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Marxism in the Works of Erich Fromm and the Crisis of Socialism

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1. Introduction

The crisis of socialism, in the light of the historical events that have provoked its downfall in Eastern Europe, had already been discussed in our Fromm Institute in Bologna, at the end of 1989. Romano Biancoli maintained that Fromm had been proved right in his vision of Marxism and of real socialism. I realized that, if Fromm were still alive he would not be surprised by this turn of events, which he hopes for in all his works on the subject.

Marxism and socialism were of great interest to Fromm and he deals with them in several of his works, on both a general and more detailed level. He examines them in the light of his humanistic view of man, which is the starting point for his analysis of the individual and of society. This is a viewpoint which allows for the critical perception of any trait which proves to be dysfunctional or pathological to the well-being of an individual or of the group. In fact, Fromm is part of that western humanistic tradition which has its roots in Judaic, Greek and Roman thought and which continues, centuries later, in the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and in positivism. His position as humanist, psychoanalyst and sociologist put him in a privileged position to carry out his research from both a human and socio-psychological point of view - Fromm is convinced that the only psychology possible is social psychology, given that the psy-

che is the product of the collective life history of humankind. This constitutes a scientifically valid approach within the tradition of humanistic thought insofar as, by using modern and efficient scientific tools (psychoanalysis and the social sciences) a closer and deeper investigation of the needs and motivations of human beings is possible.

The starting point for Fromm's research is precisely this, the search for the real and deep motives behind human action. That is to say, individuals with their human needs which, as such, must be appropriately satisfied. The cost of not satisfying these needs is malaise, sickness, estrangement from one's self and from other human beings, with a consequent loss of identity. The message that permeates all Fromm's works is profound: the flexibility of human beings has its limits. Consequently individuals can adapt to almost anything but beyond certain limits they suffer and become sick. The more widespread and collective the pathology, the greater the danger that it will be repressed. This is the pathology of normality, „a foliè a millions”.

If the background to Fromm's research is humanism, an interest in people, then the risk that human beings can become alienated, not recognizing or losing their humanity and suffering, forms the leitmotiv and the main concern of all his works. In fact, in Fromm's research in the concept of alienation, so important in Marx's theory, is an interpretative and cognitive in-



strument of socio-individual reality.

In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx states: „A direct consequence of the alienation of man from the product of his labour, from his life activity and from his species-life, is that *man* is alienated from other *men*. When man confronts himself he also confronts other men. What is true of man's relationship to his work, to the product of his work and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men, to their labour and to the objects of their labour. In general, the statement that man is alienated from his species-life means that each man is alienated from others, and that each of the others is likewise alienated from human life. Human alienation, and above all, the relation of man to himself, is first realized and expressed in the relationship between each man and the other man. Thus in the relationship of alienated labour every man regards other men according to the standards and relationships in which he finds himself placed as a worker.” (K. Marx, 1963, p. 129.)

In *The Sane Society* Fromm maintains that „the history of the world is nothing but the the creation of man” and, at the same time, „the history of man's alienation from himself, from his own human powers” (E. Fromm, 1955a, p. 253). All previous historical development has been characterized by human beings' transference of their powers to external forces in such a way that their life is governed by circumstances. But people must become the subject of history, become more important to themselves. „The analysis of society and of the historical process must begin with man, not with an abstraction, but with the real, concrete man, in his physiological and psychological qualities.” (Ibid. p. 254).

2. Fromm's Interest in Marx

Right from his adolescence Fromm was interested in individual and social problems, looking for answers and finding them, as he himself says in *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (E. Fromm, 1962a, pp. 9f.). He was particularly interested in the critical study of the theories of Marx and Freud, who he believed had both contributed

enormously to scientific knowledge by revolutionizing humankind's way of thinking. However, again in *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (ibid. p. 12), Fromm considers Marx to be „a figure of world historical significance with whom Freud cannot even be compared in this respect”. Although the thought of these two authors provides the theoretical framework for Fromm's research, he does not accept all their ideas. On the contrary, he feels the need to revise their theories by trying to identify, on the one hand their inevitable human and historical limits and on the other, all that could be considered scientific in their work. He also feels it necessary to arrive at a critical synthesis of the two systems. This was possible thanks to Fromm's wide clinical experience as a psychoanalyst which gave him access to the hidden forces and mechanisms which determine human action. Thus Fromm proposes to build a bridge between the two thinkers, to contribute to so-called Freud-Marxism, to the integration, as far as possible, of the two theories and their reciprocal theoretical and critical contributions. He uses Freud to criticize Marx and Marx to criticize Freud. The originality of Fromm's thought lies in his having successfully worked out this synthesis, filling a theoretical vacuum which was felt by many who saw that Marx's thought was lacking in an explicit theorization of the individual and psychological needs of human beings. Fromm, on the other hand, was able to interpret and integrate these two human traits, the individual and the social.

The influence that Freud had on Fromm is beyond the scope of this paper so I shall go on to Fromm's interest in Marxism. This interest can be explained and justified by the fundamental contribution that Marx's thought has made to scientific knowledge. We can see that underlying Fromm's humanistic attitude is the deep conviction that our humanity is to be found in the unconscious, and that this unconscious is simply the sum of the various traits of human beings, both positive and negative; our potential, what humankind could be, given certain existential conditions. The idea of humankind that Marx expresses in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* is not dissimilar. He maintains that:



„Individual human life and species-life are not *different things* even though the mode of existence of individual life is necessarily either a more *specific* or a more *general* mode of species-life, or that of species-life a more *specific* or more *general* mode of individual life. In his species-consciousness man confirms his real social life, and reproduces his real existence in thought; while conversely, species-being confirms itself in species-consciousness, and exists for itself in its universality as a thinking being. Though man is a unique individual - and it is just his particularity which makes him an individual, a really individual communal being - he is equally the whole, the ideal whole, the subjective existence of society as thought and experienced. He exists, in reality, as the representation and the real mind of social existence, and as the sum of human manifestation of life” (K. Marx, 1963, pp. 130f.).

Fromm summarizes Marx’s contribution in *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* when he says that:

„Unless a person is able to transcend his society and see how it furthers or hinders the development of human potentialities, he cannot be fully in touch with his own humanity. Socially conditioned taboos and restrictions must appear as ‘natural’ to him, and human nature must appear in a distorted form, as long as he does not recognize the distortion of human nature by the society he happens to live in. If uncovering the unconscious means arriving at the experience of one’s own humanity, then, indeed, it cannot stop with the individual but must proceed to the uncovering of the social unconscious. This implies the understanding of social dynamics and the critical appraisal of one’s own society from the standpoint of universal human values. The very insight into society which Marx has given us is a condition for becoming aware of the social unconscious and hence for the full awakening (‘derepression’) of an individual” (E. Fromm, 1962a, pp.131f.).

3. Some Criticisms Fromm Makes of Marxism

Even though Fromm accepts many of Marx’s teachings and considers him to be a great humanist, one of the pillars of the modern age, there are two main reasons why he does not believe in all of Marx’s theories. Firstly, Fromm maintains that human beings can only be products of their own time and that nobody, no matter how ingenious or revolutionary, can overcome the limits that history inevitably places on thought. This means that some of the answers that Marx believed he had given to human problems, however feasible and original they might have seemed at the time, have since proved to be contingent and not true at all. In short, and this too was inevitable, that typical characteristic of scientific theory, which is the capacity to formulate predictions, was missing for some developments. As a result, several phenomena have evolved differently from how Marx had foreseen them. Well-known examples are the fact that the socialist revolution did not take place in the industrialized countries and that the middle classes did not become more proletarian as Marx had predicted they would. So, in some of his theories, Marx was unable to free himself from the ideas which prevailed at the time, and I believe that this is the biggest weakness in his theory. An example of these historical limits, which Marx had in common with other thinkers of his time such as Comte and Spencer, was the strictly positivistic idea that social research was substantially the same as research in the natural sciences. They believed that the problems of society could be studied using methods which gave exact results and at the time, this belief was revolutionary. In fact, in many respects it did give good results, for instance it led, for the first time in social sciences, to the use of an analytical method devoid of metaphysical implications. However, it also led social thinkers of the nineteenth century into the mistaken belief that it was possible to discover the laws intrinsic to social phenomena, the laws which govern evolution. They believed that it was possible to have a science based on „a single principle”, as Comte said, as had happened, for example, in physics with the discovery of the law of gravity. Marx identified this general law



of evolution with the class struggle. He was convinced that the proletariat would become aware of its class interests and thus take up the struggle, win power and, through the simplistic idea of its own dictatorship, bring about the social changes that would lead to a communist utopia. In *Communist Manifesto* (K. Marx, 1954, p. 13) Marx said that „The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”. So in some respects Marxism has proved to be a philosophical conception of history rather than a scientific theory of social evolution, a guiding force which led to those experiments in socialist society which have recently collapsed.

This weakness does not escape Fromm who, reflecting on Marx and Engels’s idea of the state, affirms in *The Sane Society* (E. Fromm, 1955a, p. 259) that contrary to their theory, they „were in many ways caught in the traditional concept of the dominance of the political over socio-economic spheres. They could not free themselves from the traditional view of the importance of the state and political power, from the idea of the primary significance of mere political change, an idea which had been the guiding principle of the great middle-class revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.”

Fromm’s other big objection to Marx was that he underestimated humankind’s passion drives, atavistic, irrational and progressive. In *The Sane Society* (E. Fromm, 1955a, pp. 264f.) Fromm talks about the „grotesque misjudgments” of Marx’s thought. For example, the belief that a change in the relations of production would automatically lead to an improvement in human relations and greater solidarity between people. But he did not consider that a new and better society cannot be created by people who are products of the old social character and as such, have no new moral direction. Without this, any political or economic changes have no effect. Marx’s belief that it was possible to bring about socialism immediately has resulted in theoretical and political misunderstandings of his thought and has led, according to Fromm, to the destruction of socialism which started with Lenin. Another mistaken belief, which came from Marx’s over-simplistic and over-optimistic

view of human beings, was that by merely socializing the means of production, capitalist society would be transformed into a society based on solidarity and cooperation. He also believed that that by merely emancipating humankind from exploitation, people would be free and willing to cooperate freely. As I said before, this faith of Marx’s was due to the fact that he had not considered the importance of an individual’s irrational and destructive forces and passions which, of course, do not disappear simply with a change in economic conditions. Marx was also deceived by his idealistic view of the working class, a view which was based solely on theory and not on any direct observation of human reality. This is why, for example, he believed that simply by winning political power, the proletariat, subjected as it was to exploitation, could transform its role from subordinate class to leader. In the same way, he was unable to predict the present situation in which the majority of workers believe in the principles of capitalism and defend it, benefiting from its material prosperity with the consequent alienation of well-being, which, Fromm says, is as dehumanizing as that of poverty.

4. The Contribution that Psychoanalysis Can Make to Marxism According to Fromm

Fromm believes that psychoanalysis can make an essential contribution to what he sees as the fundamental problem of Marx’s theory, one that Marx himself was unable to solve satisfactorily: the problem of human nature. In *The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx’s Theory* Fromm maintains that „Marx - especially after 1844 - did not want to use a metaphysical, unhistorical concept like the ‘essence’ of man, a concept which had been used for thousands of years by many rulers in order to prove that their rules and laws corresponded to what each declared to be the unchangeable ‘nature of man’. On the other hand, Marx opposed to a relativistic view that man is born a blank piece of paper on which every society writes its text. If this were true, how could man ever rebel against the forms of existence into which a given society forces its members?” How could Marx use (in



Capital) the concept of the ‘crippled man’ if he did not have a concept of a ‘model of human nature’ which *could* be crippled? (E. Fromm, 1965c, pp. 219f.)

If, by „human nature”, we mean those fundamental bio-physical characteristics which are common to all people whatever their original cultural conditioning, and which distinguish our species from all the others, then we are talking about something very stable. By changes we mean neuro-physiological changes and palaeontology has shown that in nature these come about very slowly and gradually - our brain is basically the same as that of our ancestors forty thousand years ago.

In chapter three of *Man For Himself* (E. Fromm, 1947a) Fromm gives his own answer to this problem by identifying human nature with the existential contradictions that each individual has to live with: the fact that we have no control over when and where we are born and when and where we die; the fact that we are a part of nature but at the same time we transcend it; the fact that our instincts are weak but we have self-consciousness. This means that in order to find unity we are forced to try the only possible alternative: either regress to our natural and primitive animal state „without love and without reason”, without those characteristics which differentiate human beings and make them superior to other living things; or use our human resources or develop our human faculties in order to bring about a new unity with other human beings and with nature. Fromm, however, does not believe that humankind has an innate drive towards progress, but rather that man is driven by the need to solve the existential contradiction which hangs over every stage of development. But the answers that the individual can give will only work if free from material needs and from irrational passions, both of which are powerful forces that paralyze individuals and make their actions confused and futile.

Fromm sees this second point as very important for Marx’s theory, insofar as he believes, like Marx, that true freedom for humankind comes from never ending productive effort and that the development of potential should be the aim of life. Only in the group can this evolution

take place, can the unity of the species come about. According to Fromm this was Marx’s real aim; the freedom of individuals from material needs, so that they can freely develop their potential. This is possible insofar as the relationships between humankind and nature, and humankind and society are real and can be modified. In *The German Ideology* Marx says:

„The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way. The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature.” (K. Marx, 1939, pp.6f.)

There are two opposite views on this point and Fromm criticizes them both. Marxists maintain that a radical change in the socio-economic structure automatically leads to a change in people’s mentality, whereas Fromm is convinced that there can be no substantial change if individuals and new leaders are moved by the same motivations as the previous social character. For example, if whoever is in power is governed by their own selfish and irrational needs, their own greed and desire for power, it is unlikely that there will be any change or new social character. The opposite view is that to build a new society, it is necessary to change individual conscience and values. Here Fromm maintains that history disproves this theory by showing that real psychic changes are limited to a few people or groups. He believes that both these positions are too rigid and that any change, be it in the individual or society, can only be brought about by a programme for social change together with the collaboration of individuals. So we can see that Fromm took a middle view, „humanistic alternativism”, so-



called because it is neither deterministic nor does it believe in free will. It is the belief that there is room for human freedom and that individuals can choose between real alternatives, even if these are often culturally and historically defined and, of course, they are not infinite.

5. The Misunderstandings Surrounding Marx's Thought and The Collapse of Socialism

Fromm maintains that, on the whole, Marx has not been studied or read carefully enough and that he has been misunderstood or deliberately misinterpreted, not only by his enemies, but unfortunately by so-called Marxists too. His theories have been adapted, abridged or expanded according to the needs of the moment. They have undergone a process of involution, being reduced to mere ideology, sterile doctrine. In short, his theories have been laid on the Procrustean bed of alleged real socialism which Fromm already saw as having failed many years ago. Fromm quotes many passages from Marx, especially from his early works, in order to emphasize what he sees as Marx's true interests and theories, and to disprove the idea held by many Marxists that there is an epistemological discontinuity in his works. Fromm felt the need to re-discover „genuine” Marxism, to go beyond the distortions made by so many who called themselves „orthodox” Marxists, starting with Lenin, and who instead contributed to altering the spirit in which the theory was written. He wanted to restore Marxism to its original purity and to its original vocation as universal humanism. Socialism, as we know, was not Marx's final goal. It was only a transitory phase on the road to a society in which individuals are free from bonds and exploitation, and are thus able to develop freely. In *Let Man Prevail* Fromm maintains that „they define their system as socialistic because they have nationalized the whole economy, while in reality their system is the complete negation of all that socialism stands for - the affirmation of individuality and the full development of man. In order to win the support of the masses who had to make unendurable sacrifices for the sake of the fast accumulation of

capital, they used socialistic, combined with nationalistic, ideologies and this gains them the grudging cooperation of the governed.” (E. Fromm, 1960b, p. 72.)

Socialism should have been an answer to capitalism, to that pseudo-“collective wealth”, and Marx, right from the first sentence of *Capital*, ironically defines the wealth of those societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production as an immense accumulation of goods. But socialism has been interpreted as a movement whose aim was not to set humankind free from its material needs, but was solely to improve its economic conditions. Thus Marx's original humanistic intentions have been lost or distorted. But, Fromm says in *Socialist Humanism*: „Marx held that free and independent man could exist only in a social and economic system that, by its rationality and abundance, brought to an end the epoch of ‘pre-history’ and opened the epoch of ‘human history’, which would make the full development of society, and vice versa. Hence he devoted the greater part of his life to the study of capitalist economics and the organization of the working class in the hopes of instituting a socialist society that would be the basis for the development of a new Humanism.” (E. Fromm, 1965b, p. VIII.)

This is because he was convinced that free human beings would be the result of a socio-economic order whose rational workings would put an end to the prehistoric era of humankind and signal the beginning of „human history” where a new individual, no longer dependent on material needs, could develop her- or himself and society. I think it is difficult to deny that Marx's interest in economics, which dominates his later works, had the sole aim of analyzing and revealing the mechanisms by which human beings exploit one another.

But in socialist societies the emphasis has been placed only on economic objectives, exactly the same as in capitalist societies. The obvious result of this is that capitalism, with its logic of maximization of profits and, as a consequence, of consumption, prevails - at least for now, and, as I said before, it has never enjoyed so much consensus from the working class as at present. In recent times, people in the most industrialized capitalist countries have had access



to widespread material well-being as never before. This level of consumption, this „earthly paradise regained” for which human beings are endangering their identity, becoming alienated from each other and nature, became the model for those countries which practised real socialism. I think that this is probably due to the fact that, because of phylogenetic selection caused by the lack of natural resources, human beings have a reaction to an atavistic poverty. Instead of optimizing the satisfaction of their needs, as Fromm says, they try to neurotically maximize this satisfaction in the mistaken belief that they can thus free themselves. But, Fromm observes, it is also due to the fact that capitalism, in spite of its defects, has been able to guarantee the satisfaction of certain basic needs inherent in human nature, if often only on a formal level. Needs such as political freedom, freedom of expression and the defence of human dignity. In *Escape From Freedom* Fromm states:

„It also seems that this general tendency to grow - which is the psychological equivalent of the identical biological tendency - results in such specific tendencies as the desire for freedom and the hatred against oppression, since freedom is the fundamental condition for any growth... The only way in our opinion to account for this striving for justice and truth is by the analysis of the whole history of man, socially and individually. We find then that for everybody who is powerless, justice and truth are the most important weapons in the fight for his freedom and growth... Man's inalienable rights of freedom and happiness are founded in inherent human qualities: his striving to live, to expand and to express the potentialities that have developed in him in the process of historical evolution”. (E. Fromm, 1941a, pp. 288f.)

Fromm said some years ago that real socialism had failed, but his reasons for saying it are still true today and are, in fact, the very reasons that have led to its recent downfall. The regimes of Eastern Europe have collapsed because they did not establish a humanistic socialism which considered individual needs too. Only under this

form of socialism can humankind feel at ease, in a society which offers optimum conditions for self-realization. Political systems which are not concerned with allowing the satisfaction of those insuppressible needs which are part of human nature could not and did not succeed in this aim. This meant that utopia seemed further and further away. Thus an enormous gap was created between civilian society which wanted the satisfaction of those needs, and the power of the state and the bureaucracy which hoped to survive, not recognizing them and using various forms of repression, including physical.

6. Social Character and Social Unconscious: Mechanisms of Social Cohesion and Social Change

In *Capital* Marx maintains that the means of production of material life dominates the development of social, political and intellectual life, but he does not explain how. Fromm fills in the gaps by identifying the link between economic structure and ideological superstructure in two mechanisms: social character and social unconscious. By the first, he means a series of attitudes, values and forms of behaviour which are shared by the majority of people who belong to the same culture. Individuals direct their energies and passions towards goals which are desirable both to themselves and to society, so that there is no inconsistency between their desires and expectations on the one hand, and social morality on the other. A person's social character and the social structure she or he belongs to are interdependent and they interact dialectically in a continuous evolution. Thus any change which takes place in one will also modify the other.

According to Fromm in *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* „the theory that ideas are determined by the forms of economic and social life does not imply that they have no validity of their own, or that they are mere ‘reflexes’ of economic needs” (E. Fromm, 1962a, p. 86). On the contrary, they influence the social character and consequently the socio-economic structure too. So here we have a concept of character which is dynamic, relative and historically determined, and which takes into account the pole of the



dialectic that Marxism has always ignored: human nature with its basic needs. Here we are talking about human nature as a decisive factor in social processes, human nature which can only be understood if we take into account the interaction between humankind's psycho-physiological characteristics and society. This implies that if social conditions change so much that they conflict with the basic needs of human nature instead of being a stabilizing mechanism, social character becomes an instrument for social change - from cement to dynamite, to use a metaphor of Fromm's taken from the lecture given by Michael Maccoby at the symposium held in Heidelberg last year.

The other link between social structure and ideas is social unconscious. By this we mean those forms of the repression of interior reality common to the majority of the members of a society. The conscience allows only those ideas that are socially acceptable and agreed upon, so that every society tries to keep in an individual's unconscious all those impulses which, Fromm says in *The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory* (E. Fromm, 1965c, pp. 219f.), if they were conscious, would lead to socially „dangerous“ thoughts and actions.

Thus education, language, logic, social taboos, ideologies and any form of rationalization are powerful filters which make sure that basic and, at times vital, human experiences are confined to the unconscious. If these experiences became conscious, they could undermine the social status quo. The fear of isolation from society, which, according to Fromm, is more feared than death itself, can lead individuals to deny experiences which threaten their social and individual identity because they are neither shared nor even perceived by the majority.

But, like social character, this factor too can be revolutionary. While Marxists have always believed that the forces operating behind humankind are only economic, Fromm, being a psychoanalyst, sees this idea as too reductive and believes that it is the forces of social totality, social unconscious, which make the conflict between repression and basic human needs inevitable.

So history has proved Fromm right because he, as a humanistic psychoanalyst, never lost sight of

the „inalterable“ needs of human nature. As he says in *Beyond The Chains of Illusion*:

„If a social order neglects or frustrates the basic human needs beyond a certain threshold, the members of such a society will try to change the social order so as to make it more suitable to their human needs. If this change is not possible, the outcome will probably be that such a society will collapse, because of its lack of vitality, and its destructiveness. Social changes which lead to a greater satisfaction of human needs are easier to make when certain material conditions are given which facilitate such changes. It follows from this consideration that the relation between social change and economic change is not only the one which Marx emphasized, namely, the interest of new classes in changed social and political conditions, but that social changes are at the same time determined by the fundamental human needs which make use, as it were, of favourable circumstances for their realization“. (E. Fromm, 1962a, pp. 81f.)

I think that this is what has happened to the populations of Eastern Europe. Their basic and undeniable human need for freedom, happiness, dignity, individuality, self-realization and dissent from their oppressors, went unrecognized for so long, and I believe that the spirit and the movement of Gorbaciov's perestroika represent a historical opportunity to satisfy these needs. As for those regimes which called themselves socialist and whose political systems were tried out on the backs of a part of humanity, they are now buried under the ruins of the Berlin Wall, but they still haunt the world, discrediting the very word „socialism“ and carrying water to the mill of capitalism.

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Zusammenfassung: Der Marxismus im Werk Erich Fromms und die Krise des Sozialismus

In *Wege aus einer kranken Gesellschaft* (1955) spricht Fromm von „gefährlichen Irrtümern“, im Denken von Marx. Ein großer Irrtum war z.B., dass er glaubte, dass eine Veränderung der Produktionsverhältnisse automatisch eine Verbesserung der zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen und eine größere Solidarität zwischen den Menschen nach sich ziehen würde. Dabei wurde die Tatsache übersehen, dass eine neue und bessere Gesellschaft nicht von Menschen errichtet werden kann, die noch durch den früheren Gesellschafts-Charakter geprägt sind; ohne neue moralische Orientierung bleiben politisch-ökonomische Veränderungen wirkungslos. Dass der reale Sozialismus zum Scheitern verurteilt sei, behauptete Fromm schon vor Jahrzehnten. Die Gründe für diese Behauptung sind die gleichen, die jetzt sein Ende herbeigeführt haben. Die Regime sind zusammengebrochen, weil der sozialistische Humanismus, der auch individuellen Bedürfnissen Rechnung trägt, nicht verwirklicht wurde. Je weniger die Utopie des humanistischen Sozialismus in die Wirklichkeit umgesetzt wurde, desto mehr etablierte sich die staatlich-bürokratische Macht, die sich, um zu überleben, verschiedener Formen von Repression bediente. Die fundamentalen menschlichen Bedürfnisse der Völker Osteuropas haben nach der Perestroika Gorbatschows die historische Chance, wieder einen Weg zu finden, der zu ihrer Befriedigung führt, ohne dass diese Länder zwangsläufig dem Sog des Kapitalismus erliegen müssen.

Riassunto: Il Marxismo nelle opere di Erich Fromm e la Crisi del Socialismo

In *The Sane Society* (1955) Fromm parla di „pericolosi errori“ del pensiero di Marx. Per esempio, un grosso errore è stato l'aver creduto che a un mutamento nei rapporti di produzione ne sarebbe automaticamente conseguito un miglioramento nei rapporti umani e una maggiore solidarietà fra gli uomini. Si trascura il fatto che una nuova e migliore società non può essere costruita da uomini che, depositari del vecchio carattere sociale, non avessero acquisito un nuovo orientamento morale, senza il quale vani sono i cambiamenti politico-economici. Il socialismo reale è fallito, diceva Fromm già alcuni decenni fa. Ma i motivi di questa affermazione sono attuali, sono gli stessi che oggi ne hanno provocato la fine. Quei regimi sono crollati perché non è stato realizzato il socialismo umanistico, che tiene conto anche dei bisogni individuali. Ciò ha fatto sì che l'utopia diventasse sempre più irrealizzabile, che si creasse un profondo abisso tra la società civile e il potere burocratico-statale, che sperava di sopravvivere, facendo uso di variegate forme di repressione, anche fisiche, a tutti note. Cosicché i fondamentali e ineliminabili bisogni umani dei popoli dell' Est europeo, hanno trovato nello spirito e nel movimento della perestroika di Gorbaciov, l'occasione storica per riprendere il cammino che porta alla loro soddisfazione, senza portare acqua al mulino del capitalismo.



Sumario: El marxismo en la obra de Erich Fromm y la crisis del socialismo

En *The Sane Society* (1955) Fromm habla de los „peligrosos errores” en el pensamiento de Marx. Una equivocación importante fue por ejemplo que él creyera que una transformación de las relaciones productivas, llevaría consigo automáticamente una mejoría en las relaciones humanas y una mayor solidaridad entre los Hombres, sin considerar el hecho que una sociedad nueva y mejor no puede ser erigida por Hombres que siguen impregnados por el carácter social antiguo. Sin nuevas orientaciones morales las transformaciones político-económicas no tienen ningún efecto. Fromm afirmó hace décadas atrás que el socialismo real estaría condenado al fracaso. Las razones para esta afirmación son las mismas que ahora han llevado al fin del socialismo real. Los regímenes se han derribado porque el humanismo socialista, que también toma en cuenta las necesidades individuales no fue realizado. Mientras menos fue puesta en práctica la utopía del humanismo socialista, con mayor fuerza fue estableciéndose el poder diversas formas de represión. Las necesidades humana fundamentales de los pueblos de Europa del Este tienen una oportunidad histórica, desde la perestroika de Gorbachov, de encontrar de nuevo un camino que lleve a satisfacerlas, sin que necesariamente estos países deban sucumbir a la vorágine del capitalismo.