A theory of transnational revolution: universal history according to Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and its implications

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ABSTRACT
This article builds on the neo-Hegelian theory of European revolutions as developed by Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. This theory considers the major revolutions, from the era of the Crusades to the Bolshevik Revolution, as part of a single time/space structure. It holds that each revolution provoked the next by implanting so-called ‘pressure points’ abroad, while shaping the culture of an era and a particular national character in the country of origin. In the postwar east–west confrontation, this structure supposedly achieved its final shape. The article argues that the finality of this universal history can be transcended if we recognize that social innovations resulting from the earlier of these revolutions paved the way for the emergence and growth of capital. From about 1800, all further revolutions faced an existing universalism of capital, connected to an English-speaking heartland, which constrained their development. With the end of the Cold War, revolutions establishing national/regional identities are no longer trapped in this geopolitical stalemate. Current struggles against globalization may mark the first instalment of such a revolution.

KEYWORDS
Revolution; transnationalization; globalization; philosophy of history; nationality; political theory.

INTRODUCTION
In this article, we will present some reflections on transnational revolution by reference to a book by Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (1888–1973), Die Europäischen Revolutionen und der Charakter der Nationen (‘The European revolutions and the character of nations’), originally published in 1931.

The relevance of the theme of social revolution in an era of apparent closure and capitalist ‘globalization’ derives from our belief in the need
to break out of the historic stalemate celebrated by postmodern culture (cf. the critical essays in *Monthly Review*, 1995) and of course by Fukuyama's 'End of history' thesis (1989, 1992). But this stalemate with its implications for global anomie and chaos (Vieille, 1988; Kaplan, 1994) cannot be overcome by merely maintaining that we are still waiting or working for the socialist revolution. The textbook progression of revolutionary transformations that begins with the bourgeois French Revolution of 1789, and from this starting point evolves (1830–1848–1871–1905) to the socialist October Revolution of 1917 (Lenk, 1973: 20), followed again by 1949–1959–1974 (to name only some landmark dates, cf. Löwy, 1981), at the close of the twentieth century has been intersected by a series of revolutions in which no comparable linear development can be discerned. These revolutions, such as the Iranian revolution of 1979 or the 'velvet' revolutions that terminated the state socialist orders in eastern Europe a decade afterwards, disrupt the progressive chronology in a particularly discomforting way – since even the label 'counter-revolution' seems ill suited (also in the absence of any sustained dynamic in the opposite direction) to describe what they represent.

It may be, then, that we have to go back beyond 1789 and even the English Revolution to look afresh at the origins of the modern world under the aspect of its self-transformation. A crisis, as Kaviraj argues (1992: 81), not only

... opens up the future dramatically by forcing us to abandon the lines of extrapolations from the present which we specially favour and to understand the range of possibilities, but in a significant sense it also opens up the past. It forces us to look into complexities of the past and reconsider lines of possible development which existed but might not have materialised, or towards which we may have been indifferent.

Rosenstock's 'European revolutions' study (revised editions of which came out in West Germany in 1951 and 1961) can be a valuable aid in unravelling some of the 'complexities of the past' in this respect. In this book, the author develops a theory in which European revolutions, from the Crusades to the Bolshevik Revolution which established the bipolar constellation of world politics reaffirmed after the Second World War, are connected in a single space/time structure. In each revolution, a specific nation was galvanized into an expanding political unit, while simultaneously shaping the language of an era. These consecutive revolutionary combinations of national self-assertion and universalism, assimilated by the existing international configuration in a context of war interacting with civil war, in Rosenstock's view add up to what he considered the final state of the global war and revolutionary structure (*Weltkriegsrevolution*), the east–west conflict.
Rosenstock's perspective can perhaps be best classified as neo-Hegelian, and there are elements of teleology and a neglect of social structure and productive forces which readers should be aware of. His aim, as stated at the beginning of the book, is to transcend 'the purely theoretical dialectic of the Marxists by a true dialectic of peoples and parts of the world' (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1961: xii, quoted hereafter as RH). Marxism, according to Rosenstock, tends to reflect the capitalist order in that it ignores the organic side of society, and like capital itself, annihilates social time by imposing an inexorable logic of equations (RH 484-5).

Certainly the dialectic of the productive forces and the relations of production which Marxists self-confidently applied to explain the progression from 1789 to 1917 and beyond, in the 1970s as in the 1930s failed to take into account the clash between capitalist 'efficiency' and the rhythms of organic social life (day and night, the seasons, childbirth and parenthood, youth and old age) which Rosenstock considers the fundamental contradiction and limit of a capitalist order (rather than actual exploitation (RH 405, 474; cf. Polanyi, 1957)). The effects, material and ideological, on societies radically exposed to this clash accordingly have been underrated; but so was the degree to which Soviet-type socialism represented an effort to catch up with the capitalist west rather than establish a society beyond it. Since the potential for a resumption of capital's revolutionary dynamic was not recognized either (as testified by terms such as 'state monopoly capitalism' and 'late capitalism' (cf. Funke, 1978)), the march of history was too easily taken for granted.

What Rosenstock in his turn fails to acknowledge is that capital, too, projects a spiritual totality, to which its 'subjects' orient their particular expectations and actions. He therefore cannot account for the power of capital to drive forward global unification through processes of class formation on a world scale; instead, a bipolar state structure is considered the end state of world revolution. But, as we will argue below, the teleology and finality of Rosenstock's theory can be transcended precisely by reintroducing this dimension of capitalist globalization.

This article is built up as follows. First, we will present a short summary of Rosenstock's theory of transnationally connected revolutions. Next, we will argue that Rosenstock's theory is an elaboration of Hegel's philosophy of history but, unlike other 'universal histories' of an intended or unintentional idealist stripe (i.e. projecting back into history what appears self-evident today), the teleological and rationalizing aspects with Rosenstock are more in the nature of unacknowledged residues, since his professed aim is to analyse the cumulative effects of unique historical combinations; the concrete real in other words includes the rational rather than the other way around. In the final part, we will
argue that if we assign capital its proper place as a transnational force, we need to divide Rosenstock’s national/universal revolutions into those which paved the way for the rise of commerce and capital and to some extent coincided with it, and those which faced an already existing universalism of capital centring on the English-speaking countries. If amended in this way, Rosenstock’s theory remains important as an explanation of national/transnational revolutions in an apparently unified, ‘closed’ capitalist world.

WORLD REVOLUTIONS IN HISTORY

Rosenstock’s argument is that social reality as we know it is the product of world revolutions which simultaneously shaped a nation and an era governing relations between that nation, its ‘universe’ of ideas and material forms, and all the other nations that are part of, or at least are affected by, this universe.

Revolutions are seen as the expression of accumulated contradictions which are unique to the country in which they occur but have an impact far beyond its borders. They relate, across time and space, to other revolutions likewise unique and yet part, as ‘moments’, of an evolving historical totality. All revolutions are part of a growing European civilization which is not reduced to being ‘bourgeois’: rather, the succession of revolutions is seen as the process by which the crystallization of a bourgeois social space was made possible. In this space, covering Europe and the areas of European settlement and influence, the nations have retained their historical profiles stamped by the revolutions through which they emerged on the world scene. Diversity of national character is a cornerstone of Rosenstock’s analysis and informs his concept of what is currently called ‘globalism’.

‘All real revolutions are world revolutions’, reads one of the first categoric statements of the book (RH 5). In this sense, all revolutions are related to each other. ‘Events which transform the character of people cannot be comprised in single moments.... They accordingly evolve within an economy of forces comprehensively governing the apparently discrete centuries’ (RH 32). Each revolution contributed both to the national character of the country in which it began, and to the immanent totality of the ideological-political structure of the modern world. War, occurring in an unevenly developed geopolitical structure comprising historical state forms, in Rosenstock’s view derives its concrete conflict-matter from the national revolution kindling it. Here the ‘aestheticization of politics’, as Harvey (1990: 210) calls it, comes into play, because the national revolution and the civil war which it by definition involves represent an ideological rupture, a new aesthetics of politics unique to the place of its occurrence. Rosenstock sees revolution as the violent
confrontation between an existing universe of meanings and material forms and a new one:

Revolution implies ... the speaking of a previously unheard of language ... the emergence of another kind of logic, operations with other proofs.... Each major revolution has used another style of argument, a way of thinking which prerevolutionary men simply could not conceive nor understand ... the old and the new type of man appear insane to each other. This is why, in such epochs, times are truly out of joint.... The result is a revaluation of all values. Those men who have not been revolutionized, and those who have, live in opposite universes of values, and, therefore, do not seem human to each other.

(quoted in Deutsch, 1966: 290n)

War is the expression of this existential clash, the terrain on which the limits of a revolution's applicability are established. In turn, it drives home the results and implicit lessons of the revolution to all belligerents, exposing (on the battlefield or in the social order providing it with its human and material inputs) any failure to adjust to the new situation. The two world wars in Rosenstock's view represent the culmination of the concatenation of world revolutions, the terminal synchronization of the global social geography. In the east-west confrontation following the Second World War, 'the global war-and-revolution has achieved its structure' (RH 33). Hence, in this perspective, a Third World War will not take place.

Of course the finality of Rosenstock's universal history is evident from this conclusion, but let us first look at which steps are considered to have been instrumental in leading to this end-stage. Five revolutions, one transpiring in two phases, are seen as crucial:

1 the Papal Revolution and the Crusades;
2 the Reformation and the German Princes' Revolution linked to the Wars of Religion (first instalment of the German Revolution);
3 the English Revolution up to the loss of the First Empire in 1776;
4 the French Revolution and the Revolutionary Wars;
4a resumption of the German Revolution by Prussia and Austria in the nineteenth century, up to the First World War;
5 the Bolshevik Revolution consolidated in the Second World War.

In each of these revolutions, a series of elements can be observed which makes them comparable. These are:

• the pressure point (Druckpunkt) of the revolution: the historical root of the contradictions, implanted by a previous revolution directly or indirectly, that mature towards the explosion;
• the subjects of the revolution: its 'spiritual carriers';

• popularization of the revolution: the way a mass basis was created to sustain the transformation and the clash with the outside world;

• its key political creations: institutions and ideas that can be considered to have been introduced by this particular revolution into the infrastructure and superstructure of the modern world;

• its Golden Age: the period in which the cultural fruits mature, the moment in which the expanded area of the revolution shines most brightly;

• its worldview: the spirit of the revolution in relation to the global configuration of forces.

The idea of total rupture, of revolution chiming only the full hours of the world clock, limits the list of revolutions considered. Transformations which remain within the ideological universe already established are not considered to be on the same plane: the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 were merely repeat performances of 1789, and so was Kerensky's seizure of power (RH 482). Elsewhere, Rosenstock writes that what he considers 'half' revolutions cannot be treated, also for reasons of space. Thus the Dutch Revolution is seen as a half-way station between the Lutheran and English ones, and is accordingly left out of the analysis. The same goes, mutatis mutandis, for the Swedish, Polish and other lesser national revolutions (RH 265). The American Revolution is not seen as an autonomous revolution either. It was a rehearsal, in Rosenstock's view, for the French Revolution, linked to it by Freemasonry (Franklin was the chairman of the most prominent Paris Freemasons' lodge) and sharing the French interpretation of natural law and the emphasis on a written constitution; but in addition, it fed on a tradition of 'blood ties' and Protestantism that was British (RH 526).

Now the question arises where we should look for the subjects, the makers, of a revolution. Obviously, the 'nation' cannot rise to a man before its collective will has taken a concrete shape and converges on the ideas guiding the transformation, which in turn requires the sustenance of material forces. In Rosenstock's perspective, there is always an avant-garde of the revolution, unique to the situation but capable of arousing the passions of a mass base and leading it at the critical hour. Mass adherence to a radically new spirit, in conjunction with social transformation, is the distinguishing criterion of a revolution, and the vanguard embodies this spirit. The Pope or the German princes in their days were no less 'popular' than the Communists in Russia or the Jacobins in France (RH 77; cf. Polanyi, 1957: 152).

This also explains why a world revolution must coincide with the formation of a nation (which is central to Rosenstock's analysis). Only in a specific country at a given point in time can the mass mobilization
of a people asserting its collective identity, and the element of social transformation which accounts for its world-historic status, add up to 100 per cent. However, by the same logic, the revolutionary nationality is more than the sum total of attributes of its ethnic substratum. It only emerges from the violent assertion of a collective identity and a radically different worldview, which galvanizes these attributes into a new idiomatic language, a state religion or creed, and, most important for Rosenstock, national character stamped by the collective experience. The nation is thereby seen primarily as the privileged vehicle for the universal ideal, not as a goal in itself.

Now in spite of the total rupture in terms of ideology, all revolutions begin with the ideological forms (from papal bulls to slogans) inherited from the previous ones before they develop their own: again, from scholastic disputations, religious conversations, etc., up to propaganda statistics (RH 481). The new language then is applied to the labour of education and assimilation in which the revolutionary ideas are put to the ‘test of everyday life’ (RH 26). Once stabilization or restoration have set in, it also becomes clear that the freedom for which the revolution was begun is only the freedom to change the old order into a new one; it can never become a liberation from constraining structures in general. At some point, therefore, the ‘pure’ revolutionaries have to be disciplined and are turned into a ‘Left opposition’. While their militancy was indispensable for the revolution to succeed, they have to be silenced if the new order is to stabilize itself. ‘Every revolution must save its final goal from the revolutionaries who make revolution for its own sake.’ In this respect, Babeuf and Hébert, the Levellers and Thomas Müntzer are not different from Trotsky (RH 102–3).

International structure of the revolution

The revolution takes place in, and defines, a specific territory, where a catalogue of fundamental rules crystallizes what the revolution wants to prescribe for all other territories. ‘Every revolution has a normal area, its own, from the perspective of which all other areas seem to be configured wrongly. But that exactly is what is revolutionary. . . . No country after the revolution has the same size it had before the event’ (RH 57). Hence the incidence of war. Wars, too, require an order to be established and confirmed. Only when it ‘makes sense’ to die, when there is a transcendent cause, is sustained war possible; thus the distinction between a soldier obeying orders and the revolutionary, who is always a volunteer, can be transcended (RH 362). In war, the revolution hardens into a fixed order with which it confronts the outside world. As Gabriel Kolko writes in his study on war in the twentieth century (1994: 65), ‘The way a nation organizes itself during wartime reflects the nature of its entire
social system and those forces, ranging from its class structure to its intellectual processes, that define its institutional life and influence its values.' This precisely makes war the turning point in the history of social systems, a potentially revolutionary moment in their existence.

But how does the totality of world revolutions and wars actually come about – why doesn’t the revolution repeat itself in the same national setting but instead develop transnationally? Of course, there may be revolutions which are unfinished and require a second instalment – in Rosenstock’s analysis, the German Revolution, and one might also think of Mexico’s ‘interrupted revolution’ of 1910 (cf. Löwy 1981: 166–70). But a fully consummated revolution, and the excesses this may involve, often create an immunity to further transformation, turning ‘the mother country of a revolution because of this very terror ... into a bulwark against the next’ (RH 75).

The violent export of a revolution forces countries which do not yet constitute nations, and have not yet reached the stage of self-assertion, to make their own revolution. Thus the French Revolution forced the idea of the nation on the divided Germans and injected the idea of peasant liberation into Russia (RH 78). The mechanism by which this influence takes shape, the pressure point already referred to, is important in Rosenstock’s theory, although it is not systematically worked out in the concrete analyses of revolutions but pops up here and there.

The pressure point is created in the following way. The influence of abstract ideas, without the concrete bond with the country of origin, ‘poisons’ the order in the country affected by these ideas. Thus for instance, the ideas of the French Revolution poisoned the Russian order of things and made it ‘incurably ill’, although it took until the Crimean War before the shortcomings of the Tsar’s empire were acknowledged by reference to the advances made in post-Napoleonic western Europe. But the liberation of the peasants in Russia in 1861 led to catastrophe, among other things because there was no way in which a bourgeois revolution, one inspired by private property and bourgeois freedom, could develop from this first step; on the contrary, the revolution had to attack the concepts of the French Revolution from the vantage point of a different set of realities, unique to Russia (RH 80–1). This, then, is what is meant by the pressure point, the Gordian knot implanted by one revolution into the territory of a foreign country where it will mature to become one of the contradictions solved eventually by a new revolution. Among these contradictions, the tension between forces and relations of production, to which Rosenstock pays scant attention, should of course be accorded its proper place as well.

Thus there emerges a picture in which a revolution radiates aspects of its social transformation (which, as we saw, is inevitably ‘nationalized’ and accordingly always experienced as ‘foreign’ by other countries)
abroad; but, in the countries which are the most remote from it in terms of social structure and social geography, only 'illness' results, as the pressure point cannot organically develop into a self-sustaining social transformation along the lines drawn by the initiating revolution. The neighbouring countries closest to the revolution (Holland and the Rhineland in the French Revolution, for instance) could absorb the social transformation even though they at some point shrugged off the foreign domination. But once a new revolution breaks out in the country that could in no way digest the consequences of the previous one, and this revolution in turn begins to spread the new gospel in the countries where the previous revolution worked, moderate changes are sufficient, not the drastic changes which the new revolution propagates abroad. This, in Rosenstock's view, encapsulates the profound contradiction of a revolution's missionary zeal, because a lot of what it wants to bring to the other countries already has been introduced there silently and without breaking any law, yet suddenly it is being announced as new and sweeps over the borders as the latest invention (RH 87).

This argument in important respects coincides with Gramsci's theory of passive revolution (1971: 114). A passive revolution takes place when the rulers of countries confronted by a revolution outside their borders seek to defuse potential domestic strife by calculated adjustments ('interventions from above of the enlightened monarchy type', as Gramsci calls them), while resisting the revolution in its entirety. The rulers of Prussia and Austria in the aftermath of the French Revolution resorted to such a policy. The concept of passive revolution also includes the 'molecular advance' of the progressive class in the affected countries – an advance route to which that class in turn adjusts its strategy (i.e. from the insurrectionary 'war of movement' to a more gradual 'war of position' (Gramsci, 1971: 108)). Again, this is a dimension consistently underrated by Rosenstock.

Now the image of overlapping revolutionary waves with new epicentres created on their fringes in our view not only lends substance to the idea of 'immanent totality', but also allows us to define the unique position that a country (any country) occupies in the historical process at any time. This is not to suggest that Rosenstock necessarily accounts for everything important (on the contrary, what social transformation actually amounts to is dealt with in an oblique fashion), but that at a certain level of abstraction the evolving hierarchy of states and the time-space coordinates of their place in the global revolutionary structure can be defined with some accuracy.

Let us conclude this section by recapitulating Rosenstock's conclusions on the connection between different revolutions in terms of their 'pressure points' before we reflect on some of the meta-theoretical aspects of his approach.
THEME SECTION

Transnational connections

By confining ourselves to how the different revolutions were connected into a single, evolving time/space structure by their pressure points, we concentrate on the trajectory of the revolutions across space. (Later on, we will indicate how each revolution also defined space differently and actually created new space around individuals and groups, between various social structures, society and state, national and international politics, etc., and thus contributed to the further differentiation and 'freedom' of social structures.)

The Papal Revolution was a revolt against the German Emperor's control over northern Italy; the actual pressure point of this revolution was the appointment of the first German Pope in 995 (RH 139). The wars by which the popes tried to unify a Christian Europe were the Crusades. These expeditions against the Turks and against Byzantium welded the Germanic tribal kings and warriors into a unified Christian nobility, while the nobility also was unified in purpose and practice with the clergy and the towns (RH 152). The mendicant friars, followers of Francis of Assisi, who left the monasteries and went from town to town acting as mediators in conflicts etc., were an important link in this process of unification within Italy and north-west Europe. But the popes aimed at truly universal, that is global, rule. And even though recently doubts have been raised about whether Marco Polo ever really reached China, the decision to dispatch him there, in Rosenstock's view, testifies to the popes' design to bring Asia, too, under Christian control (RH 177).

The further development of the Papal Revolution need not concern us here. Actual papal power suffered serious setbacks, such as the Avignon exile which reduced it to a tool of the French monarchy, and by various forms of democratizing, the Church itself circumscribed papal power in other ways. But there was a sharp resurgence, indeed a virtual dictatorship under Pope Eugene IV, in the second half of the fifteenth century. This period of unrivalled splendour, when the Vatican was built as the biggest palace in the world and when art and science flourished in the north Italian communes, spelt the final phase of the revolution out of which it had grown. For outside Italy, the accompanying pomp and corruption provoked a movement of resistance in the Church that culminated in Luther (RH 201).

This pressure point turns Germany into the epicentre of the next revolution. The actual revolution occurred between 1521 and 1555, when the impact of Luther's attack on the authority of the Pope and Rome led to the Peace of Augsburg. All the German princes, including the Roman Catholic ones, became opposed to the supreme authority of Charles V (RH 239). Thereafter, the effects of the revolution spilled over to the land mass and outposts of the remaining Habsburg empire. Here,
the principle of *cuius regio* was not possible, and the Dutch and Bohemian revolts were the consequence (RH 253). They formed the link between the German Revolution and the subsequent Dutch and, indirectly, English and French ones, since Dutch independence and commercial ascendancy were intimately connected, through cooperation and conflict, to developments in England, while French politics took a critical turn when Richelieu reoriented France’s foreign policy from Italy to the north-east border with Germany during the Thirty Years War.

The reaction to papal dictatorship was not confined to Germany, and Protestantism also crystallized in Bohemia, Switzerland, Flanders and Holland, and France. The English Revolution, too, began with a Protestant political gesture, the Act of Supremacy of 1534. But Rosenstock looks at this episode, by which Henry VIII declared his independence from Rome, in a different way when he defines the pressure point of the English Revolution. The assertion of an English nationality in his view fed on a new spiritual element: descent, origin, blood ties. The function of Lord Chancellor was based on this element. This functionary had to be an indigenous Anglo-Saxon, not a Norman, and in this quality he stood face to face with the Norman king. Hence the designation of the Lord Chancellor as ‘Keeper of the King’s Conscience’. When Henry VIII’s Church reform was rejected by Lord Chancellor Thomas More, a profound conflict ensued (and this constitutes the pressure point of the English Revolution, the concrete but failed attempt to ‘keep the King’s conscience’, RH 293), a conflict that ended with More’s execution.

Rosenstock argues that the Calvinist sects wanted to take over this role of ‘keepers of the King’s conscience’ but went too far in their extremism; henceforth, ‘keeping the King’s conscience’ assumed a secular form in the ‘public spirit’ embodied in the House of Commons (RH 294–5). Thus, while Protestantism was a crucial factor in the English Revolution as well, what asserted itself in this revolution was primarily the notion of English birthright, the *restoration* of which against encroaching authority has been the continuous element in every further stage of the English Revolution, including the Glorious Revolution of 1688 but also the American Revolution of 1776. Already by 1651, however, commerce provided the backbone to birthright and other spiritual notions as the Act of Navigation declared the waterways between England and its overseas possessions to belong to the English alone (RH 305).

In 1776, ideas on inalienable rights, now declared universal, turned against England itself and led to a crisis of the first empire: a moment of despair when a generalized revolt against English power, comparable to the Protestant revolt against Rome, drew its European rivals (France, Holland, etc.) to the side of the American Revolution. In this crisis, when
the country almost forfeited its world role, the teachings of Adam Smith informed a period of reflection on England's future by pointing out the need for industrial development coupled to free trade (RH 309).

The pressure point of the French Revolution is again closely imbricated with Protestantism; as indicated already, during the Thirty Years War, Richelieu saw opportunities to redirect France's expansion to its north-eastern border with a Germany then torn by religious conflict. At the same time, the Gallicanism of the cardinals demarcated France from Ultramontane control without breaking formally with the Church of Rome. It is this imagery of ancient Gaul which according to Rosenstock surfaces in the French Revolution side by side with symbols from republican Rome: the Dutch become Batavians again, the inhabitants of the Spanish Netherlands are renamed Belgians, etc. (RH 327-8).

The French Revolution implanted its pressure points on various occasions in central and eastern Europe. This applies, in Rosenstock's view, to the second instalment of the German Revolution. Again, a revolution of the princes, but this time its standard-bearers are the two German great powers, Prussia and Austria (RH 407). Prussia, according to Rosenstock, developed as a 'border strip' with adjacent countryside. From that vantage point, the imperfections of the German empire stood out starkly. In the war with Louis XIV of France, the obsolescence of the empire was brought home to Prussia. The Peace of St Germain of 1679 therefore constitutes the pressure point of the Hohenzollern policy of advancing from a German to a European state that was to culminate in unification in 1871 (RH 420). To this end, Friedrich Wilhelm I donned a uniform himself, becoming his own field marshal in 1719.

The pressure point for the Austrian trajectory of continued revolution has to be located in 1741, when the Austrians were compelled to recognize the old privileges of the Hungarian nobility. This concession can be understood as a recognition of birthright as in the Magna Carta, and stands in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of restoring ancient rights (RH 412). According to Rosenstock, Austria in fact 'borrowed' its reforms from the English Revolution (the Glorious Revolution, in particular), whereas Prussia took its cue from the French Revolution (RH 416). We cannot pursue this here, but this historical, 'spiritual' link between Austria and England continued to hold in the early twentieth-century intellectual and artistic ferment that animated the Vienna of Wittgenstein and Schoenberg (Janik and Toulmin 1973).

The pressure point of the Russian Revolution was, as indicated already, the liberation of 1861 which set the peasants free without offering them prospects as self-supporting farmers (peasant liberation would have been completed in 1932 if it had run its course as planned). The peasants were thrown into a vast emptiness, without the opportunity
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to obtain land (RH 443, 446). Other ideas of the French Revolution also fell flat in Russia. The policy of Russification (like Germanization in Austria) provoked resistance in the border areas, which were, however, crucial in terms of infrastructure since many of Russia's major cities were obtained by territorial expansion – in the Baltic states, Poland, Bessarabia, the Caucasus. Indeed nothing that was offered by the west – Enlightenment, capitalism, nationalism, civil society – proved useful in Russia, Rosenstock claims, and all had to be rejected accordingly (RH 479).

Now if we look at this overview, the course of the revolutionary process across Europe does not by itself pose many problems. Revolutions in other parts of the world which, by Rosenstock's definition, would probably have to be classified as half-revolutions or repetitions can easily be linked to the European process; the American Revolution is a case in point. We can also extend it in time to the present, to include for instance the Chinese and the Iranian revolutions, but also reasonably speculate that there are still nations waiting for the moment of their revolutionary self-assertion to come or, as in the case of Mexico, to be completed; possible examples include regional nations within countries like India or Brazil, or certain African countries. But what is common to these revolutions in terms of their driving force? Was it class or economy, democracy, or if not, can we assign an inner necessity to social transformation which does not require an external reference? A successful revolutionary movement, Kolko writes, 'must in some manner be capable of mobilizing and channeling the energies and enthusiasm of a very large number of people who desire profoundly, even if for very diverse reasons, to replace the existing society' (1994:143). To assess the possible origin of this 'profound desire' in the revolutions of the modern era, we must go back to the Hegelian sources of Rosenstock's theory.

IDEALISM OF HISTORY AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

In this section, we will look at the way Rosenstock elaborates Hegel's philosophy of history and contrast it with other interpretations of Hegel's legacy. At first sight, there seems to be a straight continuity, by the importance assigned by Rosenstock to spiritual forces: spiritual forces which are not considered to be the 'reflection' of supposedly objective, 'material' forces either. Spirit is for Rosenstock what the spirit with a capital 'S' was for Hegel except for the religious connotation: the self-consciousness of an evolving civilization. The question that arises is how we define the element of material power expressed by and sustaining this spirit, the concrete arena of social relations structured by productive
and reproductive practices to be transformed by the revolution, and the limits to what it can achieve in this respect.

Extending the life history of capital back to early modern history and beyond, and thus positing a continuous substratum on which all politics ultimately rests, in our view is the wrong way round this problem. André Gunder Frank (from his early work in the 1960s (1975) onwards (1981)) and Immanuel Wallerstein (e.g. 1979) have cleared the way for such a supposedly ‘materialist’ idealization of capital by attributing to merchant capital the actual establishment of a capitalist world economy – whereas a more accurate assessment holds that it only ‘contributed to organizing economic space and exchange in a way that permitted the eventual emergence of a fully developed capitalist system’ (Genovese 1989: 291, emphasis added); this critique was developed by Ernesto Laclau (1971). Frank in his later work has even projected the notion of international hegemony based on a ‘structure of accumulation’ onto pre-capitalist societies reaching back as far as the Sumerian and Chinese empires, while Christopher Chase-Dunn likewise has applied the concepts of mode of accumulation and world-system to the ancient world (Gills and Frank 1990; Frank 1994; Chase-Dunn 1994).

However, once the dividing lines between merchant capital and industrial capital, between hoarding and capital accumulation, between slavery and the exploitation of wage labour, between piratical conquest and imperialism, etc., become blurred in our thinking, we are assuming the operation of causal links and subjectivities which were not at all operative at the time. Although the most abstract concepts are valid for all epochs because of their very abstractness, they remain a product of concrete social relations and, as Marx noted, ‘possess their full validity only for and within these relations’ (1973: 105). Even the market economy as such remained an epiphenomenon of social life much longer than often assumed and hence was largely external to people’s ways of dealing with each other practically and spiritually. The supposedly natural propensity to ‘barter, truck and exchange’ discovered by Adam Smith was a projection, for ‘though the institution of the market was fairly common since the later Stone Age, its role was no more than incidental to economic life’ (Polanyi, 1957: 43).

Hegel was probably closer to the mark than the contemporary representatives of the capitalist continuity thesis when he argued that in ancient Asia, cattle-holding, agriculture and handicrafts entirely predominated in the vast inland expanses, leaving only a marginal role for trade and shipping. The ancient Asian civilizations (China, India, Babylonia) hence remained closed in themselves and did not assimilate to the principle of the sea. ‘Therefore there could only be a relation with further history to the degree that they themselves were being visited and investigated’ (Hegel 1961: 166).
Hegel's philosophy of history

Let us here briefly pursue Hegel's argument to establish the way in which it defines a moving spirit as a historical force. Of course, we need not repeat that Hegel, by positing a closure of history, retrospectively approached it in a dogmatic, teleological way that reduces human action to its functional aspect (cf. Blasche and Schwemmer, 1975: 30–1). As we will see, Rosenstock builds on Hegel's philosophy in important respects even though in his theory the real holds precedence over the rational, which in Hegel's philosophy still governs reality.

It is certainly possible, however, to read Hegel 'materialistically', as Lenin proposed in his Philosophical Notebooks (Lenin, 1973: 94). Perhaps this captures what Rosenstock did in his 'European revolutions' in one word. Hegel claims that what the Spirit wants to realize in human history is freedom; more specifically, bourgeois freedom. 'Just as the substance of matter resides in gravity, so we should say that the substance, the essence of spirit is freedom' (Hegel, 1961: 58). To this he adds a 'second moment' in order to arrive at a realistic picture and 'this is the elaboration, the realization, the principle of which is the will, the activity of people as such' (Hegel, 1961: 65). Nothing, after all, has been achieved without an interest on the part of those who were active to obtain it, nothing of greatness in world history was brought about without passion having been at play. But through these passions, Hegel argues in the famous passage on the 'cunning of Reason', history works its way towards its final goal. This goal is freedom brought to fruition in the state, a state which is strong in itself but also allows the realization of the interests of its subjects, 'the one finding satisfaction and realization in the other'. The 'strength' of the state is that it unifies in its general goal the private interests of its citizens. But this unity is a complex, internally mediated one, the result of a long history (Hegel, 1961: 68). Therefore, in contrast to Fukuyama's reading, Hegel is not a 'more noble' Lockean liberal. For Hegel, the reciprocal full realization of the private and the public is the real goal, and people hence are not doomed to a possessive individualism run wild; on the contrary: 'it is the individual's destiny to lead a general life' (Hegel, 1972: 215; cf. Pierre Hassner's comment on Fukuyama (1989) in the same issue of The National Interest and Fukuyama's attempt to respond (1992: 144)).

With Rosenstock, Hegel's concepts have been reordered in a different ontological scheme. The freedom at stake in a revolution is the freedom to liberate a community from particular spatial constraints, to redefine the boundaries of its existence both territorially and also in terms of its infrastructure: the relation between the individual and the community, society and state, etc. Here he follows Hegel's lead in terms of the increasing complexity of the relation between the private and the public,
but the driving force is historical, not given in advance. We may perhaps refer in this connection to Wertheim, who considers collective emancipation the guiding principle of evolution, which, if blocked or frustrated, may erupt into actual revolution (1977: 77, 108). What Rosenstock calls the pressure point implanted from abroad, with Wertheim is the counterpoint to the dominant ideology, which he relates to the ambivalence that characterizes any set of human attitudes and valuations (Wertheim 1977: 129–30), and which feeds on a reservoir of home-grown myths, religion, popular art and theatre and other cultural forms never entirely obliterated by a prevailing universalism (Nederveen Pieterse, 1990: 64; cf. McNally, 1995). If this approach does not explicitly refer to the transnational dimension, it does highlight the setting in which a transnationally transmitted pressure point matures, to which any foreign influence must adjust, with which it must become articulated to allow social forces to crystallize into a mass movement.

For Rosenstock, this transnational dimension is as essential as the actual social content. It establishes the concrete totality of which all world revolutions are part. Revolution thus refers to the diachronic, ‘superstructural’ conflicts between definitions of how the totality of social spaces should be ordered, which then are fought out on ‘ground level’ in war.

Hegel also begins with straight geography (defined as the ‘Idea laid out in space’ whereas history is ‘the Idea laid out in time’). The historical civilizations move from the east to the west, each dealing with geography in different ways (as in the example of the Asian empires in relation to the sea). Freedom develops in the relation between the material collectivity and authority, civil society and state. In the Asian empires, freedom was still entirely confined to the level of patriarchal command and not yet operative in a society of which all attributes are subsumed under the central, ethical authority. In the Greek world of antiquity, subjective freedom does emerge, but still in an unreflected unity with ethics – a unity expressed in the beauty of its works of art (Hegel, 1961: 172). This highly transitory, short-lived idyll gave way to the Roman empire, where the state begins to develop into an abstract, autonomous entity. Individuals have an interest in this state, which adorns itself with the aesthetic and sacral forms reserved for art and religion by the Greeks; but this interest is not a simple, immediate one. Rather, the free individuals have to subordinate their individuality to the abstract generality, which stands apart from their private desires. People come to resent the despotism of this state, however, and withdraw from it into spiritual reclusion; in their subjective spirituality, they find the consolation of a heavenly empire. Thus, with Christianity begins the Germanic empire, which covers the era from the Germanic invasions to Hegel’s lifetime.

Rosenstock’s book deals with this Germanic ‘empire’, which is charged with expansionary pressures, pregnant with national diversity that wants
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to establish itself. Expansion in Hegel's view was the historical condition of this Germanic civilization, which indeed only developed as part of the process of expansion itself. While the Asian empires were closed entities waiting to be 'discovered', and both ancient Greece and Rome according to Hegel only turned to the outside world after their essential characteristics had matured into fixed principles, the Germans appeared in the European theatre as violent barbarians and developed the principles of their civilization in the course of its expansion (Hegel, 1961: 468). This also applies to the Abbasid Arabs. But their principle was confined to abstract passion, brilliant but transitory (according to Hegel, because 'on the foundations of generality, nothing solid can emerge' (1961: 490)). Early Germanic Christianity by comparison was a violent and scattered mass. The Crusades, however, served to discipline the Germanic warriors while exposing them to the civilization of Islam. Together, these experiences allow the emancipation of rational knowledge once the crisis of the Church weakens its hold on the European world (Hegel, 1961: 559).

Here, still presented of course as a necessary march of history, or the unfolding of a rationality that was in the books all along, we have the description of the historical and socio-geographical terrain which Rosenstock then analyses in terms of each era's self-consciousness - that is, without reference to a preconceived rationality. Hegel's conclusion, however, as to the decisive rupture in this process is indicative of the real break which the modern Germanic-European era represents relative to classical antiquity and ancient Asia: one might say that the closer Hegel comes to his own era, the less idealistic he becomes. The crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in the Reformation not only 'democratized' the Spirit, as we would now say, but also set free the potential for humanity's self-understanding. Thus the condition of a free intellect has been created, which will allow human existence to be organized rationally. In Hegel's words, 'The Spirit, once again thrown back onto itself, brings forth its result in the shape of thought and has obtained the power to realise only the rational from the principle of worldliness' (1961: 75).

Decoding the spirit

The fate of Hegel's philosophy perhaps illustrates best what historical development does to any 'spirit' it may bring forth. The reality which Hegel was giving expression to was the advance of bourgeois democracy culminating in the establishment of the European state system. But, as Lefebvre writes (1976: 99), things move fast in revolutionary periods and a philosophy such as Hegel's had outlived itself by 1845. By then, the consequences of industry and private property led to questionings of the comprehensive rationality ascribed to the democratic state; beyond
the state and the realm of equivalence it enshrined, there emerged an underworld of production, the hidden, unequal exchange in the wage relation, the expropriation implicit in private appropriation, and other aspects of people's real lives in the ascendant capitalist economy. Perhaps alienation was not fully redeemed by the granting of citizenship, but continued to be reproduced by engaging in commodity relations, etc.

Marx's conclusion at this juncture that Hegel had found only the 'abstract, logical, speculative' expression of the movement of history, but not the real movement of humanity 'as a presupposed subject' (MEW Ergänzungsband 1: 570), has several implications, one of them being (and this also applies to Fukuyama's thesis) that what is presented as the Spirit guiding history all along is actually the dominant spirit of a particular society projected retrospectively into history, denying its material historicity and hence the possibility of its future demise. In this sense, the continuity thesis which applies concepts linked to developed capitalist society to its prehistory likewise represents an idealism denying, if by implication only, the possibility of an eclipse of this type of society.

Rosenstock's solution to 'nationalize' the spirit is also problematic, because the idealism of Hegel in such a procedure is rendered meaningless, and what Hegel says of the Spirit is emptied of content. But already in the German Ideology, Marx and Engels related the World Spirit to the world market, and in the Grundrisse Marx decodes the Spirit as the totality of capital, the universe projected by the commodity form, a real if limited spirituality. 'Hegel's idealism', Helmut Reichelt sums up Marx's conclusion, 'is ... the real idealism of capital, in which a derivative becomes the original and unfolds its own law of motion' (1972: xxx; cf. van Erp, 1982: 58).

The difference between historical materialism and idealism (Hegelian as well as contemporary) is that the comprehensive idealization which evokes the present as intended by, or merely a linear continuation of, the past, is seen as the largely unintended outcome, a result of social conflict and development rather than the realization of its inherent rationality. 'What the idealists call "spirit" is not a point of departure but a point of arrival', Gramsci wrote (1971: 445-6), 'it is the ensemble of the superstructures moving towards concrete and objectively universal unification and it is not a unitary presupposition.'

Contrary to the oft-repeated thesis of Marx standing Hegel on his head, we should establish that in fact the notion of a 'spirit', a collective consciousness, is not at all denied. Historical materialism rather seeks to historicize the particular spirit of an age, locate it in a given configuration of social forces, as the set of concepts and philosophy which allows a particular class to retain its directive power and hence is most eagerly embraced by it – but not by that class alone.
The importance of Rosenstock's theory of revolutions is that it reclaims the terrain of national revolution, the self-assertion of a people in the evolving time/space structure of the modern world. Certainly, not unlike Austro-Marxist socialist theoreticians around the turn of the century and their 'national materialism', Rosenstock underrates the role of class and the determinants of class formation (cf. Talmon, 1980: 160-1). But if the 'objectively universal unification' of the ensemble of superstructures of which Gramsci speaks still proceeds under the impetus of the 'globalization' of the spirit and material reality of capital, Rosenstock's analysis should remind us that this unification develops through the crystallization of diverse *national* spirits dialectically related to it. This dialectic will concern us next.

**THE SPIRIT OF CAPITAL AND CONTINUED REVOLUTION**

The emergence of capital as a comprehensive force structuring the action of individual entrepreneurs, and giving rise to a collective 'spirit', constitutes a revolution in its own right which coincides in time with certain phases of Rosenstock's *Weltkriegsrevolution*, but cannot be conflated with it. The capitalist revolution prescribes patterns of behaviour which transcend the national level from the beginning, and not just in straight economic terms. Gramsci captured this when he spoke (1977: 12) of the 'Enlightenment [as] a magnificent revolution in itself ... it gave all Europe a bourgeois spiritual International in the form of a unified consciousness. ... In Italy, France and Germany, the same topics, the same institutions and same principles were being discussed.'

But the reality of even this era of revolution (the eighteenth century and the nineteenth to 1848) is still a series of *national* revolutions. Since each people represents a unique combination of elements and its moment of revolutionary self-assertion comes at a particular conjuncture in the history of international relations, capital can transcend but not entirely overcome Rosenstock's 'true dialectic of peoples and parts of the world'. Thus even though ruling classes in each major country shared important aspects of a common bourgeois spirit throughout the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 'a class that is international in character has – in as much as it guides social strata which are narrowly national ... and indeed frequently even less than national ... – to “nationalise” itself in a certain sense' (Gramsci, 1971: 241). In a revolution, this need can only increase if the aspiring ruling class wants to emerge victorious.

If we define capital not as identical to society, but as a historical regime over the social forces of production, 'a discipline over them, which becomes superfluous and burdensome at a certain level of their development'
(Marx, 1973: 415), we may distinguish between the growth of this discipline, which is a revolutionary process by all means, and the continuing development of society through revolutionary self-assertions of peoples establishing their collective identity. Rosenstock’s theory links each revolution to a national spirit, a revolutionary idealism seeking to change the coordinates of its present existence and conquer the space in which a more differentiated social order can take shape – which has a territorial aspect but also seeks to make the infrastructure of society more ‘spacious’, i.e. reduce the mutual constraints imposed on each other by individuals and groups, state and society, etc. (cf. Harvey, 1990: Chapter 13). Let us again return to Rosenstock’s narrative, this time concentrating on this latter aspect; we may then observe that the freedom progressing through revolutions and ‘bourgeois freedom’, in the sense of a legitimate capacity to engage in private exchanges, develop hand in hand until around 1800 but then become contradictory.

**Advancing structural freedom, defining new spaces**

According to Rosenstock, the contribution of the Papal Revolution was that it introduced the territorial definition of political power. The new concept of state expressed temporal rule, potestà, secondary to, and derived from, the authority of the Pope. The archetype of the new state was the Kingdom of Sicily under Frederick II Hohenstaufen. Frederick was the first modern monarch, since under his rule the feudal system of graded authority was replaced by royal government through a bureaucracy (RH 195). The new conception of the state was expressed in the royal seal: on the orders of the Pope, ‘Rome’, the symbol of empire, was replaced on this seal by a map of Sicily and Apulia. This signified a revolution of the worldview of that era, testimony to the ascendant power of the territorial state (RH 196). The worldview which supported this development was a product of the discovery of landscape which Rosenstock allegorically ascribes to Francis of Assisi leaving the monastery; it expressed a greater distance from nature, necessary to look at it without being engulfed by it. In Italian Renaissance painting, the endlessly repeated image of the Madonna with Child set in a landscape underscores this worldview, in addition to symbolizing the safety of the communes in the arms of Mother Church (RH 190-3).

In the German Revolution of Luther and the princes, new accents were of course set in the mutual relations between political power and Church authority as well as between the new states, the Länder, and the empire; but also, as a consequence, in the relation between the individual and the new Protestant Church which was elaborated in the art forms of the period. Hegel, as we saw already, pointed to the ‘democratization’ of the Spirit, the reclaiming by society of the realm of thought, which lay
at the basis of both modern science and the modern state. Rosenstock describes this process as an internalization of the Crusades, a pilgrimage of the individual soul to heaven (RH 228; 233). Book printing, and notably the spread of the translated Bible, provided a key channel to communicate this image to the world, although actual Lutheranism with its unusual intensity of individual, almost physical, communication with Jesus (captured by the lyrics of Bach’s cantatas) remained largely confined to Germany and Sweden. Rosenstock also counts Goethe as an exponent of this revolution. His *Faust* parallels the turn to the world exemplified by Luther (*Faust* does not make a tour of heaven and hell like Dante, but meets the devil in this life and has to deal with him here and now (RH 262)). Of course one might ask whether at this point the French Revolution should not be brought into the picture – not just in literature and philosophy but also in music. Haydn and Mozart were committed Freemasons and in their music expressed the new equivalence and greater distance between social subjects (as in the shift from the *basso continuo* accompaniment of the baroque to the ‘emancipated’ cello in the string quartet).

In politics, the German Revolution implied a new departure for worldly authority. The eclipse of Church law made the organization of education and civil law (land tax, marriage law, etc.) a task of princes hitherto concerned only with a military role. This produced a new separation of a civil from a military sphere of state activity (RH 241). The new role of universities also fits into this development. Universities were charged with guarding religious orthodoxy in their respective (Protestant or Roman Catholic) states; having a university was a precondition to escape the junior status of a petty princely state. According to Rosenstock, German intellectual life grew out of a situation of universities committed to their state’s religion (*cuius regio*) engaging in mutual debate. Thus a learned German nation re-emerged from the defunct Reich (RH 244–5).

If looked at in this way, the German Revolution stands out as the Big Bang of a new universe of political and cultural forms, a spacious structure allowing creative diversity and differentiation. From now on, however, the ascendant market economy will increasingly inscribe itself in this same universe. Rosenstock does not consider this commercial revolution on the same plane as his national revolutions, although his remarks on the specific capitalist forms emerging in the later revolutions are often insightful.

**The English Revolution and the continuing revolution of capital**

Rather than describing the English and French revolutions as bourgeois, Rosenstock emphasizes their quality as national revolutions. But the
transnational/universal dimension by which he distinguishes world revolutions from half-revolutions and repeat performances inevitably merges with aspects of the universalism projected by capital. (Capital, as we will see, also has a particular nationality hidden behind its universalism - if not an actual English, at least an English-speaking, one.)

First, let us look at Rosenstock’s interpretation of the advances in freedom resulting from the English Revolution. It would seem from his analysis that following the structural innovations of the Papal and German revolutions, which in the territorial state and the secularization of thought produced universal forms in addition to their specific national consecration in the country of origin, the English Revolution represents a moment of ‘privatization’, a subordination of its social and political structural innovations to English supremacy simultaneous to their introduction. In contrast to both the Lutheran emphasis on the authority of the state and the Spanish definition of an oceanic world defined by counter-reformation as the directive worldview, the concept of descent/origin as the single spiritual bond that unifies the English in all their areas of settlement emphasizes, in Rosenstock’s view, the inherent notion of the English as a ‘chosen people’. This he sees reflected in the Old Testament jargon of the Puritan Revolution, transmitted also to New England (RH 266, 268). In English-speaking Protestant fundamentalism, this notion of a chosen people is still very strong (Armstrong, 1980; Nederveen Pieterse, 1992). In international relations, the Commonwealth (both under Cromwell and in the twentieth-century edition) is defined as a universe of which England is the centre but which is not identical with it; it represents an area in which it can expand (cf. Rosenstock’s remarks on the Act of Navigation referred to on p. 297).

The scientific revolution for which both Protestant revolutions paved the way itself carried a strong connotation of control. As Marian Lowe (1988: 176) writes,

Power, which had previously been exercised through social networks and personal relationships, began to be seen as the exercise of control which came through knowledge, understanding and reason applied to manipulating causal relations. . . . Moral strictures against exploiting nature, previously viewed as an organism, disappeared.

The universal scope of the new European science implied that everything under the sun was encompassed by it, subject to this control from the centres of science and commercial power. ‘Enlightenment culture’, Nederveen Pieterse observes (1990: 21), ‘as an imperial culture was one whose forward march of power and knowledge, of rationality and control, led spatially across the globe while penetrating internally with new modes of regimentation.’
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This underscores an aspect caught but not elaborated by Rosenstock in its consequences—that the claims of the English Revolution with regard to its privileged station in a newly defined commercial world economy indicate a real break in his list of revolutions, the moment of its intersection with the imminent revolution of capital. This revolution also was premised on particular ‘spatializations’ in the political structure, especially the establishment of a Lockean state/society complex finally consecrated by the Glorious Revolution of 1688 which redefined the state role as safeguarding the self-regulation of property-owning civil society. But Rosenstock shows that the imbrication of the English Revolution with the commercial and subsequent industrial/capitalist ones also produced particular forms of increase in the structural freedom of social actors, collective and individual. Capitalism in his view is premised on alienation from one’s fellows. Only where buyer and seller are strangers—and this includes employer and worker—can a pure capitalism function (RH 363). The most extreme forms of exploitation therefore take place overseas. Once merchant capital turns from its overseas expansion to exploit wage labour in the home territory, people begin to look at their own country as if it were a foreign one; Montesquieu’s Lettres persanes illustrates this perspective. But also in other respects, the ascendant bourgeoisie breaks away from its own community. Freemasonry and other secret societies serve to provide the cover for a new social identity and a cosmopolitan attitude, underpinned by cosmopolitan consumption (RH 364). All these important developments are recognized by Rosenstock but then again subsumed under the history of national capitalisms. This is why he posits a finality to the history of European revolutions in the east-west conflict of his old age; capital as a collection of national capitalisms in this view cannot rise above this stalemate and transcend it by imposing a superior universality.

The French Revolution (and the American one which synthesizes elements of it with its lineage to the Puritan Revolution) was already made by Freemasons. Not out of any world conspiracy, but simply because Freemasonry at this point was the international party of liberalism, and actually was a product of the Glorious Revolution (Knight, 1985: 21–2).

It was indeed this, in hindsight, decisive revolution of 1688 which by its transnational connections (to Dutch finance, but especially to the areas of English settlement, notably in North America) laid out the blueprint for what can be designated a Lockean heartland of capital (van der Pijl, 1989, 1995). As Senghaas has commented (1982: 29; cf. Mjøset, 1992):

When one considers international society in its entirety, there is no question that since the first industrial revolution in England, the major part of the world . . . has been turned into a periphery and
that only a small number of societies have succeeded in withstanding the pressure towards peripheralization and achieved an autonomous, catch-up development.

This Lockean heartland growing on the foundations of the English Revolution remained the basis from which capital expanded and projected its universalism on the globe. Patterns of trade and finance were recentred on an English industrial pivot as *circuits* of (commodity, money) capital by the Industrial Revolution; they were intersected by circuits connected to other centres. Britain was challenged by these, but it was never defeated because by 1911 the Dominions and, especially, the United States were knitted into a new 'Commonwealth' formally and informally. In this sense, the paramount 'national' identity of capital has remained broadly the same, even though today we associate it with the United States more than with Britain. Terms such as 'multinational', 'global', etc. should not mislead us here. A French lawyer in this connection speaks of a convergence between 'Americanness' and globalism, in which an American particularism and even parochialism assumes global dimensions on the strength of US power and of the magic conveyed abroad by its consumer products – so that the apparent ideological and cultural neutrality ascribed to capital is in fact the peculiarity of its most powerful province (Cohen-Tanugi, 1987: 180, 185).

The revolutionary nature of capital resides in its capacity to develop, indeed revolutionize the productive forces, and so far this revolution has not abated. But also in terms of the 'spirit' of revolution, its proclaimed universality, we see the same innovative compulsion. The spirit of capital has already been forced to redefine its own eternity several times to survive such major crises in its further development as transpired around 1873, the 1930s and the early 1970s. The restless accelerations of capital accumulation have continued to upset any stable balance in its ideological self-representation as well. Whereas in, say, the mid-1960s, there was a near-consensus that capitalist society had left the cruder forms of private enrichment behind and had entered a stable era of mixed economy, the household names associated with this period such as that of Keynes have since become anathema. The apparent self-evidence with which the need for state intervention in the capitalist economy was accepted thirty years ago (along with the managerial revolution and many other creeds) has been replaced by a completely altered code of what is normal which likewise claims to be based on eternal principles, human nature, etc. Elsewhere we have distinguished four such comprehensive concepts of control since the nineteenth century (Overbeek and van der Pijl, 1993): four idealizations which are based on often mutually contradictory premises, and yet have been widely accepted as legitimate expressions of the general interest of the (expanding) area to which they were supposed to apply.
With only the exception of a state-monopolistic development which had its epicentre in continental European heavy industry and state monitored accumulation around the First World War, the revolutions of the spirit that have accompanied the shift from one capitalist order to another emanated from the English-speaking world: nineteenth-century liberal internationalism from England, New Deal corporate liberalism from the United States, and neo-liberalism from Britain and the US again.

However, for all the triumphalism of today’s neo-liberal capitalist order, and the real ‘globalism’ by which it imposes its discipline on the world at large, there exists (in spite of 200 years of close association) no identity between capital and the English-speaking world. Therefore, capital can arguably lose this indispensable base again. Even apart from the profound social dislocations in the US and Britain, made acute by the reduction of the socially protective state, the image of economic success of neo-liberalism is probably deceptive. As two business economists have argued in a survey of capitalist cultures, the wealth generated in Britain and the USA under the neo-liberal concept which lends the image of success to it and provides it with the levers of world power rather reflects an ‘ever-profitable market in disaggregation and disintegration’.

Despite waxing fat in profits from 1984 to 1989, much of the money then extracted from British corporations was not reinvested. Come a recession, profit maximizers seeing no gain for themselves, under-invest chronically, which helps to explain why Britain, America, and other English-speaking countries shoot farther up in booms, but crash farther and deeper in recessions.


Privatization, we may add, has largely depleted the stock of centrally controlled wealth which the homeland of capital might need to survive future crises, but which has now been liquidated for private enrichment driven by the same predatory instincts.

This leaves us with the question: what about the subsequent revolutions that came after the set of three (English, American and French) which together created the conditions for the capitalist revolution? To this we now turn by way of conclusion.

**Revolutions from above, continuing revolts**

If, on the one hand, the acknowledgement of a separate, if socially ‘embedded’, capitalist revolution forces us to take a second look at the historical finality of the world revolution/war process posited by Rosenstock, on the other hand, it also sets free the theory of revolution as a continuing process of self-assertion of peoples from this stricture.
Once we recognize that the revolution of capital continues to project a universalism of its own, a discipline on world society today sustained primarily by the US-led military power of the west and G-7 and IMF-coordinated financial surveillance, we may better understand the characteristics of the revolutions after 1800. But we can also extend his list of revolutions to the present and the future.

Of course, the demystifying power of capital can be applied fruitfully to the elements of Rosenstock’s theory, as in the case of the ‘pressure point’. The spirit of one revolution may be transmitted to another by capital (in the use-value aspect of commodities, through financial practices and the outlooks engendered by them, or actual productive investment defining forms of management and wage labour). The role of the global media in this connection needs no elaboration.

Returning to Rosenstock, let us briefly sum up how he sees the contributions to world culture of the revolutions of the late-comer states, or, as we called them elsewhere, Hobbesian contenders. The reference to Hobbes here seeks to highlight the moment of state control preceding its selective withdrawal from civil society. In the French Revolution this can already be observed soon after the national consolidation and imperialist turn under Napoleon. According to Rosenstock, the French Revolution was premised on many forms of liberation in the sense that we have defined above (enlarging the spaces within the social structure, between it and the state, etc.), but the revolution itself imposed the state on social life again. The revolution coined the notion of organization later developed by Saint-Simon, while even the holy trinity of liberty, equality and fraternity obtained an administrative inflection in that everybody was equally subject to it, although ‘freedom’ retained its tradition in France also in opposition to the state, as a ‘myth of revolution’ (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1995: 348). Therefore, in Germany and Austria, the same sentiments, now clothed in an ‘organic’ metaphor, could be raised against Napoleon’s administration by the awakened nations (RH 353).

But in France itself, too, the original optimism associated with the prelude to revolution, which begins with rationalism and Descartes’s discovery of the ego, and with individuality and subjectivity in literature, gradually soured as France became aware of being hemmed in by more powerful states and, we would infer here, the ascendant universalism of capital primarily connected to Britain. Rosenstock traces this rise of pessimism in French literature, in the biographies, private letters and diaries which document bourgeois culture of the nineteenth century. Three stages in this development are distinguished, symbolized by three novelists. Balzac, the first, writes the Comédie humaine to depict life as lived under two passions, love and money. It is the era of Louis-Philippe, the ‘citizen king’, of the motto ‘enrich yourselves’. The second novelist,
Zola, already records the impact of the Paris Commune. From his work emerge exhaustion and despair. In love, it is syphilis which sets the price of enjoyment. Finally, with Proust, life has become a Sodom and Gomorrah; his search for time past leads into a quagmire of passion, illness and madness (RH 394-6).

We need not dwell on the fact that the second instalment of the German Revolution fits perfectly into the image of a contender state (two in this case) trying to catch up through a revolution from above: the same turn to pessimism, but due to the tremendous energies contained in the German social formation, its authoritarian predilections and the stifling constraints imposed on it after its first grab for world power, the cause of another, even more destructive one.

In the Russian Revolution, the element of regimentation deriving from the state-led attempt to catch up becomes equally pronounced. The system of party-controlled councils, the soviets, functioned as a transmission belt for the real goal – the electrification and organization of the Russian economy – Rosenstock writes. The telephone and technology were more important in the Russian Revolution than the masses as a subject: meetings were pure propaganda, not even theatre. There was no pathos, everything was cold and calculated. The possibility of a witty exchange on the scaffold, as between Danton and his executioner, is unimaginable in the terror of the Stalinists, symbolized by the pistol shot in the neck (RH 483). The language introduced by them is that of figures. Everything is conveyed through the 'heartless' medium of statistics, which have become the overwhelming language of our times. Whatever is presented in figures, true or not, tends to be believed (RH 477). This in Rosenstock's view is the contribution of the Russian Revolution to contemporary civilization: a stage in the growth of world civilization as a whole expressing the particular position of the USSR in it, and pushed to its extremes by the insertion of Russia into the world revolutionary process.

Thus we are confronted with the reality of revolutions imposing ever stricter controls on societies supposedly liberated by them. Clearly, this has to be related to a factor outside the succession of revolutions as listed by Rosenstock, i.e. the revolution of capital. It is the universalism of capital which itself restricts and constrains individualities and social possibilities while claiming to liberate them, and the countries trying to catch up are merely copying and selectively applying certain aspects of this regimentation to sustain their own forced marches. All the same, they continue to reproduce the postulated set of connected elements, war and revolution, nationality and universalism. The Chinese Revolution was a national liberation struggle by which an independent statehood was established; it was achieved in civil war and followed by war (Korea), and it projected a universalism, albeit a self-consciously
restricted one, Third Worldism (cf. Wertheim, 1977 and Löwy, 1981 for analyses of this and other Third World revolutions in comparative/historical perspective). Vietnam and Cuba would then be half-revolutions linked to this particular experience, just as the American Revolution was a half-revolution compared to the French, by Rosenstock’s standards.

Another example of a highly restrictive, constraining liberation which can be understood in this connection is the Iranian Revolution. Here ‘Islamic ideology became a substitute for the lost communality of the oppressed masses’ (Nima, 1983: 142) but then was applied as a mode of severe repression, followed by an exhausting war, projecting a quasi-universalism in the shape of fundamentalist Islam across the globe.

We may thus reconstruct the continuing process of global war and revolution as understood by Rosenstock by including the revolutionary universalism of capital. All revolutions following the French Revolution (which marks the divide and has many aspects of ambiguity in this respect) would then be compelled to reduce structurally freedoms and the ‘spaciousness’ of social infrastructures in order to sustain the attempt to catch up. With the collapse of the USSR, these attempts have in all probability lost their future. If there is a point in Fukuyama’s ‘End of history’ thesis, it is that the geopolitical juxtapositions of alternative social orders have largely been overcome by the universalism of capital. But even the manifold control levers by which contemporary capital seeks to regulate the lives of peoples and nations to the minutest detail (what Stephen Gill (1995) calls the ‘new constitutionalism’ and ‘democratic surveillance’, and the world credit/debt structure which sustains them) have failed to root out the continuing quest for autonomy and increased self-determination of the peoples of the world. This may assume perverted forms such as citizen militias’ armed posturing against the federal US government, but in France and Italy the spirit of authentic democracy has taken to the streets to a degree not seen in several decades.

Let us therefore conclude by referring to a syndicated newspaper article by Guardian editor John Vidal (1995) entitled ‘Ken Saro-Wiwa has many followers’. In this article, he sums up an impressive array of popular struggles against capitalist globalism. These struggles, ranging from Indian peasants resisting forced introduction of hybrid seeds to German demonstrators against Shell’s Brent Spar oil rig demolition in the North Sea, and from the Chiapas revolt against NAFTA to the protests by the Ogoni people in Nigeria against the destruction of their habitat by the oil and gas exploitation of the same Shell oil company, all testify to what he sees as a growing resistance to the western development model. The form they take, however, is not random. Though within a wide range of variation, a common theme in them seems to be the establishment of regional identities which not only challenge the self-
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evidence of the present capitalist world culture. They also, in the words of Vidal, express a radically different set of values, which totally rejects the globalist, but increasingly destructive, universalism of capital.

The 'end of the Cold War' here assumes a new meaning, since these revolts can no longer be denounced as 'Moscow-backed' and treated accordingly. It may well be that we are in the midst of an important turn of events in which, on a truly global scale, the limits of the capitalist mode of production are being brought to light – not by revolutionary governments of existing states, but by people having to sustain the ecological and social foundations of their bare existence threatened by a rapacious and irresponsible economic discipline. While still in its early stages, and as yet incapable of formulating a political vision beyond the rule of capital, what we witness today may well evolve into a real revolutionary self-assertion of peoples articulating the affirmation of their diversity with a true universalism, that of planetary survival.

NOTES

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1 The English reader may catch more than a glimpse of the argument of this book from Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man, published in exile in the United States in 1938, which in a different chapter sequence comprises parts of the 1931 book. Otherwise, the author seems to have been largely forgotten. There are incidental references to Rosenstock in Harold Lasswell's 1935 World Politics and Personal Insecurity (Lasswell, 1965) and also in Karl Deutsch's study Nationalism and Social Communication, originally published in 1953 (Deutsch, 1966), but as far as I have been able to trace, no systematic elaboration of his approach is available. 'A revolution', Lasswell writes (1965: 3), 'is rapid and extensive change in the composition and the vocabulary of the ruling few; world revolutions are those which inaugurate new principles of elite recruitment and the new reigning ideologies in the political life of humanity.' The reference that accompanies this passage, and the subsequent exposition of the 'configurative method' with its emphasis on grasping the diachronic and synchronic totality, reveals the influence of Rosenstock's work. In Hannah Arendt's On Revolution (Arendt, 1965) and Kurt Lenk's book on theories of revolution (Lenk, 1973), Rosenstock is listed in the general bibliographies without being discussed explicitly. Deutsch (1966) lists in his bibliography Rosenstock's Out of Revolution, and on p. 290, note 10 gives a lengthy quotation from the original Die europäischen Revolutionen (Jena, 1931) on the concept of revolution; but this title is not in the list of references.

Of Rosenstock's other work, the library of the University of Amsterdam lists, apart from Die europäischen Revolutionen and Out of Revolution, a
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forty-two-page Revolution als politischer Begriff in der Neuzeit ('Revolution as a political concept in the modern age' (Breslau, 1931); in Lenk this title is referred to more fully as part of a Festgabe für Paul Heilborn zum 70. Geburtstag).

Further: Der Atem des Geistes ('The breath of the spirit') (Frankfurt, 1951); Heilkraft und Wahrheit: Konkordanz der politischen und der kosmischen Zeit ('The capacity to heal and the truth: coincidence of political and cosmic time') (Stuttgart, 1952); Des Christen Zukunft: oder Wir überholen die Moderne (Munich, 1955), revised German edition of The Christian Future, or The Modern Mind Outrun. These works deal with topics relevant to education and Christian philosophy. More closely related to the historical approach in Die europäischen Revolutionen are Die übermacht der Räume (Soziologie I) ('The superior force of spaces') (Stuttgart, 1956) and a work not in the library but mentioned by the author in the 1961 preface to Die europäischen Revolutionen: Die Vollzahl der Zeiten ('The completeness of the ages'). This book was completed in 1958 (when he was 70 years old) and subtitled Soziologie II.

REFERENCES

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MEW: Marx-Engels Werke, Berlin: Dietz, various years.
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