CHRISTIAN-MARXIST DIALOGUE:
AN UNEVEN PAST-A REVIVING PRESENT-
A NECESSARY FUTURE

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Dialogue is a conversation between two or more persons of differing views with the primary purpose of each learning, not persuading, convincing, defeating, or the like. We speak of interreligious dialogue when the persons entering the dialogue each specifically identify themselves with a religious tradition. A religion can be briefly described as “an explanation of the meaning of life, and how to live accordingly”—constitutively containing the “four C’s”: Creed (belief-system), Code (ethical-system), Cult (celebratory-system), Community structure (social-system)—which is based ultimately on something which “goes beyond,” which transcends, humanity and the world. An ideology, in the value-neutral sense, is the same as a religion, but is not based ultimately on something transcendental. Thus, dialogue with Marxism as an ideology can be called an interideological dialogue.

Today the two Communist giants, the USSR and China, are in a variety of ways opening themselves up to dialogue and cooperation with many of their erstwhile enemies, including Christianity. But even aside from, and to some extent before, the economic reforms of Deng Xiao Ping and the glasnost policy of Gorbachev, dialogue between Christians and Marxists was reviving. In many ways, however, the Christian dialogue with Marxism is more complicated and difficult than the dialogue with the religions. It is more complicated partly because there are many persons who identify themselves as Marxists, and are even very active and influential members of Communist parties, who do not espouse the atheistic philosophy of Marx, and might even be prominently practicing Christians. This indeed complicates the situation for the “purists” of both the Marxist and the religious camps, but for the rest it presents a very interesting reality, one which offers a great deal of potential for creativity, or destructiveness, depending on one’s perspective. What makes the dialogue more difficult
is the fact that Marxism is essentially very intimately bound up with poli­
tics—and "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Nevertheless, the recent revival of the Christian-Marxist dialogue is
hopeful, and we very much need this hope, for the long-run alternative to
it is the courting of future disaster.


What we today call the Christian-Marxist dialogue began in 1964. Of
course there were roots of the dialogue that went back earlier, but before
that time conditions simply were not favorable to the growth of inter-
ideological dialogue between Christianity and Marxism. Things happened
on both sides in the early 1960s, however, which provided the atmosphere
for a fruitful encounter wherein persons from both sides sincerely wanted
to learn from each other—in short, an atmosphere conducive to dialogue:
de-Stalinization and the development of "peaceful coexistence" on the one
hand, and the pontificate of Pope John XXIII (1958-63) and Vatican II
(1962-65) on the other. Pope John XXIII’s two encyclicals *Mater et mag-
istra* and *Pacem in terris*, both of which breathed a much more irenic
attitude toward socialism and also those who espoused differing ideolo-
gies, as long as they were "persons of good will," contributed significantly
to the new, positive atmosphere. So too did his receiving of Soviet leaders,
and other sympathetic actions and statements. Vatican II of course had an
immense positive impact on the attitude first of all Catholics, but indirectly
also on many more Christians, and even non-Christians, toward interreli-
gious and interideological dialogue. Three Vatican Secretariats were set up
to foster dialogue: with fellow Christians, with members of other religions,
and with non-believers.

It was this latter Secretariat for Non-believers that issued an extraordi-
nary document on dialogue with non-believers whose whole purpose was
to encourage Christians to engage in serious dialogue with non-believers.
It is worth recalling some of its most salient points here:

All Christians should do their best to promote dialogue between per-
sons of every class, as a duty of brotherly and sisterly charity suited
to our progressive and adult age. ...The willingness to engage in
dialogue is the measure and the strength of that general renewal which
must be carried out in the Church, which implies a still greater appreci-
cation of liberty....recognizing the truth everywhere, even if the truth
demolishes one so that one is forced to reconsider one’s own position,
in theory and in practice, at least in part.... In dialogue the truth will
prevail by no other means than by the truth itself. Therefore the liberty of the participants must be ensured by law and reverenced in practice.1 As a consequence, in 1964 Christian-Marxist dialogue “broke out” almost simultaneously in a number of European countries: Czechoslovakia, Italy, West Germany, and France.

Joseph Hromadka, a theologian of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, was a pioneer of this dialogue on the Christian side. Already in the early 1930s he initiated a number of discussions on the relationship between Christianity and Marxism. The Czech Communist Party did not respond then; however, a practical cooperation did ensue during the Nazi occupation period. After the Communist take-over of the Czech government in 1948 the oppressive mood of the Communists was too dominant to allow for any dialogue. Still, Hromadka took a largely positive attitude toward the virtues of socialism, as exemplified, for instance, in his 1958 book, *The Gospel for Atheists*, and his 1964 book *The Field Is This World*,2 which also encouraged direct dialogue with Marxists.

In the meanwhile, the Marxist philosopher Milan Machovec of the Charles University of Prague began in 1957 to treat the work of outstanding Christian thinkers in his seminars—despite internal resistance. In the same year he wrote his *The Meaning of Human Life*, but he did not venture to publish it until 1965.3 Actual face-to-face dialogues began in 1964 when Machovec invited prominent foreign Christian theologians to his seminars for dialogue, including Charles West of Princeton, Albert Rasker of Leiden, Heribert Braun of Mainz and Gustave Wetter of Rome; Czech Christians like Hromadka, Jan Lochman, Milan Opocensky and others were also involved. “Machovec is one of the giants of the Christian-Marxist dialogue and perhaps its most seminal thinker. His own intellectual productivity is one of the main reasons for the brightness of the meteoric stage of the dialogue...his most significant [book] is *A Marxist Looks at Jesus*, undoubtedly the best Marxist scholarly study of Jesus written to date.”4 A number of other Marxist scholars also began to get involved in the dialogue, perhaps the most prominent being Vitezslav Gardavsky, who published “one of the most profound Marxist series of essays on Christianity in *Literarny Noviny* (Prague)” during 1966-67.5 The dialogue intensified rapidly both qualitatively and quantitatively as Czech society liberalized.

A high point was reached in 1967 when on April 27-30 an international dialogue was cosponsored by the Section for the Theory of Sociology of Religion of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the Paulus-Gesell-
schaft of West Germany and Austria and was held in Czechoslovakia at Marianske Lazne (Marienbad). Around 170 of the most prominent Christian and Marxist scholars attended; in the lectures there was not only criticism but also appreciation of the dialogue partners, and self-criticism as well. Liberalization continued explosively as Dubcek came to power and the Czechs tried to create "socialism with a human face" in the "Prague Spring" of 1968. During that Spring many Christian-Marxist dialogues took place, with thousands of participants. The first public dialogue was held in Prague on April 29, with twelve panelists participating. Paul Mojzes reported that somewhere between 1200 and 3000 persons attended, and James Will of Evanston, Illinois, who was present, said the dialogue was "very open and spirited." Other such public dialogues continued throughout the "Prague Spring," until August 21, 1968, when the invasion by Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops brought them to an end.

The invasion was a terrible blow to the dialogue not only in Czechoslovakia, but also throughout the world. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Machovec was stripped of all his teaching functions and expelled from the Party, along with his likeminded Marxist colleagues, and that "it became clear that the devastating change would turn the country into the most oppressed Soviet satellite," a number of Czechs, both Christians and Marxists, continued the dialogue—mostly from exile. Within the country silence and oppression reign:

Many Christians and Marxists remember with longing the days when they carried out a mutual engagement in the spirit of constructive criticism.... Such conditions would arise again almost immediately if the heavy hand of Soviet intervention were lifted. For the time being prospects for that are very bleak. It remains the destiny of the protagonists of the dialogue to suffer together.

In Italy too the Christian-Marxist dialogue began in a public way in 1964, this time with the publication of a book *Il dialogo alla prova* with essays by five Christian thinkers and five Marxist thinkers and edited by a Marxist, Lucio Lombardo Radice, and a Christian, Mario Gozzini. Lombardo Radice was a professor of mathematics and a member of the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party and has been described "one of the initiators and most vigorous promoters of the dialogue between Marxism and Christianity." Among his many subsequent writings and lectures for this cause is the 1968 book he authored in conjunction with Milan Machovec and Roger Garaudy, *Marxisti di fronte a Gesù* (Marxists Face Jesus). But the roots of the dialogue go much further back in Italy. To begin
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with, Antonio Labriola, "the father of Italian scientific Marxism who laid the theoretical basis for an original Italian Marxism," had already in a 1897 letter to Sorel attacked "the sterile anti-clericalism of the radical Socialist and insisted strongly that the Catholic world be taken seriously." The great intellectual of Italian Communism, Antonio Gramsci, also pushed the ideal of dialogue with Catholicism during the 1920s and 1930s, though with little success; that began to come only with the cooperation in the anti-Fascism-Nazism efforts during the war. There an extraordinary thing happened.

A group of young Catholic activists became involved in the resistance movement and in 1941 they founded the "Sinarchic Cooperative Party" (Partito Cooperativista Sinarchico). After a year they changed their name to the "Communist Christian Party," and after the fall of the Fascist government on September 8, 1943, they changed it once more to the "Communist Catholic Movement." Under intense pressure from the Vatican they changed their name for a last time to the "Christian Left Party," but even then, under the threat of excommunication by the Vatican—which of course would have made their party politically ineffective—they dissolved the party in December, 1945, and urged their members to join the Communist Party of Italy (PCI).

In the national assembly of the PCI from December 1945 to January 1946, the following article was inserted into the constitution of the party: "All Italian citizens of 18 years of age can be members of the PCI, independently of their race, religious faith, and philosophical convictions, provided that they accept the political program of the party and bind themselves to work for its realization." Hundreds of thousands of practicing Catholics and Protestants have since joined the PCI. For example, the President of the Protestant Church of Italy, Rev. Sergio Aquilante, has been a life-long member, as were his parents before him; Antonio Tato and Giglia Tedesco, husband and wife, were among the members of the above described Communist Catholics who joined the PCI and in 1961 both became members of the Central Committee of the PCI; he also became the personal political secretary of Enrico Berlinguer, the Secretary General of the PCI until his death in 1983, and she a Senator of Italy since 1962, and a Vice-President of the Italian Senate. In Italy, the dialogue continues.

In West Germany and Austria the dialogue was initiated and led by the Paulus-Gesellschaft under the leadership of the Catholic Priest Erich Kellner. The German Marxist Ernst Bloch spoke at the Munich conference of the Paulus-Gesellschaft in the Spring of 1964, and that Fall the Polish
Marxist philosopher and member of the Central Committee of the Polish United Worker’s Party (Communist), Adam Schaff, spoke at another of their conferences in Cologne. There was another conference at Salzburg, Austria in 1965, Herren Chiemsee, West Germany in 1966, Marianske Lazne, Czechoslovakia in 1967. The number of Marxist participants was one apiece at each of the first two conferences, but the Marxist participation steadily increased, reaching its highpoint at the 1967 conference. The Paulus-Gesellschaft also sponsored a youth congress in Bonn in the Fall of 1968, but since that was just after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia Marxist participation dropped off dramatically and afterwards the Paulus-Gesellschaft suspended meetings until 1975. That year they sponsored a conference in Florence, and in 1977 another one in Salzburg, but Marxist involvement was modest.

Politically Marxism has been more or less absorbed and significantly modified by the Social Democratic Party in West Germany; there are also various splinter communist parties, but they are politically ineffectual—much as in the United States. Hence, the dialogue in West Germany has been conducted largely by intellectuals on both sides.

In France, however, the Communist Party is a significant political force—the socialists are even more so, of course, as is visible in the presidency of Francois Mitterand. In 1936 the then Secretary General of the French Communist Party (PCF), Maurice Thorez, made a radio speech in which he said that, “We stretch out our hand to you, Catholic worker, employee, tradesman, peasant; we who are laic stretch out our hand to you because you are our brother and you, like us, are burdened with the same cares.” However, because the PCF followed the Moscow line so closely in the years after World War II, this invitation was viewed with extreme scepticism. With the new conditions of the early 1960s, however, French Marxists, particularly in the person of Roger Garaudy, also joined in the public dialogue. Garaudy had been a Senator and a Vice President of the French National Assembly, Director of the Center for Marxist Study and Research in Paris, member of the Politbureau of the PCF and Professor of Philosophy at the University Institute of Poitiers. He, along with the Christian theologians Johannes Metz and Karl Rahner, spoke at the 1965 Salzburg dialogue sponsored by the Paulus-Gesellschaft, and later that same year his lecture was published in greatly expanded form as a book, De l'anathème au dialogue. Also in 1965 Garaudy was invited to lecture at the Catholic university at Louvain, Belgium and at St. Michael’s College of the University of Toronto on the Christian-Marxist dialogue. For the
next several years he carried on an intense dialogue with a number of Christian theologians on both sides of the Atlantic, including a dialogue with Paul van Buren at Temple University in 1966. However, despite his powerful position within the PCF, because after the August, 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia he was outspokenly critical of the Soviet Union, he was expelled from the PCF. He continued to be active in the dialogue for a number of years thereafter, but of course with much less effectiveness, until in 1975 he ceased identifying himself as an atheist Marxist. Nevertheless, his impact was massive and his contribution substantive, and hence will merit some reflection below.

In many ways Yugoslavia is the country where the most creative and continuous Christian-Marxist dialogue has been carried on. The first “quasi-dialogue” took place on March 28, 1967, in the Student Center of Zagreb between the Catholic theologian Mijo Skvoc and the Marxist philosopher and author of the book *Philosophy and Christianity*, Branko Bosnjak, on the topic of his book. “About 2,500 people attended. Though the two speakers were polite to one another the conversation can be best described as a polemic. Yet the symbolic value of the meeting, attesting to the openness of Yugoslav society, was great.” A number of Christian and Marxist thinkers, however, subsequently attended some of the dialogues sponsored by the Paulus-Gesellschaft and learned there what a dialogue really should be like. Then, just as the Christian-Marxist dialogue closed down everywhere else in the world in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, a most creative dialogue was launched in Yugoslavia and lasted in its public, relatively unfettered, form until 1972.

It should be noted that in the beginning it was the Marxists who initiated the dialogue, which, since they were in the position of power, was quite understandable. However, after 1972, when because of restraints placed on the Marxist participants by their Party the dialogue was forced out of the public into the private sphere—though it also continued to some extent in print—it was the Christians who showed a greater willingness to continue the dialogue. In this case they had less to lose by going counter to Party directives. Also important to keep in mind is the fact that for all practical purposes it is only the Catholic Christians who have engaged in the dialogue. The Orthodox Churches, comprising about 40% of the population, and the tiny Protestant Churches, making up less than 1% of the population, have avoided the dialogue.

Despite the various restrictions, the dialogue continues creatively in Yugoslavia, and also spills over into the wider world, largely through the
efforts of Paul Mojzes and the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*. Mojzes noted that,

the Yugoslav dialogue has an astonishingly broad base among intellectuals.... Though the dialogue is still dependent on the internal political situation it is by no means dead. It is agreed by nearly all participants in the dialogue that there are no lasting theoretical obstacles to it. Only political circumstances and historical encumbrances hinder it. The de-dogmatization of theology and of Marxist theory has largely taken place among thinkers, who, however, are not fully trusted either by the party bureaucracy or ecclesiastical hierarchy.... Only through a long and protracted struggle will forces favorable to the dialogue have a chance to assert themselves and tilt the precarious dialogue in the direction of taking a firm hold as the main means of Christian-Marxist interaction.18

In Hungary after the Communist take-over in 1948 grave oppression of the churches followed for many years, including after the 1956 Soviet military crushing of the political reform movement under Imre Nagy. This hostile spirit continued until the 1980s, when as part of a general liberalization of Hungarian Marxism relations with the churches also began to improve. The leading intellectual Marxist in this liberalization was the philosopher Joseph Lukacs, who unfortunately died suddenly in 1987. His influence, however, along with other causes, had already had their irenic effect, so that in June of 1988 it was stated publicly by a group of Hungarian Marxist intellectuals that now 90% of Hungarian Marxist intellectuals (not to be confused with the apparatchiks) were of the liberal humanist sort—and all available evidence seemed to support the statement. It was this dramatic shift that led to the organizing of the Christian-Marxist dialogue in June, 1988, in Budapest on “Changes in the Evaluation of Religion and the Churches in the Last Decade in Hungary and the U.S.A.” The effect of that dialogue was so positive that a subsequent dialogue was held in late 1989 in Washington on “Christian and Marxist Views on Human Rights: An American-Hungarian-Yugoslav Dialogue.”

The dialogue in the rest of the Eastern European Socialist countries has not been sufficiently extensive to merit detailing here. In Poland, until the rise of Solidarity in the 1980s there was a “carefully managed dialogue in order to facilitate cooperation in recognition of each other’s strength.”19 In the other countries, besides Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia where true
dialogue existed (and still does in Yugoslavia), no dialogue has ever existed, that is, in the USSR, Bulgaria, Rumania and East Germany.

There has also been some dialogue in both Spain and England, but likewise not sufficient to warrant discussion here.

In China there has been no formal dialogue, although recently the tiny Christian population (6 million?), along with Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims, etc. have been enjoying considerable religious freedom. The churches, temples and mosques are in fact jammed with people as they seldom are in Europe. The Director of the Institute of Religion of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Xian Zhitian, noted that the Party and state have adopted a series of policies which include "implementing the policy of freedom of religious belief, resolutely rejecting any suggestion or practice of abolishing religion by administrative or other compulsory means and consistently protecting the right of citizens to religious freedom."²⁰ (Nevertheless, restrictions do continue to exist regionally and locally, depending on the bureaucrats involved.) However, for the first time, in August, 1987, at Igls, Austria, a Chinese Marxist philosopher, Che Ming Zhou, from Nankai University in Tianjin, participated in a Christian-Marxist dialogue, which was organized by Paul Mojzes.

Even before that, however, in 1984 one young Chinese scholar had the chance to take part in a project which was jointly sponsored by a university in Yugoslavia and my home university. The project brought together several students of Marxism and Confucianism to write a book on Marxist and Confucian views of being human. At that time Professor Leonard Swidler was invited to lecture at my university. The topic of his lecture was the Christian-Marxist dialogue on what it means to be human. To my knowledge, Dr. Swidler was the first Western philosopher to bring the subject of Christian-Marxist dialogue to the attention of the Chinese Marxists after the Cultural Revolution.

The reaction to the subject was dramatic. The official authorities at my university insisted that the goal of Marxism is to eliminate religion from society, and therefore no dialogue should be allowed. Fortunately, the officials who were in charge of censorship did not know English and so [X] and I managed to translate the title of Dr. Swidler's lecture into a less dangerous one in Chinese—"Current Issues in Christianity in the West"—while Dr. Swidler nevertheless lectured [quite oblivious to all this behind-the-scenes activity, I might add—Swidler] on the Christian-Marxist dialogue on human nature.
His lecture was very well received and opened up a new avenue of dialogue for the Chinese audience. Since then I have kept my hope alive for a free and open dialogue between Christianity, Confucianism and Marxism.

Once the barrier to dialogue was breached, the inflowing of open conversation seems to have begun. In 1985 a division of the University of Beijing was set up to teach the academic study of religion (already of course in the late 1960s, just before the onslaught of the Cultural Revolution, an Institute of World Religions was set up within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing; it was placed in “suspended animation” during the decade of the Cultural Revolution and then reemerged, along with similar institutes in Nanjing and Shanghai, and lesser ones with a more regional outlook elsewhere throughout the country).

By the Summer of 1988, when I was sent to China on an exchange program by the American Academy of Sciences to lecture on religion, similar divisions for teaching the academic study of religion had been set up in at least four additional universities: the People’s University of Beijing, Nanjing University, Fudan University in Shanghai and Nankai University in Tianjin.

I lectured at all those universities, as well as the institutes of religion in those cities, and universally found an extraordinary interest in the serious study of religion not only by the faculty involved, but even more so by the students. Everywhere I lectured, the room where I lectured, regardless of its size, was always jammed with students and faculty to nearly double its capacity: extra chairs were brought in; students at all around me on the floor of the podium, and stood in every other available space, and out into the hallway through open doors—and they sat or stood “pin-drop” still for three hours (!) while I lectured and answered questions (everything had to be translated into Chinese). In June, 1990, I had similar experiences.

One of my former graduate students in philosophy at Nankai University had been appointed an instructor in religion at the People’s University of Beijing where in 1987 he offered for the first time an introductory course on religion; 100 students took the course. He offered it again in 1988; 300 took it!

In June, 1988, at Hong Kong, several Chinese scholars of Confucianism or Christianity participated in the first international conference on Confucian-Christian dialogue, and in August, 1988, the participation of Chinese Marxists in the Christian-Marxist dialogue, which took place in Granada,
Spain, rose to two, Professor Che Ming Zhou again and Professor Yin Lujun, both of Nankai University.

In Latin America there has indeed been an encounter in the past dozen years between Marxism and Christianity, but not so much in dialogue as in a certain amount of collaboration and the assimilation of Marxist social analysis without its atheistic philosophy by Christian theologians in Liberation Theology. All this took place in the wake of the European dialogue, and indeed, was clearly in part made possible by it—it is not irrelevant to note here that Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff and other prominent Liberation theologians were theologically trained in Europe. Also in Africa the Christian-Marxist encounter has been by way either of mutual opposition or practical collaboration, rather than dialogue. 22

It remains to say something about the involvement of Americans in the Christian-Marxist dialogue. To begin with, the Institut für Friedensforschung of the University of Vienna (encouraged by the Catholic Theological Faculty and led by the theologian Rudolf Weiler) and the International Peace Institute of Vienna (under the leadership of Vladimir Bruskov from Moscow) jointly sponsored a conference in Vienna in 1971. That was followed by conferences almost each year, usually alternating between socialist and non-socialist countries. In 1977 this European dialogue branched out to include Americans for the first time. That year the conference took place at Rosemont College (near Philadelphia). Already since 1975 the leadership on the American side has come from Paul Mojzes, and is supported by “Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe” (CAREE) and the Journal of Ecumenical Studies, with conferences continuing to occur almost annually. The American participation in the international conferences (twelve between 1971 and 1984) has been substantial ever since they joined in 1977.

What is particularly interesting, indeed unique, about this series of dialogues is that Soviet participation has also been heavy, between five and ten persons each time, most often Marxists, but recently also a single representative of the Russian Orthodox Church. Mojzes described their involvement as follows:

The Soviet participants in these conversations are highly placed scholars or ecclesiastical leaders. They tend to explain their party or church position intelligently and straightforwardly. They do not try to dominate the meetings nor do they engage in surreptitious tactical moves. But their presentations rarely take into account the contributions of the partners beyond perhaps a few quotations used in a “proof-text”
manner. They speak and they listen, they defend their positions when under attack, but they are never self-critical and show no independ­ence from the official position [except sometimes in private after a few vodkas—Swidler].

Since September, 1986, Paul Mojzes has organized an additional series of Christian-Marxist dialogues which have been sponsored by the New Ecumenical Research Association, an ecumenical outreach organization of the Unification Church in the U.S.—this despite the fact that in general the Unification Church is strongly anti-Communist. The series is continuing, though in modified fashion.

b. Attitudes toward Dialogue

In the dialogues between Christians and Marxists each participant has most often felt the need to defend his or her participation and describe what they thought they were doing and why. Thus, "dialogue" was the most dis­cussed topic in the dialogue. Next most discussed has been the one partner's reassessment of the other, that is, the Marxist analysis of religion and the Christian analysis of Marxism. Then came joint concern for human beings, followed by such topics as alienation and sin, theism and atheism, Jesus and Marx, history, creativity and freedom, immanence and transcen­dence, evolution and revolution of society, and the search for peace.

Some participants think that dialogue should be only for the sake of practical cooperation, that is, ideological dialogue is to be excluded, whereas others believe both practical and ideological dialogue should take place. Still others, without denigrating the need for practical cooperation, see the ideological dialogue as a constant need of both Christianity and Marxism.

The Czech Marxist Machovec clearly valued ideological dialogue very highly: "The way of truth takes the form of dialogue...truth itself consists in dialogue. It may be that the metaphysics of human existence can be realistically grasped only when it is expressed in terms of dialogue." The Yugoslav Marxist sociologist Esad Cimic similarly finds that it is impos­sible for Marxists, or anyone else, to enjoy a continuous development of their thought if they do not engage in dialogue with those who differ from them, providing thereby the needed correctives and stimuli for a critical reevaluation of their own presuppositions and goals.

The Hungarian head of the Research Group Studying the Theory of Religion at the University of Budapest, Pal Horvath, states that there is "no alternative to the dialogue, either in Hungary or anywhere else in the
world," and not just on practical issues: "It is now obvious that an exchange of views on the basic questions of ideology...is an indispensable element of the dialogue in a broader sense between Christians and Marxists.... Christian Marxology, or Marxist theory of religion can accomplish an in-depth clarification of its own theoretical position in this very climate of metaphysical dialogue." 26

Another Yugoslav Marxist sociologist, Zdenko Roter, believes dialogue to be a creative act which leads to an ever richer growth in a dynamic system by providing continuous interaction, complementarity and fecunda­tion. 27 Andrija Kresic, a Yugoslav Marxist philosopher, argues that dialogue must lead us beyond co-existence—which he finds to be just a forced pause in what is ultimately a position of contra-existence—to what he calls pro-existence: "Pro-existence means finding common ways to transcend basic social contradictions by forming a true human community of persons regardless of their ideological or religious orientation." 28

The Czech theologian Jan Lochman argues that "the spirit of authentic Christianity and of authentic Marxism is the spirit of dialogue." 29 Bishop Joszef Cserhati of Pecs, Hungary believes the purpose of the Christian-Marxist dialogue is to share values, promote the happiness of the people and to respect each other. 30 Archbishop Franje Franic of Split, Yugoslavia sees no biblical or theological barrier to Christians being involved in the dialogue with Marxists; he believes that if both Marxism and Christianity "work more selflessly for the people and live for the other, then there is more hope that some day, which is probably still far off, Marxists and Christians can reach full understanding and agreement." 31

The anonymous Chinese scholar cited above even sees dialogue as a "way of life," indeed:

Like the world in which Marx lived, our world is still a world of conflicts. However, unlike the world in which Marx lived, in our world dialogue as a desirable way of being human has become a powerful vision for the human future. Not only should dialogue be promoted as a fundamental social virtue and as a pluralistic capacity to enjoy differences and diversities, but, more significantly, dialogue itself is a way of life, a dynamic state of social peace in which differences are not eliminated but communicated without violence. Dialogue, in this sense, should become the social practice of all members of our society.

He insightfully notes that, "the real issue is not whether the solutions that Marxism or Christianity offer to the old problems are right or wrong;
rather, the real issue is to realize that we have before us the unfinished task of redefining the problems facing our changing world." He then indicates not a solution but a direction, namely, "free, open dialogue in which the promotion of humanization is not the practice of a single class, bourgeoisie or workers, a single religion, Christianity or Confucianism, a single social system, socialism or capitalism, but the practice of all of us, the Marxist, the Christian and all others."

It is clear, as the Marxist Kresic explicitly pointed out, that there can be no dialogue between dogmatic Marxists and traditionalist Christians, for they will only reinforce each other's prejudice. If there is no minimally "deabsolutized" understanding of truth, there can be no dialogue. Related to this insight is the observation made by the Marxist Roter that, "for politicians, both ecclesiastical and societal, dialogue is treated as an instrument which is to be turned off when those in power perceive that it does not suit their interests." One notorious example on the Christian side was that of the Salesian priest Guido Girardi who for his continued dialogue with Marxists was fired from the Salesian University in Rome and in September, 1977, was expelled from the Salesian Society. A similar fate overtook Roger Garaudy, Milan Machovec, Adam Schaff and scores of other Marxist scholars. Dialogue is obviously perceived by the power brokers as an activity dangerous to them—and correctly so.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a growing number of Christian theologians, churchmen and activists moved to embrace varying elements of a program of social justice and societal reform, not despite their being Christians, but because they were Christians. To this extent they could be said to have embraced much of the program of Marxism and other kinds of socialism. With the massive growth of the influence of Marxist thought after 1917 the Marxist analysis of society, and to some extent even its critique of religion itself, was taken more and more seriously by a growing number of Christian thinkers and activists.

But what about thought movement in the other direction? Has the dialogue produced any reflection on the part of Marxists that was prompted by what they encountered in Christianity? The answer is yes, at least for those Marxist thinkers who have taken the dialogue seriously—at considerable risk of course, especially, though not only, in Eastern Europe.

c. Capitalism vs. Socialism

Before turning to the questions about the fundamental meaning of human life in the dialogue with Christianity, however, a few reflections on human
rights and economics will, I believe, be helpful in setting the parameters of an authentic Christian-Marxist dialogue, and who and what the participants represent.

Too often in such dialogues there is an assumption on the Marxist side that capitalism and Christianity are identified: if one is a Christian, one is a capitalist. Given the writings and actions of thousands, even millions, of anti-capitalist Christians, that is obviously an egregiously false assumption. It should be obvious from empirical data that one can be an authentic Christian and at the same time a very convinced socialist, or a very convinced capitalist, or anything in between.

A second serious misperception often present in these dialogues, and this is as often true on the Christian side as on the Marxist side, concerns what passes for capitalism. Capitalism is far too often described in almost outrageously outdated and extreme fashion, making it the cesspool of all the most self-centered vices humankind is capable of, while often at the same time it is assumed that in the evolutionary progress of humankind full socialism is the ultimate goal. Clearly, a fundamental part of the problem here is an unclarity in the definition of key terms, socialism and capitalism.

Basically capitalism means the private ownership and control of the means of production. Socialism, on the other hand, basically means the collective ownership and control of the means of production. The important term to notice here is “the means of production”—understood, of course, to include both the production of goods and of services.

Socialism does not necessarily include the elimination of all private property, such as clothes, house, furniture, etc. That it does necessarily mean that has been a frequent serious misperception of socialism.

On the far extreme of capitalism is a rather complete laissez-faire attitude which would reject any outside interference by the state, except possibly action in support of the capitalist. Such a complete restriction on state involvement, however, is no more necessary to capitalism than the elimination of all private property is necessary to socialism.

In fact, not only did the “father” of capitalism, Adam Smith, reject such a rejection, so too, in fact does every current existing capitalist society. In brief, what might be comprehensively described as “welfare” systems can be, and are, part of both capitalist and socialist societies—e.g., East Germany of the latter and West Germany the former.

Similarly, the notion that monopoly is the natural end and goal of capitalism is a fundamental error that is too frequently entertained by its opponents. Monopoly would in fact be the end of capitalism—in quite a
different sense than that of the previous sentence. The essence of capitalism is the notion that free competition is good for the capitalists and society in general, and it is precisely at this point that the action of the state is sometimes called for: to ensure free competition by preventing monopoly.

It can be said that the basic dispute between capitalists and socialists is over which system will more effectively provide more and better goods and services for the whole of a society. It is not over whether an effective welfare and civil rights system should be set up or not. Both humane capitalists and socialists advocate that it should. This was not, however, always so, e.g., in the USSR concerning civil rights and the US concerning welfare rights. Nor is there always satisfaction and agreement about the effectiveness of the particular welfare or civil rights system, again, e.g., in the USSR and US. (It might be noticed, however, that this was and is not so in Germany, where shortly after the formation of the united states of Germany in the late nineteenth century an effective welfare system was installed by a state, under Bismarck, which hardly could have been called socialist in its orientation. In fact, the opposite was the case.)

If an effective welfare and civil rights system is in fact in place, then the debate between capitalism and socialism will focus on the quality and quantity of production of goods and services for all the people. If, for example, in a capitalist society the lower income population has more and better goods and services than in a socialist society, then the possible wide disparity between the wealth of the higher and lower income populations in the former as compared to the latter should not necessarily be seen as a negative aspect of the capitalist society; in fact, it may be seen as a necessary element to make the system work, and, hence, a positive aspect—so long as the lower income population receives a just minimum and is moving beyond.

A basic characteristic of human nature, and therefore a basic human right, is freedom. To the extent that it is restricted, except by the freedom and rights of other human beings, to that extent one’s humanity is restricted. It would seem obvious, however, that the setting up of an effective welfare system will to some extent act in a freedom-restricting manner on those who have to pay for it; however, the argument is made that a well-working welfare system effectively ensures the freedom of the whole of society in transitional and crisis situations, and therefore is not an improper restriction of the freedom of those who pay for the system. In fact, to the extent they are producers of goods and services, they are the ultimate
beneficiaries, for an efficiently running society provides more demand which the capitalists and their workers can then profitably fulfill.

A related issue is the freedom and humaneness of the work situation of the producers of goods and services. How much participation in the decision-making in production should there be in an optimally human work situation? Said otherwise, how much freedom should workers exercise, individually or in groups, in their work? The question will then arise: Should all means of production be worker-owned and worker-managed? On the face of things the proper answer might seem to be, yes. But what then about efficiency, creativity, motivation, ambition, jealousy? In light of those questions, especially based on experience, the answer no longer seems to be an automatic yes, for to date such attempts have been far from universally satisfactory. It would seem that here much more testing and experimentation is in order—as well as a great deal more pluralism.

In fact, in most recent years various economic reforms moving in the direction of free enterprise and some private ownership of the means of production had been inaugurated in Marxist states (Yugoslavia, of course, had long since moved in that direction), particularly Hungary and China, though others are also attempting to so move, including the USSR with Gorbachev’s perestroika. At the Christian-Marxist dialogue in Budapest in June, 1988, mentioned above, not only did the Yugoslav Marxist scholar Svetozar Stojanovic of the University of Belgrade state that, of course some private ownership of the means of production would be an ongoing element of a socialist society from now on, but so did Professor Janusz Kuczynski of the University of Warsaw, who is also the Editor of the influential—both in Party and non-Party circles in Poland and abroad—journal Dialectics and Humanism as well. Then 1989 and 1990 brought a continuing political and economic revolution in Eastern Europe which widely introduced democracy and a market economy.

Pluralism, however, essentially means freedom. The basic question is: What system will produce the greatest degree of freedom (including, of course, “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear,” as Franklin D. Roosevelt expressed it in 1941) for all the population? How Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, or any responsible human beings, answer that question will determine whether they are for capitalism or socialism or something else. On the issues of social justice and effective welfare systems there can be no fundamental disagreement—among Christians, or Marx-
ists, or anyone else; they must be affirmed—although on many of the specifics there can, and should be, all kinds of proper debate.

Therefore, the dialogue between Christians and Marxists is not between capitalists and socialists, as such, but could well, among other things, focus on which system will best produce goods and services for the population and at the same time foster the human rights of all. But that is a discussion that goes on between Christians, among others, and not just between some Christians and Marxists.

d. Marxist Self-Criticism

In the Christian world self-criticism particularly in the form of various church-democratization, political and liberation theologies is wide-spread. Though the possibilities for expression are more restricted in the Marxist world, Gorbachev's program of "openness," glasnost, is not the only or the first to focus on the question of freedom and human rights. Everywhere in Marxist controlled countries today one finds these issues fervently discussed. For example, when I was in China in the summer of 1988 and 1990, besides religion, human rights was the subject students and faculty most eagerly wanted to talk about.

In Hungary Professor Tamás Földesi, Dean of the Law Faculty of the University of Budapest, has been very outspoken on human rights, having published two books in 1989 on the subject. He noted that although all the classical human rights are listed in the various constitutions of the countries in Eastern Europe, the situation there is "incoherent," for those rights are in fact often suspended, "enervated by a special general enclosure," meaning that they can only be "practiced in harmony with the interests of socialism" as decided by the Party. Moreover, this contradictory situation was not one resulting from the aberration of the "so-called personality cult" (e.g., Stalinism), but rather "was a permanent phenomenon of the characteristic political structure." The fundamental problem with the political structure, said Földesi, breaching a political taboo, is that it is a one-party system, and "as a result the so-called classical political human rights could exist only in a very limited manner."

But human rights—and Földesi specifically includes the liberal civil rights for he refers to "human-citizens rights"—are "not of secondary significance but a cardinal issue for the East European societies." Human rights are essential, for "after all, a consistently humanistic society—among others—must be based on human rights and...ensure their widest possible effectiveness." He completely rejects what he sees as a subterfuge
in the customary claim that there is a "socialist model" of human rights which is different from bourgeois human rights; there are only "Human Rights," and "their essence is not bourgeois particularity but the expression of what is universally human," that is, those "that are also included in the United Nations documents."

Results of this enervation of human rights? "In my view, one main lesson...is that the limitation of classical human-citizens' rights has held back the development of these societies [Eastern European] to a significant extent, and considerably promoted those operational problems and social crises that developed periodically in these countries."

Our anonymous Chinese Marxist commentator makes the same point from his own experience in, if anything, even stronger language, noting the "paradox that the theoretical ideals promoted by Marxism and Confucianism are denied by themselves in practice." He points out that, "the stress that Marx places on the ideal of individual freedom under a socialist system in his thought is evident." Then, however, comes the contradiction: "But Marxism, at least what has been practiced under the name of Marxism in socialist countries, turns out in practice to be intolerant of individual freedom." He sums up the antinomy by saying that, "the hard truth of the human situation in a socialist country like China gives rise to a paradox in which, theoretically, freedom is valued and even idealized, but, practically, individual freedom is repressed."

Our Chinese commentator even sees "the need to apply the notion of alienation to our understanding of the socialist society." The distortions and repressions in socialist societies result not only because "the dogmatic use or abuse of Marxism has rendered socialism a way of manipulating individuals, but socialism itself turns out to be a problem of alienation rather than a solution to the problem of human alienation."

These are not the thoughts of a critic from outside the system, but of one living and working within it: "I was born in and grew up with a socialist system." But then, "my experiences and reflections have convinced me that the cry for individual freedom and personal fulfillment—two of the highest virtues that Marx dreamt would be fulfilled under the socialist system—ironically is exceedingly louder in socialist countries than in what we usually call 'open or free societies.'" He ends with a rather breathtaking turn of a saying of Marx: "The cry for freedom, to adapt a phrase from Marx's writings, is the sigh of the oppressed under the socialist system."

Professor Zagorka Golubovic of the Yugoslav Praxis group (Marxist
social scientists at the University of Belgrade who, because they were critical of elements of socialist society, were fired from their positions, and subsequently reinstated, but without the right to teach) also raises the question of alienation by noting that, “the question usually posed as a critique of the weaknesses of Marx’s concept of alienation is the following: How can alienated men liberate themselves?” For her, Marx saw the problem, but did not have a complete solution: “In order to handle this problem it is necessary to go beyond Marx’s philosophy of a revolutionary praxis and take into consideration the contributions of modern philosophical thinking, as well as those of psychological science and socio-cultural anthropology,” for they will help to highlight and resolve the new problems that constantly arise in a living society and also lead one to respond creatively and “differently to the old dilemmas.”

Professor Fldesi also saw the need to bring the social sciences to bear on the problems of socialist society, and to do so with courage: “One should not disregard sensitive issues and respect the ‘taboo’ nature of certain subjects, but the contradictions appearing in the field of human-citizens’ rights should be analysed in a critical manner.” The Marxist social scientists, however, face a serious difficulty for, “a characteristic feature of the political systems of the Eastern European countries...is that they expect the social sciences to carry on their activities in such a way that they directly or indirectly legitimise the existing practices.” However, the true interest of socialist societies, Fldesi argues, “does not require an apologetic approach, but the facing of the actual situation, and this makes the re-evaluation of the East European theory of human-citizens’ rights necessary.”

Underlying even these profound questions of the relationship between the individual and society and human rights are the still more basic questions about the fundamental meaning of human life, and they are questions about which Christians and Marxists tend to have basic disagreements. Since the answers to those questions will shape all subsequent dialogue and relationship, they need to be addressed, not only once, but continuously.

e. Questions about the Fundamental Meaning of Human Life

Because Roger Garaudy’s dialogic work was both so widely influential both inside and outside the Marxist world and also so penetrating, I wish here to concentrate on a few of the major insights developed by him concerning the fundamental meaning of life, and then also on some reflections on the nature of being human from Zagorka Golubovic, a contempo-
rary Marxist scholar from the creative, and controversial, Praxis group in Yugoslavia.

To begin with, Garaudy sees in the positive attitude toward matter, evolution, the immanent force within matter rising unendingly up to the level of consciousness and beyond, as expressed preeminently in the thought and writings of the Jesuit scientist-theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Copernican turn in Christian thought that enables Marxists not only to join with Christians in "building the earth," as Teilhard put it, but also to learn something from them in their efforts to relate the immanent and transcendent in the universe. As Garaudy cited Teilhard: "The synthesis of the [Christian] God of the Above and the [Marxist] God of the Ahead: this is the only God whom we shall in the future be able to adore in spirit and in truth."36

This Teilhardian idea is also much like the notion of Karl Rahner's that the Ultimate of humankind is the Absolute Future, the ever receding, ever beckoning Horizon within which humankind lives and moves forward. Garaudy understands Marxism to see the future of humankind similarly:

Yes, man will always be capable of an always greater future. For us, Communism is not the end of history, but the end of pre-history, man's pre-history which is made up of the jungle-like encounters common to all class societies. "This social formation," Marx writes in his "Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," "constitutes...the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society."37

For Garaudy Marxism is not static or pre-determined, but dynamic, relational, and unendingly so:

The individual for Marx is defined by the whole of his social relations just as the object is defined infinitely, inexhaustibly by its relations with the totality of other objects. The reality with which the physicist has to deal is already, as Lenin wrote, inexhaustible. How much more inexhaustible is the human reality which with life, conscience, society has crossed so many other thresholds of complexity!38

Garaudy also stresses the dynamic, non-determined core of reality in his emphasis on the Marxist notion that praxis is the fountain of history and truth. He cites Marx as saying that "men make their own history," and goes on to ask, "How, in spite of such insistence, has it been possible to ascribe to Marx a supposed 'economic determinism' which is so contrary to the basic spirit of his doctrine?" He answers that, "superficial disciples or excessively hasty or ill-intentioned opponents have frequently mistaken
the true originality of Marx’s materialism...understanding ‘scientific’ history to mean a history in which the future has already been written. This is a distortion of the very spirit of Marxism which is essentially a methodology of historical initiative.” (This stress on the formative quality of *praxis* was also elaborated by the Italian Marxist Gramsci, and was picked up largely through him by a number of the Latin American Liberation theologians.) Garaudy secures the validity of his interpretation by a citation of Engels:

> Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasize this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights.

For a quarter of a century there had been an “intellectual hardening of the arteries within Marxism,” but then there was a “vigorous reappearance of the problems of subjectivity, choice and spiritual responsibility.” Garaudy insisted that, “this development has occurred because of the inescapable abandonment of old values and the birth-pangs which accompany the creation of new ones,” but granted that “to the extent that Marxism has failed to answer these questions adequately, youth has turned elsewhere to seek the answer which it is our job today to seek, though we may not yet fully discover it.” He emphasized that in seeking for answers to these critical human questions Marxism, at least in part, cannot evade the quest for what it owes to Christianity as a religion of the absolute future and as a contributing factor in the exploration of the two essential dimensions of man: subjectivity and transcendence. We cannot, without impoverishing ourselves, forget Christianity’s basic contribution: the change in man’s attitude toward the world, preparing a place for subjectivity.

Moreover, he claimed that he was not alone in “this realization of the Christian contribution to civilization and culture, and of the revolutionary potential of the faith,” which he said had been “operative not only within the French Communist Party since the great step forward in 1937 but also within all...those countries where progressive movements were taking shape within the Catholic Church,” meaning especially Italy and Spain.

Garaudy said that Marxism has an interest in the questions raised by women and men “about the meaning of their life and their death, about the problem of their origin and their end, about the demands of their thought and their
heart," 46 and granted that there is much that “Marxists must assimilate from the rich Christian heritage.” However, he went on to claim that although the greatness of religion is displayed by its awareness and concern for these fundamental human questions, its weakness is in its fixing of its once-given answers as always-given answers, despite humanity’s advances in thought and ways of understanding. Marxism and Christianity, he stated, both live under the same exigencies, but they differ in their answers:

He began by saying that, “If we reject the very name of God, it is because the name implies a presence, a reality, whereas it is only an exigency which we live, a never-satisfied exigency of totality and absoluteness, of omnipotence as to nature and of perfect loving reciprocity of consciousness.” But then he added that, “We can live this exigency, and we can act it out, but we cannot conceive it, name it or expect it. Even less can we hypostasize it under the name of transcendence. Regarding this totality, this absolute, I can say everything except: It is. For what it is is always deferred, and always growing.” 47

Garaudy then wants to stake out a claim for Marxism of both a doctrine of subjectivity and of transcendence, an unendingly self-transcending future for humanity: “I think that Marxist atheism deprives man only of the illusion of certainty, and that the Marxist dialectic, when lived in its fullness, is ultimately richer in the infinite and more demanding still than the Christian transcendence.” But, “it is undoubtedly such only because it bears within itself the extraordinary Christian heritage, which it must investigate still more,” and in the end it “owes it to itself in philosophy to work out a more profound theory of subjectivity, one which is not subjectivist, and a more profound theory of transcendence, one which is not alienated.” 48

Most Christian theologians will today admit that the old arguments for the existence of God do not have the rational force of a demonstration that they were once thought to have had. Many will with Hans Kng claim that in the end it is reasonable to affirm the existence of God, not ineluctably so, but in fundamental trust, although in the very affirmation one is confirmed in the reasonableness of one’s affirmation. 49 The transcendentalist theologians and philosophers, like Karl Rahner and Joseph Marechal, however, have argued that the very presence of the open-ended thirst for knowledge, for being, found in the inner nature of humankind, demands that there be an open-ended Source and Goal of that spiritual drive. Garaudy takes that idea up when he says, “my thirst does not prove the existence of the spring.” 50 But ultimately doesn’t it? It is conceivable in this world as we know it that there could develop a being which has a need for
something, say, water, if there were no such thing as water? No, it would die aborning. But humankind has not died aborning. Therefore…\textsuperscript{51}

In any case, Garaudy took seriously the Teilhardian-Rahnerian notion of God as no-thing, as the unendingly, infinitely creative, absolute future (reminding one of Buddhism’s “boundless Openness,” \textit{sunyata}): “In such a perspective God is no longer a being nor even the totality of being, since such a totality does not exist. Being is totally open to the future to be created. Faith is not the possession of an object by cognition.” He then added that, “the transcendence of God implies its constant negation since God is constant creation beyond any essence and any existence. A faith which is only assertion would be credulity. Doubt is part and parcel of living faith. The depth of faith in a believer depends upon the force of the atheist he bears in himself and defends against all idolatry.”\textsuperscript{52}

For his part, of course, Garaudy did not find what theists call a divine presence, but only its absence. Still, he was aware that his affirmation of absence was also not an ineluctable rational affirmation, but likewise a choice of his whole being, and in that sense, a “faith”: “We thus reach the highest level of the dialogue, that of the integration in each of us of that which the other bears in himself, as other. I said earlier that the depth of a believer’s faith depends upon the strength of the atheism that he bears in himself. I can now add: the depth of an atheist’s humanism depends on the strength of the faith he bears in himself.”\textsuperscript{53}

(More than twenty years later the Hungarian Marxist Pal Horvath made a similar point when he said “that the existence of God cannot be theoretically proved or denied…. Whoever sees the essence of Marx’s atheism in this is mistaken.” He then quotes another Hungarian Marxist, Tamas Nyiri, saying: “Until a communist society without religion has developed, the Marxist theory pretending that religion is essentially a false form of consciousness, cannot be considered as proved. It is just one of several potential theories to be verified or refuted by historical-social practice.” After all, Horvath says, “When we turn to the question of whose ultimate hypotheses of a cosmic nature will prove true, I am convinced that an answer can only be expected in a perspective of world history.”\textsuperscript{54})

Garaudy in the end pleaded—to both sides obviously—for the dialogue to continue and deepen—both the ideological and practical dialogue. He said that it would be one of the tragedies of history “if the dialogue between Christians and Marxists and their co-operation for mutual enrichment and for the common building of the future, the city of man, the total man, were still longer to be spoiled, perhaps even prevented, by the weight
of the past." He was not asking for "conversion" of one side to the other, but rather, "we offer a dialogue without prejudice or hindrance. We do not ask anyone to stop being what he is. What we ask is, on the contrary, that he be it more and that he be it better." He then added that, "we hope that those who engage in dialogue with us will demand the same of us."

All this is rather stunning stuff, coming as it did from a Marxist philosopher and French Politbureau member of such prominence and profundity—and clearly a solid basis on which Christian thinkers can enter into a fruitful dialogue with Marxists. Still, it is only a beginning, as Garaudy himself admonished us: "Let us be clearly aware of the fact that we are still only at the start of a great turning point in the epic of man. The turning point itself will not be reached until we have graduated from the meetings of a few lonely scouts, possibly even suspect in their own communities, to the authentic dialogue of the communities themselves." Then in words that were much too painfully prophetic he continued: "The road is heavily ambushed and...we must confess that present political conditions do not make any the easier the requisite clarification of the problems." That was 1965. Then came 1968, and Garaudy's expulsion from the Communist Party in 1970, and similar retrenchments elsewhere.

There followed a long, cold winter of relations between Marxist and non-Marxist countries, but slowly a thaw set in, and by 1988 glasnost and perestroika, even before and without the names, began making themselves felt in many places in the Marxist world, leading to a reburgeoning of the Christian-Marxist dialogue (and in several countries sweeping away Marxist power).

As an exceedingly brief example of creative contemporary Marxist thought—which also sounds in many ways very much like that of Garaudy, and hence also provides a promising basis for dialogue with Christians—I would like to turn finally to one or two of the reflections of the Yugoslav scholar Zagorka Golubovic on the fundamental meaning of human life.

She argues that according to Marx "the uniqueness of being human cannot be expressed by a definition based on a selection of one of the distinctive traits." Rather, "the very fact that men persistently create and recreate themselves speaks against a definition of man in terms of a fixed set of traits." For Marx, a key notion was that of praxis, which helps us understand "that human beings do not exist as 'determined objects,' or as 'unambiguously free subjects,' but as the conscious agents who both con-
struct the world by their actions, and are conditioned and limited by the world they themselves have created."

Golubovic develops this notion of humans as conscious agents, rejecting the vulgarized Marxist concept of economic, or other, determinism: "One cannot speak strictly in terms of determinism when human processes are concerned because the many-sided interactions taking place in the sphere of human conduct are not explainable by the categories of causality." Rather, one must go beyond the usual causal categories; "a new kind of teleological causality should be applied when trying to understand human activity and man's relation to his world." As a consequence, "Men's developments depend not only on the given conditions and opportunities, but also on the choices and decisions they have to make...in their conscious goal-directed actions." 58

In the end, Golubovic offers her own description of the constitutive elements of being human, with a strong stress on freedom and the "spiritual" dimensions—not what one usually expects from alleged atheistic dialectical materialists:

a) an evolved psychic structure which is unique to man (which may be named as 'spiritual nature,' expressing a network of many-dimensional psychic traits and abilities);

b) a new mode of man-environment relationship (taking freedom as a paradigm which explains how man breaks through natural determinism and causal relations and changes the world); and

c) self-actualization as an essential expression of individual existence, which links human characteristics and abilities evolved in the course of socio-cultural evolution of man with the process of personalization.

f. Conclusion

It is clear that even after the 1989 Revolution, the Christian-Marxist dialogue still has tremendous potential; both sides have much to learn from each other, and together. But authentic dialogue is threatening to those in positions of power, and this is all the more so when the power is also a political power with physical force behind it. If, as I have indicated elsewhere in my groundrules for interreligious, interideological dialogue 59 such dialogue must be "a two-sided project—within each religious or ideological community and between religious or ideological communities.... Only thus can the whole community eventually learn and change, moving toward an ever more perceptive insight into reality," then we must both continue to press for the freedom of members of all communities to
be able to engage in dialogue, and at the same time be patiently aware that some dialogue participants must move extremely cautiously, that they not be cut off from their communities. But the dialogue, at whatever level possible, cannot wait—lest we find one day there is no one left to dialogue.

_Furniture University_

Notes


3 Milan Machovec, _Smysl lidskeho zivota_ (Prague: Nakladatelstvi politice literatury, 1965); German: _Vom Sinn des menschlichen Lebens_ (Freiburg: Verlag Romback, 1971).


6 Mojzes, _OPREE_, p. 33.

7 E.g., the Marxist Jaroslav Krejci, who emigrated to England and Jan Lochman, who now teaches at the theological faculty of the University of Basel.

8 Mojzes, _OPREE_, p. 34.


10 Vittorio Messori, _Ipotesi su Gesu_ (Turin: Societa Editrice Intemazionale, 1976), p. 14; remark by the editors—Lombardo Radice wrote the preface.


Mojzes, OPREE, p. 36.

Ibid., p. 39.


This Chinese scholar shall remain anonymous throughout these reflections for reasons of security. Freedom of expression has not progressed sufficiently far to allow otherwise.


Mojzes, OPREE, p. 17.

Machovec, A Marxist Looks at Jesus, p. 38.


These remarks, and others below, by Pal Horvath come from his paper delivered in English at the Christian-Marxist dialogue on “Changes in the Evaluation of Religion and the Churches in the Last Decade in Hungary and the U.S.A.,” held in the Law School of the University of Budapest, June 20-25, 1988, sponsored by the New Ecumenical Research Association.

Quoted in Mojzes, OPREE, p. 43.


Fran Franic, Putovi dijaloga (Split: Crkva u svijetu, 1973), p. 132.


Cited in Mojzes, OPREE, p. 43.

These two books appeared in Hungarian in 1989. Their English titles would be: Meditation on Human Rights (230 pp.) and Justice and the Penal Law (375 pp.). The quotations in my reflections here are from an English translation of the introduction to the first book, which was made available to me by the author.
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36 Garaudy, Anathema, p. 54.

37 Ibid., pp. 90f.


39 Garaudy, Anathema, p. 73.


41 Garaudy, Anathema, p. 75.

42 Ibid., p. 112.

43 Ibid., pp. 82f.

44 Ibid., p. 112.

45 Ibid., p. 117.

46 Ibid., pp. 88f.

47 Ibid., pp. 94f.

48 Ibid., p. 96.


50 Garaudy, Anathema, p. 92.

51 See doctoral dissertation in the Religion Department, Temple University, 1985, by Anthony Matteo, entitled, "Joseph Marechal and the Transcendental Turn in Catholic Thought."


53 Ibid.

54 See note 26.

55 Garaudy, Anathema, p. 96.

56 Ibid., p. 122.

57 Ibid., p. 120.

58 Professor Golubovic calls attention at this point in a footnote to a very important distinction between what Marx himself thought and what most so-called "orthodox" Marxists taught: "Marx was aware of the fact that social laws appear merely as tendencies, unlike natural laws which have a causal structure and determine the effects. This is a very significant distinction which the Orthodox Marxists failed to make, thanks primarily to a greater influence of Engels’ ‘dialectic of nature.’ However, when the necessary distinction is made it becomes possible to speak of man’s freedom as an important component of a specific kind of social determinism which involves the ‘teleological causality.’” See note 35 above.