Preface to German edition of Psychoanalysis and Revolution

On two armchairs and the couch, parents and children sit
sit next to and opposite each other. [...]
Erect and smiling, they look past each other,
into the four corners of the room.
It will never be possible to prove
that millions of such family photos, superimposed,
could have anything to do with the outbreak of war.
Christa Wolf, Childhood Patterns (236f)

When I opened Freud's collected works for the first time and looked into the lectures on the introduction to psychoanalysis, I was almost speechless. Neither had I heard anything as indiscreet in my - then relatively short - academic career, nor could I imagine that these lectures had actually been given in 1916/17. The topics were almost monstrous: childlike perversion and sexual lust, incestuous desire, neuroses as a result of repressed and frowned-upon sexual desires - such lectures parallel to the First World War? The audience must have left the lecture hall outraged... Well, certainly not all of them. For some must have felt the same as I did: Freud's words had a magnetic effect, psychoanalysis has always fascinated. Freud brought the irrational, the impulsive, the unruly back into the essence of man. Topics that university psychology still shuts itself off to this day. That was Freud's radicalism, that is the radicalism of psychoanalysis to this day. In it, the unfinished, contradictory, fragmented, repressed in the human being returns. Freut taught: repressed desires and repressed fantasies do not disappear from the subject, rather they make it rigid and immobile. The unprocessed guilt of a war, the repressed sadism and the collectively repressed shame have left their rigid traces on significant parts of German generations. In the novel quoted at the beginning, Christa Wolf attempts to investigate her own responsibility and to break open the multi-layered and buried traces of memory.

When Parker and Pavón-Cuéllar write a manifesto on psychoanalysis and revolution, they inevitably reflect on the relationship between self-liberation and social liberation. But what is the relation of inner and outer liberation? Many of us have had the experience ourselves that left liberation movements are no more liberated than others. That the very deep structure of the psyche is strangely resistant to progressive insights. That feminist men stalk, harass, rape, that left solidarity towards the homeless and the poor remains limited, that progressive social movements are always surprisingly white. This often happens against better knowledge, against reason, and the mechanisms that reproduce and maintain domination again and again, even in liberation movements, remain unknown and unrecognised. Uncovering them is or would be a lot of work, work against inner and outer resistance. The task of progressive movements would be to learn to endure the fact that morality and need regularly diverge. In this sense, psychoanalysis is a tool for liberation: it can be revolutionary when it also becomes an instrument to penetrate ourselves, when we accept its offer to deal with our (even frowned upon) needs, with our own inner bottomlessness. These are, as the object relations theorists around Melanie Klein later called them, the two great primeval instincts of man: Hunger and Love (Klein & Riviere, 1983 [1937]). This book can be understood as an invitation to do so.

It was above all the Frankfurt School that placed this tension in relation to the constitution of society. On the one hand, as Freud (1930) already noted, civilisation

necessarily goes hand in hand with the requirement to control one's inner nature. Every form of society requires the renunciation of drives. The Critical Theory of Society related this insight to the tension between classes: the tension 'between needs and the means available for their satisfaction' is 'intensified under capitalist conditions by that between the higher degree of satisfaction of needs of the ruling class and the lower of the dominated.' (Fromm, 1936: 94) Revolution thus strives for a social production that is arranged to meet as many needs of its members as possible. Or, to put it another way: the necessary renunciation is equally distributed on all shoulders. A reasonable society does not demand more drive suppression from its members than is necessary for its reproduction. In many respects, the revolution was and is regarded as a promise of happiness, as a path towards a society in which 'all fountains of cooperative wealth flow more fully' (MEW 19: 21). To each according to his abilities, then, to each according to his needs. But Marx also speaks of the material basis of the realm of freedom: the realm of necessity (MEW 25: 828).

Parker and Pavón-Cuéllar make a contribution to dealing with the tension between freedom and necessity - currently and in the future. Against this background, the existing state of affairs can be questioned in terms of the points at which current society requires renunciation where it is not necessary and produces death where it need not be. Late capitalism has hardly contributed to the improvement of life despite technical progress. Concessions were granted to the western working class. In parallel, however, developments in the global South continue to resemble those of the Western working class at the beginning of the last century - up to and including phenomena of modern slavery. And yet the revolution seems far away. In the studies on authority and the family (Horkheimer, 1987 [1936]), the Frankfurters brought the institution of the family and the authority of the father to the fore: here lay the key to understanding the path from external demands to harshness and self-control to internalised values. The more authoritarian the society, the more rigid the superego and the individuals who live in it. The family is the central mediating instance. However, conclusions can also be drawn in the other direction: authoritarian subjects remain an expression of an authoritarian society. Subordination has not diminished, but shifted. It is no longer the father who embodies authority, but the capitalist promise of happiness through performance (Decker, 2015). Under the dictates of global late capitalism, not only labour power but everything becomes a commodity: our leisure, our sexuality, our relationships. Invocations to self-control, adaptation and submission make the living and uncontrollable in the subject a constant inner (and outer) threat. Thus, overthrow remains conceivable only as collapse, revolution as destruction. It becomes the expression of an inner world of non-permitted affects in an outer world characterised by conformity and submission. Psychoanalysis is a tool to find access to the repressed, to understand the violence of the super-ego and to mitigate it if possible. It is thus on the side of individual liberation. But it is also a way to better understand the other and the world. The reading takes up both aspects.

Psychoanalysis and revolution are taken up by the authors, as they both understand the present from its historicity. Marxism helps us to penetrate the historicity of what exists, to understand: it cannot remain as it is. And even in psychoanalysis we cannot escape our fate. For some, this means disaster, and to break free from this disaster, to live a self-determined life, psychoanalysis can contribute to this. But revolution is also inescapable, for Marx it was even historical law. It was the necessary result of historical development. In this sense, both seem to have fallen out of time, although there is no doubt that their necessity continues. And what seems anachronistic is sometimes the only thing that makes sense, as

the writer and communist Roland M. Schernikau already knew: 'How anachronistic a central committee seems against the World Bank, but how uniquely sensible'. (Schernikau, 2009 [1990])

A book about psychoanalysis and revolution not only appears as a pleasant anachronism, its essence remains depressingly topical.

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