at a better future in the first case, and a depressing present in the second. The council communists kept a close eye on the activity of the proletariat, which increasingly vanished from the horizon of the Frankfurt School: the only contribution in the ZfS on the Spanish Civil War, which might have halted the lemmings' march to fascism and World War, came from Korsch. Meanwhile, the Frankfurt School with its critique of ideology and culture analyzed the reflection of domination in the individual much closer than the council communists, who remained focused on the critique of political economy and class conflicts. Rühle's programme for an anti-authoritarian psychology, very close in intention to the Frankfurt School, met with widespread incomprehension and rejection from his comrades.

On the relation between critique, consciousness, and practice, there existed conflicting views within council communism, which were correspondingly close to or far from those of the Frankfurt School. Pannekoek's distinction between a 'radical' and an 'opportunistic' tendency in the workers' movement meant that the battle of ideas was not an idealistic spectacle beyond the actual class struggle, but essential to its revolutionary unfolding. The organization remained indispensable to him as the vehicle for a critique of ideology. On the other extreme, for example, Brendel displayed an unshakable trust in the class, which on the basis of its 'everyday experience', had a 'clearer concept' of its oppression than all who wanted to instruct it and thereby ignore what the class 'will be forced to do' (Brendel, 1978). Adorno's critique of left-wing 'Hurrah-optimism' was aimed precisely at such a conjunction of workerism and metaphysics of history, which holds that every 'attempt radically to alter this consciousness [of the worker] by withholding assent to it is considered reactionary. Suspicion falls on anyone who combines criticism of capitalism with that of the proletariat'. The fact that Adorno rejected such optimism also by pointing out the 'lack of any spontaneous resistance by the German workers' to National Socialism once again shows the different significance that the latter had for both currents (Adorno, 1951: 113). Council communism moved between 'Hurrah-optimism' and critique of the proletariat. With Mattick's sober post-war writings, it comes very close to critical theory. Subversive endeavours today should draw on both currents in order to at least maintain the level of reflection achieved in the twentieth century.[15]

Notes

1. Mattick (1904–81) came from a working class left-wing family in Berlin; he was politicized during the revolution of 1918/19, trained as a metal worker, and was a member of the KAPD youth. In 1926, he emigrated to the United States, and was active with both the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the autonomous unemployed movement in 1930s Chicago. During this time, he also corresponded with Henryk Grossmann, whose The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System (1929) was formative for him. Mattick was the driving force behind International Council Correspondence, and remained until his death one of the most prominent advocates of council communism. See the biography by Roth (2015) and the biographical interview with Mattick (2013).

2. Korsch (1886–1961) was a jurist and philosopher, successively a member of the SPD, the USPD and the KPD, from which he was excluded in 1926 because of left-wing deviations. He wrote Marxism and Philosophy in 1923 and is considered the spiritual father of the 'Marxistische Arbeitswoche' gathering in the same year, in which Georg Lukács, Felix Weil, Karl August Wittfogel, and Friedrich Pollock participated, all of whom belong to the immediate prehistory of the Institute for Social Research. In 1933, he emigrated from Germany, and lived in the United States from 1936 onwards, where he collaborated closely with Mattick. Korsch first became associated with council communism in the early 1930s, often advocating 'unorthodox' positions in this framework.

3. Published from 1934 to 1943, the magazine was later renamed Living Marxism and New Essays.

4. Rühle (1874–1943) was a publicist and educator for the SPD in the Reichstag from 1912 to 1918; he came to the KAPD via the Spartacist League and KPD, and in 1921 split to the AAUE. Influenced by his wife, Alice Rühle-Gerstel, Rühle became interested in Alfred Adler's individual psychology in the second half of the 1920s; he wrote numerous publications on psychology and pedagogy. In 1932, he emigrated to Prague, and in 1935 to Mexico, where the Rühles became friends with the Trotskys. He was a member of the Dewey Commission, which cleared Trotsky of the accusations raised against him in the Moscow show trials.

5. Pannekoek (1873–1960) was a renowned astronomer, going from the Dutch SDAP via the left-wing split SPD to the KPN and finally to the KAPN. As a teacher at the Berlin Party School of the SPD (from 1906), he was an important link between Germany and Holland. He was only marginally involved with the GIK. Pannekoek was perhaps the best-known representative of council communism, having written Workers'

Councils (1947), a standard work of the tendency. On Pannekoek, see Brendel (2001).

6. Gorter (1864–1927) was a well-known poet, and like Pannekoek moved from social democracy to council communism. He participated in the Spartacus uprising in January 1919 and later in battles in the Ruhr.

7. There, during the Great Depression, the council communists also continued to develop activities in the independent movement of the unemployed, until they were booted from traditional left-wing organizations. The New Deal's social legislation also defused the situation somewhat. In 1936, Mattick wrote a detailed study for the IfS, but never published it (Mattick, 1969a; see also Roth, 2015: 166 et sq.).

8. Canne Meijer (1890–1962) was initially a metal worker, and later a teacher; he was active in the KAPN starting in 1921, and later a driving force in the GIK.

9. Pannekoek also showed in Lenin as Philosopher (1938) that the latter did not move beyond eighteenth-century bourgeois materialism. Korsch tried in vain to place a review of the book in the ZfS.

10. Council communism made a huge practical impact on events through the action of an individual: the Reichstag fire starter, Marinus van der Lubbe, came from their ranks. The reactions in the council communist milieu ranged from glorification to sharp condemnation (see Bourrinet, 2003).

11. Langerhans (1904–76) was a social and political scientist, excluded from the KPD for 'Korschism' in 1926. He received his PhD in 1931, with Horkheimer among his supervisors. He was arrested in 1933 as a member of the Red Fighters, sentenced to jail, then detained in Sachsenhausen concentration camp, and finally pardoned in 1939 in the course of an amnesty on the occasion of Hitler's 50th birthday. Korsch and the Institute worked together to help him enter the United States, where he lived from 1941 to 1956. He was later a professor at various universities in Germany.

12. For the most part, however, Korsch vehemently criticized Behemoth. In his eyes, Neumann's characterization of the Nazi regime as a non-state and a break with the previous republic amounted to an idealization of Weimar (Neumann was a Marxist social democrat). But since Neumann derived this break precisely from the impossibility of a democratic mediation of class antagonism in the crisis since 1929, Korsch's harsh polemic is surprising.

13. Brendel (1915–2007) was a journalist, and joined the GIK in 1934. After the Second World War, he was active in the council communist group Spartacusbond. After their split, he published the journal Daad en Gedachte until shortly before his death. His understanding of class struggle and revolution is exemplified most clearly in Brendel (1971).

14. Marcuse to Mattick, 25 October 1967 and 29 December 1965. The letters are in the Mattick papers in the IISG, Amsterdam. Thanks to Gary Roth for providing me with them.

15. Traces of both council communism and the Frankfurt School can be found today in the journals Endnotes (English), Internationalist Perspective (English/French), and Kosmoprolet (German).

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