

Communism — that's where nobody's got nothin', nobody knows nothin' and where everything is held in common."

That was a standing phrase I remember from my youth. It was attributed to an old high school teacher at the tradition-bound school I attended. It was repeated with an amused doubt about the correctness of the statement, but surely it was quite as the teacher himself — an original known throughout the whole town — had propounded it.

It remained to ask: Was there anything to it? But there wasn't much asking in middle-class circles, in Germany, where I grew up.

All the same: "Where nobody knows nothin' . . ." but that wasn't the way it was. In the commercial and harbor town the

seclusion we were used to in our childhood — of peasant society with its patriarchal idyll (there was no landed proprietor in our village) — could not be maintained. There were demonstrations, strikes; in those days we lived in a working-class district; and had meetings, talks, and got to know young workers. It turned out that there were young people of my age who had firm and enlightened opinions about things I had never thought about: “Surplus value”, “growth rate”. You were able to talk precisely about such things, with paper and pencil, there was something solid there. “Opium for the people” — that was meat for an argument, but not just in one direction: against the atheists and against your own church. The latter was a ticklish problem. Because there were the big hospitals in the town and provinces, the church institutions devotedly tended, social works. That means you must know your history, the primitive Christian community, the Sermon on the Mount; in the pocket edition of the New Testament Christ’s words referring to the poor were underlined in green, Christianity turned out to be an “ideology of the poor.” The atheist partners in the discussion had it easy of course: by pointing to the historical role of the church they were able to talk about romanticism. Nevertheless, there were Chris-

tian social theories, heretical movements, *pauperes Christi*, social utopias, finally you got to Kaiserswerth, Rauhes Haus, Bethel, Angerburg, Carlshof.* Having come to terms with this, you got the following picture:

A mountain road, narrow, and curvy, one side a steep precipice. So the Christians build a railing on top. And at the bottom, a rescue station for the victims. Admittedly, that is a lot. But the right thing would be to chop a tunnel through the mountain.

So that amounts to a transformation of (social) conditions.

"... Where nobody's got nothin'..." — it doesn't have to stay that way under changed conditions. Besides, there is the Soviet Union, a large state which, of course, works under enormous difficulties or so one hears. A couple of years later, 1941, you learned about its stability on your own back.

"... And where everything is held in common..." — that was an ideal, look at the primitive communities, which made Mrs. Kovalevski's opinion that "there'd be the same clothing for everyone," meaningless. "Just think, everybody going around with the same hat." No, that was irrelevant. People all have different heads, hair style

* Various Christian charitable organizations for the upkeep of hospitals and mental homes.

goes according to the hair, which also differs from person to person — so what does that mean: the same hats?

Conclusions, reflections. Then experiences in the struggle within the church. Then the war. Years rich in work during captivity, a miner in the Donets basin.

And today?

Since then a number of Socialist states has arisen. I live in such a state, that is to say with Communists, that is to say with atheists. I share their apprehensions: I see anti-Communism in its most varied forms. And I don't become so absorbed in aspects which could perhaps be disposed of as hysterical that I forget about the mortal dangers which it keeps alive and which it awakens. Take hysteria — that can't be shrugged off. He's hysterical, so they say. And then he is suddenly dead, died — without having been sick, as they say. Just of hysteria.