

## Call for Papers

**'... and if you are not willing, then I'll use force!' Utopia and Coercion in Communism.**

*Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung 2012*

**Deadline: extended until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010!**

'The new human being' will learn 'to move rivers and mountains and to build people's palaces on the summit of Mont Blanc or at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean'. This is what Trotsky thought in 1923, five years after the Russian October Revolution. With this – according to Karl Schlögel – 'the entire fantasy world of the nineteenth century: technical fantasies, fantasies of justice, urban and anti-urban visions, the fetishism of machines and Luddism, dreams of rationalism and fantasies of bureaucratic regulation' would virtually explode. After the European excess of violence of the First World War, the communist utopia – which stretched back to antiquity – appeared to have moved within immediate grasp. The October Revolution in Russia was for many radical Socialists a prelude for the coming world revolution, for the systematic self-liberation of workers from exploitation and subjugation. Everything appeared achievable – if not today, then tomorrow. The Soviet Union of the first decade, as well as the communist movement worldwide, combined a sheer limitless belief in science and technology with a totalitarian desire to act. According to Lenin's dictum 'communism is Soviet power plus electrification' the backward, rural Russia should be catapulted in the shortest period, and if necessary by force, into industrial modernity. Correspondingly diverse was the process of creating the 'new human being' (e.g. constructor of socialism, conqueror of space, completer of creation) with whom this goal was to be realised: conditioning, psychophysics, eugenics, anthropological technology and the like. These were seemingly modern means of 'social engineering' which in the process combined with atavistic destructive reflexes. In the 'delusional' utopian aim of a cleansing and homogenising society according to political, social and racist criterion there was, according to Gerd Koenen, the 'singularity' of Stalinism and National Socialism, which in their parallelism – not identity! – had raised the human history from all other previously known regimes and forms of society.

Regardless of this, communism's promise of salvation for decades cast a spell over many people, who were not infrequently prepared to sacrifice life and love for the communist cause. In the face of worldwide poverty and screaming class differences was the dream of a just and humane world, free of exploitation: on the one hand, this was the motivation for an often highly self-denying political engagement; on the other, the communist utopia legitimised dictatorships of the most different types, mass terror and criminal acts.

The contribution to the *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* (2012) should, on the one hand, concern themselves with the concrete visions of the future which changed over the decades and from country to country and continent to continent, which were formulated by communist parties, their leaders and leading thinkers. Which immediate

and which longer-term objectives were conceptualised over the decades for workers and peasants, on the one hand, and for intellectuals on the other? In 1961 the Soviet Communist Party still proclaimed that communism would be established within twenty years. The Soviet Union would achieve the highest production in industry and agriculture; the following principle would pertain: from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. After that work would only be the fulfilment of life and happiness: ‘the dream of become a hundred years of age without aging will be realised’. Yet, in fact, a decade after 1981 the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

On the other hand, contributions to the *Jahrbuch* should look at the concepts and instruments with which the ‘new human being’ would be formed in order to achieve these objectives. How was the image of society and humanity of communist leaders formed and how did it change? What role and importance was attached to violence and terror in the social revolution? Which scientific and pseudoscientific concepts were used in this ‘social engineering’?

The perspectives outlined here should be multidisciplinary in their approach. The focus should in no way only be on the Soviet Union. What were the blueprints for the future of communist parties worldwide, whether in opposition or in the ‘dominion of real socialism’ after 1945? Besides the analyses of political history, the following approaches are sought: cultural and social historical analyses, literary or architectural history and comparative approaches to dictatorship. The editors are not only calling for offers of contributions from the main areas given in outline here! Please send your offers of contributions for the 2012 issue of the *Jahrbuch* in the form of a short exposé (3,000 characters) by 31 May 2010, in which you sketch the contours of your topic showing its source base and methodology, as well as giving a short author biography to the editors. The *Jahrbuch* publishes essays, biographical sketches, forum articles and also research and archival overviews with a length – as a rule – of between 25,000 and 50,000 characters. It usually publishes in German, but translation from other languages can, in individual cases, be arranged by the editors. A publication fee is, unfortunately, not possible. The *Jahrbuch* 2012 issue will appear in March of that year. Contributions for this edition must – unless otherwise arranged – be received by 31 January 2011. You can find more details about the *Jahrbuch* online at: <http://www.stiftung-aufarbeitung.de/Jahrbuch/>

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