

# Interpretation

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- 3 Eric Buzzetti The Rhetoric of Xenophon and the Treatment of Justice in the *Memorabilia*
- 35 Mark S. Cladis Rousseau and the Redemptive Mountain Village: The Way of Family, Work, Community, and Love
- Discussion: Locke on Natural Law: Two Opposing Views*
- 55 Samuel Zinaich, Jr. The Internal Coherency of Locke's Moral Views in the *Questions Concerning the Law of Nature*
- 75 Michael P. Zuckert On the Lockean Project of a Natural Law Theory: Reply to Zinaich
- Discussion: Kojève-Schmitt, Colonialism, Edited and Translated by Erik de Vries*
- 91 Alexandre Kojève and Carl Schmitt Correspondence
- 115 Alexandre Kojève Colonialism from a European Perspective

# Interpretation

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Dear Professor!

Thank you very much for the friendly transmission of *Tyrannie der Werte*,<sup>1</sup> which I, as always, read with great interest and satisfaction.

I hope that we will soon have the opportunity to talk.

With respectful greetings,

Faithfully,

(s)

1. Schmitt, 1979.

## Colonialism from a European Perspective

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Before I begin my lecture, I would like to thank the Rhein-Ruhr-Club most sincerely for the friendly invitation.

And then I would also like to apologize for my poor German. It is, however, a joy to give a lecture in Hegel's language. But my German leaves much to be desired, and therefore I must ask for a good deal of indulgence.

Finally, I would like to repeat what Mr. Koch already said to you. Namely, that everything that is said here is my own opinion, which I present, throughout, not as a French bureaucrat, but exclusively as private citizen [if also as a former student at Heidelberg].<sup>1</sup>

I would also like to remark that in my lecture I very consciously and deliberately want to avoid anything which is in any way political or could appear to be so. I intend radically to depoliticize all the concepts I discuss, above all the concept of so-called colonialism. Thus I will examine and deal with all problems from a purely economic, exclusively political-economic {*national-ökonomischen*} perspective.

I

The word "capitalism" was coined in the 19th century, and Karl Marx gave this concept a very precise, specifically economic meaning.

Marx understood by "capitalism" an economic system characterized by the following. First: the "capitalist" economy is an industrialized economy. Second: the industrial means of production belong, in this system, not to the physically laboring (with the help of these means) majority of the population, but to a politically as well as economically "leading," "guiding" minority or elite of so-called capitalists. Third: this system is set up so that the working majority, the

so-called “proletariat,” derives absolutely no advantage from the technical progress of industrialization, or, if you like, of the “rationalization” of production.

The progress of industrial technology increased the labor yield, the “productivity” as it is called today. It thus creates a surplus value from labor. This “surplus value” was not, however, paid out to the working mass, but was retained by the capitalist minority. Thus the working majority of the population remained, in spite of technical progress, at the same standard of living, which was, moreover, a minimum for subsistence and thus could absolutely not be lowered. In contrast, technical progress permitted a constant increase in the capitalist minority’s income.

I say deliberately: “increase in income” and not in standard of living. For just as there is a minimum for subsistence, there is also a maximum for living {*Lebensmaximum*}, or, let us just say a living optimum which is not surpassed. And this optimum had already been attained by the “leading” minority long before industrialization. Marx called it very good, moreover, and said so even in his scientific works.

Thus, in fact only a very tiny part of the capitalist surplus value was consumed. Almost everything was “invested” and thus served the further progress, i.e. the constant expansion and “perfection” [?] of industrialization or rationalization of the national economy.

However, as I have mentioned, the “capitalism” Marx has in view was set up so that the working majority absolutely did not profit from this progress. And while they did not become poorer in absolute terms (which was completely impossible anyway), they did become so relatively: the difference between {their income and} the combined income of the elite became ever greater.

From this Marxist theory of capital formation and surplus value, Marx himself and the so-called Marxists of the 19th century derived the well-known social and political consequences. The so-called “social Revolution” was prophesied as a historical necessity. It was said: capital formation founded on surplus value destroys the social equilibrium; the entire system will thus collapse sooner or later. And this violent collapse of capitalism was called “social revolution.”

Now, it can be ascertained, without further ado, that the Marxist soothsayers erred. For precisely in the really capitalist countries, there was no “social revolution.” [And today not a single serious person seriously asserts that there is still any possibility for such a revolution in these countries.]

But while it is no longer possible to deny these facts seriously today, it is possible to interpret them falsely. One could assert that Marx erred in his prediction because the theoretical foundations of these predictions were false. [And that was actually asserted very often.] But, in my opinion, such an interpretation is not only false in itself, but also dangerous. For Marx erred, in fact, not because he was theoretically wrong, but rather right.

For how did this error, certainly generally recognized today, actually come about? It was not that there was no revolution in the West, although the capital-

ism Marx described continued to exist there. It was also not because of this that Marx erred, because (as one liked to assert in the last century) absolutely nothing like the capitalism he described existed. In fact, Marx erred, first of all, because in his time capitalism was exactly what he said it was, and secondly, because this capitalism resolved its economic defects—or, if one likes, “contradictions”—discovered and described by Marx. Namely, in the direction Marx himself indicated. To be sure, not in a “revolutionary” and “dictatorial,” but in a peaceful and democratic way.

Marx and the Marxists really erred in only one way. They assumed that capitalists were exactly as naive and shortsighted,<sup>2</sup> exactly as unwise and blind, as the bourgeois political economists and intellectuals generally, who believed themselves to have “refuted” Marxist theory in books of varying thickness. Now, had it really been so, Marx would certainly not have erred in this way. But it was, in fact, not this way. The capitalists published the “anti-Marxist” books, sometimes even (as young students) read them, but they did exactly the opposite of what could be drawn from these books. Namely, they rebuilt capitalism in a Marxist way.

To put it briefly, the capitalists saw exactly the same thing as Marx saw and said [although independently of him, and with some delay]. Namely, that capitalism can neither progress, nor even exist, if the “surplus value” produced through industrial technologies is not divided between the capitalist minority and the working majority. In other words, the post-Marxist capitalists understood that the modern, highly industrialized capitalism of mass production not only permits, but also requires, a constant increase in the income (and of the standard of living) of the working masses. And they behaved accordingly.

In brief, the capitalists did exactly what they ought to have done according to Marxist theory in order to make the “social revolution” impossible, i.e. unnecessary. This “Marxist” reconstruction of the original capitalism was accomplished more or less anonymously. But, as always, there was a great ideologue here, too. He was called Henry Ford. And thus we can say that Ford was the only great, authentic Marxist of the 20th century. [All other so-called theorists were, more or less, “Romantics” who, moreover, distorted the Marxist theories in order to apply them to noncapitalist relations, i.e. precisely to economic systems Marx did not have in view.]

Nevertheless, after Ford fully consciously did what advanced capitalists had already done before him, more or less unconsciously, along came intellectual theorists who developed Fordist ideas under the name “Full Employment,”<sup>3</sup> in a learned language incomprehensible to the average person; and they were so successful in this that it became really difficult to understand that it had to do with Fordist ideas, which were properly Marxist and therefore, as soon as they were realized, actually refuted pseudo-Marxist theories.

Be that as it may, the fact is that today, the capitalism described and criticized by Marx, i.e. old-style capitalism, which created investment capital by artifi-

cially limiting the income of the working class to the minimum for subsistence, no longer exists in any industrialized country—except for Soviet Russia. Where it is, moreover, called “socialism” if not “communism” [, but demonstrates the same sociopolitical (police-related on the one hand, and revolutionary on the other) side effects as the European capitalism of the 19th century. In full conformity with Marxist theory. For, from this theory’s perspective, it does not matter whether the surplus value is invested by private individuals or state bureaucrats. It is only important that the capital-forming surplus value is calculated such that the working masses are kept close to the minimum for subsistence.]

## II

Now, ladies and gentlemen, what I have said is absolutely not new. [These are plainly truisms today.] And you will certainly ask yourselves why I am speaking about it. All the more because my lecture is not entitled “capitalism” but “colonialism.”

Now, I have spoken about Marx and Marxist capitalism, as well as its peaceful and democratic—“political,” if you like—overcoming, because, in my opinion, this old-style capitalism has not been so totally and finally overcome as appears at first glance. Indeed, not only because it continues to exist in Soviet Russia (and in the so-called satellites) under the more or less correct name “socialism,” but also because it—unfortunately—also lives on in the West, where it is also called “colonialism” today.

Marx himself, however, had only western Europe in mind. And in his time that was also fully justified. It is less justified, however, that even today many of those who repeat or who criticize him have the same world view as an ancient Roman political economist might have had. Except that the United States of North America are also included in this “orbis terrarum” {“earthly globe”}.

In reality, however, after the 2nd World War in any case, the so-called “Western world” is absolutely no longer just European or Euro-American. It is also, and perhaps even predominantly, at least in the long term, African and Asian.

Now, when this World is looked at as a whole, i.e. as it really is, it is not difficult to see that the Marxist definition of capitalism is very well suited to this world, and indeed with all the consequences which follow “logically,” i.e. not only “actually,” but also “necessarily.”

Indeed, we see that nowadays the most important means of production belongs to a Euro-American minority which alone profits from technological progress, as it expands this minority’s income from year to year, while the Afro-Asian majority does not become poorer, to be sure, in an absolute sense (which is certainly physically impossible), but does become relatively more impoverished. At the same time, it is absolutely not true that this is a matter of two

economically divided systems. For there is a vigorous economic interaction between Euro-America and Afro-Asia. But the system is constructed such that the one, smaller part becomes richer every year through it, while the other, larger one absolutely never raises itself above the absolute minimum for subsistence.

In other words: in no industrialized country—except for Russia—today is there a “proletariat” in the Marxist sense, i.e. really poor classes of the population who can only just subsist and have no real affluence. [In the so-called “capitalist” countries everybody is, more or less, equally rich and not poor; for everybody there lives in—relative, to be sure—affluence.] But if one takes the real world as a whole, however, then one immediately sees a gigantic proletariat, precisely in the true Marxist sense of this word. And because it has to do with an economic unit, i.e. an economic system, one can thus certainly say that there is also a “surplus value” in the Marxist sense of the term, which in its totality only reaches those countries which, alone, govern the industrial means of production.

The way in which this “surplus value” is obtained and retained is, from the economic perspective, completely irrelevant. It is important only that this surplus value contributes to the capital accumulation in the industrialized countries. And thus one can, although not calmly and confidently, nevertheless still say that the modern Western economic system is also completely “capitalist,” in the Marxist sense of the word.

Nonetheless, an important difference, not only in the psychologico-political, but also in the economic respect, exists between the system where the surplus value is extracted from the working masses within the country and that where this surplus value is taken in other countries. And this difference can be terminologically fixed if the concepts capitalism, socialism and colonialism are defined in the following way. By capitalism we can understand the classic, European capitalism of the 19th century, i.e. the system where the surplus value is extracted within the country and is invested by private persons. By socialism (I do not mean the theoretical socialism, which existed nowhere yet, but the system which actually exists today in the Sovietized countries), by Soviet socialism will be understood that system in which the surplus value, is, just as in capitalism, raised within the country, but where this surplus value is invested by the state. Finally, the word “colonialism” will indicate the system where the surplus value, as in capitalism, is not invested by the state, but privately, but where it is raised not inside but outside of the country.

These definitions immediately indicate, then, that real capitalism does not exist anywhere anymore, as well as that colonialism is still related to this vanished capitalism. Thus one understands how it is that contemporary Marxists take a position on colonialism which is analogous to that which Marx took up against classic capitalism. On the one hand, they establish that {the difference} between the Afro-Asian majority and the Euro-American minority is constantly expanding; on the other hand, they infer from this that this system, because of

this lack of equilibrium, will collapse. In addition, they assume, like Marx, that they are the only ones to make these observations and to draw these conclusions from them, whereas the present-day colonialists, in contrast, will be just as blind and stupid as the capitalists were in Marx's day.

Now, were it really thus, the neo-Marxists could certainly be correct in their prediction concerning capitalism. And it is for precisely this reason that I said, at the beginning of my lecture, that it would be extremely dangerous to interpret falsely the facts that Marx's prediction with respect to capitalism went wrong. [For we saw that capitalism did not collapse, although its "contradiction" revealed by Marx continued to exist. In reality there was no social revolution in the West, because Western capitalism itself eliminated this contradiction, in a peaceful, democratic way, at that, while reconstructing its "economy" in a "Fordist" way. And] From this historical fact one can logically draw only one conclusion: namely that, in order to prevent the collapse of colonialism, this colonialism will have to be reconstructed in a rational way, which is analogous to the way in which the capitalists before, around and after Ford reconstructed the old capitalism.

### III

The situation is quite peculiar and, in a certain way, disturbing. In old capitalism, the "Marxist" contradiction was actually and actively overcome in practice by "Fordist" capitalists themselves. Only after this did the new scientific theory of so-called Full Employment<sup>4</sup> emerge, and states, in accordance with the already-existing economic system, only adjusted later. In contemporary colonialism, however, the situation is perfectly reversed. There are already many good theoretical works about the problem (as, for example, in the context of the United Nations); there are also positive governmental statements<sup>5</sup> and programs (such as, for example) President Truman's famous "Point IV"<sup>6</sup>). But the practitioners of the economy take a reserved, even sceptical position and behave as if the whole business has nothing to do with them, because it has to do with a so-called political problem.

Now it is certainly a political problem and perhaps even *the* political problem of the 20th century. But, as has been mentioned, I would like to disregard that completely. And that all the more so, since the problem is undoubtedly—and even, perhaps, above all—an economic problem. For, to put it colloquially, i.e. appropriately: poor clients are bad clients, and if the majority of a firm's clients are poor, i.e. bad, then the firm itself is a bad firm—in any case, not a sound one, but particularly not when the firm, in order to avoid going bankrupt, must expand every year. And not one person will be surprised if such a firm goes bankrupt one fine day. [Expressed in "nobler" language, this simple assertion is called the "law of [?]." But it remains true today nonetheless.]

Thus one must really ask the question today: how can colonialism be economically reconstructed in a "Fordist" way, so to speak? On the face of it, there are three conceivable methods, and all three have already been suggested.

First, one can work on the famous "terms of trade."<sup>7</sup> That is, in good German, one can pay more for goods, i.e. mainly raw materials, produced by the underdeveloped countries than has been the case until now. The purpose is to stabilize the prices of raw materials, and to do so at a level which not only allows the exporting countries to live, and not only to live securely, but also to live continually better, just as the importing countries continually live better. In other words: modern colonialism could do the same thing as old capitalism did, namely, to understand that it is not only politically, but also economically advantageous not to pay as little as possible for labor, but as much as possible. That was the real purpose of the much-discussed "Commodity agreements."<sup>8</sup> Well, they were much discussed, anyway, and in many languages, too [: five months at the Havana conference of '47, four months in the GATT in Geneva in '54]. And all countries were finally ready for it. It was all the more pleasant when it was established that there were underdeveloped people in the underdeveloped countries who could absolutely not understand why, for example, oil produced in the Middle East should cost almost half as much less than oil in Texas. Or also why, if there were a so-called world union, precisely these raw materials would go for almost nothing at all, while industrial prices would change relatively little. And so on. So, as has been mentioned, all countries were in agreement in Geneva. But: one country was against it and, what is more, on "principled grounds." But that was enough. And thus nobody speaks about it—for the moment—any more.<sup>9</sup> For the only principled country was called the USA.

Secondly, one could proceed directly. One could, namely, collect the surplus value from raw materials and anything else colonial, as before, but not invest it in the already industrialized and rich countries, but in the underdeveloped, poor countries in which the surplus value is being extracted anyway. And this could be done by world organizations suited to it: SUNFED,<sup>10</sup> or something of the kind. This has also already been much discussed: for years, and "internationally." [Although not exactly as I have just done, but in a "noble" way, as it meant that the industrialized countries were to come to the aid of the underdeveloped ones, in that they were to be financed by an international investment institution. And then everybody was finally (I mean after 5 years of studies and conferences) without exception . . . in agreement to find, altogether, \$250 million, and to put it at the disposal of all the underdeveloped countries. But the sum has still not been found—probably because it is so very small. . . .] And it is still being spoken about . . . in the United Nations!

Thirdly, one can proceed directly, not internationally, but nationally instead. That is, a given industrialized country can extract the colonial surplus value with the one (indeed, the right) hand, as all industrialized countries do nowadays, but with the other (thus the left) hand invest this surplus value, or even more than

that, in one or more underdeveloped countries. Now, if such a country really invests the entire surplus value, or even more than that, in this way, one can, to be sure, no longer speak of colonialism in the conventional sense. For then one is certainly, *de facto*, no longer taking anything, and is even giving something. And when the country in question spends far more than is collected by it, then it must even really be called anticolonialist.

As far as I know, this third method is applied by only two countries today, namely by France and by England. As far as France is concerned, no matter how high one calculates the extracted colonial surplus value to be, *i.e.* including the markup for French goods, preferential tariffs, etc., nonetheless it emerges that, since the war, France invests five to six times more in its colonies and former colonies than these colonies and ex-colonies supply in surplus value. And while I know the corresponding English figures less precisely, I do know that about the same is true for England.

To summarize the contemporary situation in the Western world, one can thus say the following:

First: the stronghold of “principled” colonialism is in Washington;

Second: all industrialized countries are *de facto* colonial—except France and England.

#### IV

I certainly do not need to bring to anybody’s attention that what has just been said should be taken *cum grano salis* {with a grain of salt}. Or, in German: it was a joke. But the philosophers call such a joke “Socratic irony” (which, moreover, can be more or less successful). In other words: my lecture is, at root, meant seriously and is, in one way or another, “pedagogical.”

What is meant seriously is that the real problem of our time and of our world is not political, but economic colonialism. For in general political colonialism no longer exists at all. Only a very few countries today are still under a truly colonial “regime.” And even if, because of these, local difficulties exist or could arise, then the whole Western world will certainly not be destroyed by them. This colonialism is no longer a world problem. In my opinion, however, economic colonialism is a world problem and a mortal danger.

What is also seriously meant is that not only is it possible to conduct colonialism without having colonies, but that, in fact, all industrialized countries—more or less<sup>11</sup> unconsciously—are colonialist, in the sense that these countries alone derive advantage from technological progress in that they become richer every year, while the backward countries remain exactly as poor as before, and therefore become relatively poorer every year.

What is seriously meant, finally, is that the problem cannot really be solved

as long as the practitioners of economics continue to stand aside. Modern colonialism requires a new collective “Ford” just as urgently as the old capitalism needed many Fords, who emerged spontaneously at the time. I mean people who produced for a mass market, which they created themselves only when they increased the wages, i.e. the production costs, for economic reasons, without expecting that the state would only create this mass market for theoretical or political reasons.

All of this seems to me to be the law of the contemporary world. In Greek: the *nomos* of the Western Earth.

I just read, in one of the wittiest and most brilliant essays that I have ever read, that the ancient Greek *nomos* develops from three roots: from taking, from division and from grazing, i.e. from use or consuming. And that seems to me to be absolutely right. But the ancient Greeks did not know that the modern *nomos* also has a fourth, perhaps central, root, namely giving. This root of the socio-political and economic law of the modern Western world escaped the ancient Greeks: maybe because they were a small heathen people, and not a great Christian power? Who knows?

One thing I know for certain. Namely, that what has just been said is absolutely no criticism of Professor Carl Schmitt. For his “division” implicitly includes my “giving”: if everything has already been taken, one can naturally divide only if some give away what the others receive.<sup>12</sup> I only wanted to point out that, from the etymological perspective, the verb “to give” perhaps sounds better than the verb “to take”—even if it means practically the same thing! Thus we say, for example, that we pay our taxes ourselves, and not that they are taken away from us!

And words have even a much larger meaning than is normally believed. In the final analysis, after all, man is distinguished from animal by language. And precisely from this linguistic perspective it is not going at all well for our Western world. The old, taking capitalism, which gave the domestic masses as little as possible, was rechristened “socialism” in Russia (at least after it was nationalized). But our modern, giving capitalism, which gives the domestic masses as much as possible, still has no name. At least, not insofar as it is giving. For insofar as it is taking, even if only from abroad, it is called “colonialism.” And who does not know this name nowadays? But the very latest thing, I want to say giving colonialism, which gives the backward countries more than it takes from them, is still anonymous. It is, to be sure, only a newborn child [thus small and weak, but is it not also unusually beautiful?]. But, in accordance with the modern Christian custom, a newborn child should be baptized and named [And that seems to be a good, a smart, custom.]

But—named or unnamed—the *nomos* of the modern Western world is, for me, undoubtedly what I have called, in an improvised and thoroughly bad way, “giving colonialism.” And because this colonialism is “law,” all industrialized

countries will, sooner or later, submit to it: particularly, however, those countries which have no so-called "colonies" to which they give anything, and which thus abandon themselves to the purest form of taking colonialism, and, moreover—normally—with an excellent conscience.

## V

Were it really so, then it would be time to ask oneself: in what amount, in which way, and to whom are the legally-required disbursements to be made in the framework of giving colonialism? I would just like to take up this question before I finish.

So first of all: How much should one pay? That is a difficult question and I would not like to take a position on that generally. I can only remind that the United Nations' experts calculated that the entire problem of the underdeveloped countries could be solved if all the developed countries invested about 3 per cent of their national revenue in the backward countries. If that is true or not, I do not know. [I do know, however, that 3 per cent in the United States would mean a considerable amount. In western Europe, too, that would yield a lot.] But I know that, independently of the theoretical calculations mentioned, France has, in fact, invested about 3 per cent of its national revenue in its colonies annually since the war. Moreover, without being ruined by that . . . [But I concede that the operative motives there were purely of an economic kind. At least they were not always so, and not everywhere.].

And, if one might extrapolate the French experience in this area, it appears that "giving colonialism" in the Western world as a whole could manage on about \$10 billion. That is certainly a burden, indeed a heavy burden. But the French example shows that this burden is, by far, not unbearable.

Secondly: How should one give? Now, I have neither time nor the desire to speak about Commodity Agreements.<sup>13</sup> [I would only like to remark sincerely that I have never succeeded in understanding the grounds for the American aversion. Thus I personally tend, of course, to see a so-called prejudice in that. But I could also be wrong.] I must, however, confess that I think our American friends are right in one respect, namely that Commodity Agreements<sup>14</sup> alone cannot solve the entire problem. Direct contributions would have to be added in any case. And here the question arises of what should be given in this direct manner. To this, in fact, two very different—even, if one likes, contradictory—answers are given today.

The American direct contributions consisted, until now, almost exclusively of consumer goods [which are certainly absolutely not primarily of the Coca-Cola type, as is sometimes maliciously asserted]. In contrast, the French and English direct contributions are exclusively on-the-spot investments (in which consumer goods are not only not given away, but are even usually sold more

expensively than they cost on the world market). [And I would like to remark, in passing, that in this respect the Anglo-French method is analogous to that which Russia is applying in China today.]

It is difficult to say which of these two methods is to be favored. For, on the one hand, it is, psychologically, decidedly easier to give away surplus consumer goods than to invest, particularly where we are dealing with investments in competing firms. And it is perhaps better, anyway, to give something than nothing at all. But on the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the industrialization of the backward countries has become a world-myth nowadays and that, until now, this myth is being realized in a spectacular way only outside the Western world, by which I mean in China. From a long way off, in Europe, it is hard to see it, but from India, which is closer, one can already see it much better! [Moreover, I believe that the industrialization of the backward countries with gigantic populations is just as necessary as it would be necessary for mass production to raise the buying power of the domestic masses {; it} is an economic necessity. Thus I must confess that I personally greatly favor the English-French method of on-the-spot investment to the American method of giving away readymade goods.]

Thirdly: To whom should one give? For many reasons I believe that, on the one hand, the international means of aid is by far not the best one, and that, on the other hand, a regional aid would be, in itself, greatly preferable to national aid. Even on purely economic grounds. Namely because there are, still today, actually natural economic regions. But these regions are, from the perspective of giving colonialism, not equal.

Let us, to begin with, take the regions, which lie outside the Western world, of the Mongolian empire, first founded by Ghengis Kahn, and which recently became politically and economically reestablished. There we see, in contrast to the 200 million relatively industrialized Russians, about 700 million underdeveloped Asians. I e.: each Russian would have to carry 3.5 “underdeveloped” people on his shoulders for many decades. That is a heavy, very heavy burden. But perhaps still not an unbearable burden [provided, however, that the Russians continue to follow the course of police-supported consumer asceticism].

Let us then look at the sterling zone. Here things look much worse. For here each Englishman would have to carry about 10 “underdeveloped” Asians on his shoulders. And that would be absolutely unbearable. In spite of the much-prized British “austerity,”<sup>15</sup> which is, however, decidedly less “ascetic” than Soviet socialism, and which rests, moreover, on a pure moral-religious and not on a police {*polizeiliche*} foundation. Thus it seems that in this region, the future giving colonialism must be not purely English, but Anglo-Saxon, i.e. Anglo-American.

If, however, one also adds India, with Indonesia and Indo-China, to the total North and South American region, even if only partially, in this way one arrives at a per capita burden on the Américains which is proportionately larger than is

the burden on the Russians of the Chinese. Because however, in the very long run, the American national product is becoming much higher than the Russian one, it will thus be possible for America to attain decidedly better results than Russia without giving up the "American way of life"<sup>16</sup> [which, moreover, is not a path of "austerity," to say nothing of "asceticism"].

And now, last but not least,<sup>17</sup> the European region. Like the Mongolian one, this region also has an old, very old, history. For this region was once called the Imperium Romanum and economically preserved itself astonishingly viably and robustly. Indeed, modern historians have established that this economic region would have preserved itself, i.e. reestablished itself, even despite the barbarian wars, if the Islamic conquest of the Mediterranean, which was the connecting link of one single economic world, had not converted it into a border between two worlds, so that for centuries it longer served commercial traffic, but became almost exclusively a theater of military games.

But people have meanwhile become more serious, more adult; and the time is certainly not far off where they will no longer play at all. Thus one can certainly calmly and confidently say that the economic conditions of the Mediterranean region's economic unity have been restored. And here one must say that, from the perspective of giving colonialism, this economic region is a region which has been blessed by God. For each inhabitant of the industrialized countries north of the Mediterranean only needs to look after one half of an inhabitant of the backward southern and eastern countries of this region in order to attain the same, or even better, results as anywhere else in the whole world. And half a man per head is, for Europe, no burden at all, but instead is, so to speak, just stabilizing ballast, which is well known to be very useful, but which nonetheless does not make itself felt directly.

Thus one is all the more astonished when one reads in the newspapers that giving colonialism in the Mediterranean must get its financial resources from far away. For these resources could in fact be found much farther away, indeed. For the sums concerned, and which are spoken of, are relatively so small that they are really "à l'échelle européenne" {on the European scale}, even if one likes to speak, rightly, of "small" or even "smallest" Europe, in contrast to the contemporary superpowers.

[These sums are all the more natural when in this "small Europe" there are at least two or three countries which must notice that the high rate at which they are becoming wealthier is economically destabilizing. Thus these countries would like to become wealthier somewhat more slowly, and they use perfectly adequate means for that: more importing, reducing tariffs, etc. All of this is, undoubtedly, very clever and even wise. But it should perhaps not be forgotten that, in fact, all these resources can serve to improve life by only a little in a place where one already lives "like God in France" {*wie Gott in Frankreich*}.<sup>18</sup> The really poor members of the economic Mediterranean region will not become richer in this way. If nothing more serious than this is done, if giving colonial-

ism is not practiced as well, then the southern and eastern Mediterranean clients will remain, as before, poor clients; and that also means: bad or even “dangerous” clients.]

I must stop here! I have already spoken a lot, as well as long. And I notice that I have not even begun my actual lecture. For what was just said was only an introduction to it.

Thus I must summarize my lecture very briefly.

The title reads: Colonialism from the European perspective. I should thus have explained how colonialism looks from this perspective: at least in my opinion. Now, how does it look to me? Or: how should it, in my opinion, look in reality? In other words: what should it be?

My answer is the following:

First: it should not be a taking but a giving (if you like: a dividing, or sharing) colonialism. [And it would be good to find a fitting name for it.]

Secondly: it should not give away readymade goods, but invest productively on the spot.

Thirdly: as really European giving colonialism it should cover the entire area (and perhaps only the area) which lies around the Mediterranean and which has historically proven itself to be a viable economic region; an area which is, however, nowadays only half-covered—in my view, adequately—by French giving colonialism.

That can suffice as an outline of my theme. For the actual execution of this theme, however, I have no more time—and I’m very sorry for that!

That all the more so as I have, so far, only stated mere truisms. And that is, for listeners, always somewhat disappointing. So I must also apologize for that.

But I must confess that I personally have a weakness for truisms, precisely because they are truths. The original, however, if it is not perfectly brilliant, always runs the risk of showing itself, sooner or later, simply to be wrong.

And I absolutely wanted to avoid the risk of coming to Düsseldorf at the friendly invitation of the R-R Club, but stating something false.

1. Text in square brackets appeared in the German text but was omitted from Kojève’s French version of the text as published in *Commentaire* (Kojève, 1980 and 1999).

2. Reading *kurzsichtig* where Tommissen’s edition reads *durzsichtig*.

3. In English.

4. “Full Employment” appears here in English.

5. In Tommissen’s edition these two words are illegible, but they appear in Kojève’s own French translation (Kojève, 1999, p. 560).

6. In English.

7. In English.

8. In English.

9. Several commodity agreements were subsequently successfully constructed under the so-called New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the 1970s, but all except for the rubber commodity agreement failed, mainly due to lack of political support (Gilbert, 1996).

10. The Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development was proposed by developing nations in 1952 as an alternative to the World Bank, controlled by wealthy states, particularly the

United States. A UN committee was formed and recommended the formation of SUNFED, a \$250 million third-world capital fund, in 1953. The third-world states pressed hard, but the United States ultimately prevailed in 1959 with its compromise solution: the International Development Association (IDA) offered the third world loans on much easier terms than the World Bank did, but was run by the World Bank (Nossiter, 1987, pp. 34–37; United Nations, 1953).

11. Reading *weniger* where Tommissen's edition reads *eniger*.

12. Schmitt takes up this point in a 1959 essay: "In a world made by people for people—and sometimes unfortunately also against people—man can *give* without *taking*" (Schmitt, 1995, p. 583).

13. "Commodity Agreements" appears here in English.

14. "Commodity Agreements" appears here in English.

15. In English.

16. In English.

17. "Last but not least" appears here in English.

18. I.e. in luxury.

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