

The signs of communism -
signs of ambiguity.
Language and communism

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1.

Since the founding of modern linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure we have become accustomed to see words and more complex constructions of linguistical matter *as signs*. When we speak of language, a sign is a double expression of sound and content. We have a sound, for instance the sound sequence [kåmjunizm], and we have a whole catalogue of content which is attached to this arbitrary sound. In the tradition of Saussure we call these two aspects: *signifiant* og *signifié*. Together they form a sign.

If we look at *the language of communism* as a distinct linguistical system or community it shows some immediate peculiarities: 1) first of all it is a multilingual system, the words and sentences can be expressed in any language but there is a hierarchy in this multilingual system. At the top of the hierarchy you'll find Russian and German, if we speak only of the Comintern-system. On the next level you'll find other principal languages: English, French and Spanish, and maybe some others. On the third level you'll find the vernaculars. 2) secondly, although the multilingual system corresponds to the fact, that the CI (Communist International/Comintern) was an international organization, the significance of this hierarchy was that *meaning and content* could only flow from top to bottom. 3) thirdly, it is a very important feature of this language community, that in the sign-system it uses the relation between signifiants og signifiés was characterized by a fundamental ambiguity. In the first part of my article I shall deal with these problems.

1.1

Traditionally the language of socialism was German, it was the language of Marx, and it was the language of the first social democracy. When *Capital* was translated into French and English it already revealed, that these languages didn't have the conceptual tradition used by Marx, and many of his *Hegelianizations* were untranslatable - a problem running all the way down through the history of Marxism.

Although the language of Leninism was Russian, socialists in Russia still accepted the fact, that German was *the* language of socialism. When the CI was founded it was planned and conceptualized as an international organization, but very quickly German became the chief language. That is to say, even though in the beginning there were 'language-groups' ('sprachgruppen') according to the principal languages, German became the most used language internally. Some of the leaders of the CI (e.g. Trotsky) knew French, some of them knew a little English, but most of them knew - beside their native language - only German. It was essential for everyone to know German.

However, it very soon turned out that the German party wasn't the decisive party in the CI. The decisive party was the Russian one, the VKP(B) as it was called, and from the very beginning both money and the upper strata of leaders were Russian. More important was the fact, that the Russian party was the decisive one due to the fact, that it had carried out a

successful revolution; it had after all both the authority and the power.

This tendency became stronger over the years, especially during the years of terror, when the NKVD was integrated into the structure of the CI. In those years the general secretary was a Bulgarian, who spoke poor Russian but could nevertheless make himself understood in Russian.

Then, inside the first level of the hierarchy Russian turned out to be the centre of *meaning, money, power and authority*, while that of German turned out to be the intermediary between Russian (the core language of communism) and all the other languages.

At the second level in the hierarchy, the principal languages only functioned in a pragmatic manner. These were the languages used by the CI press. Much of the propaganda used by parties speaking these languages would use material directly processed by the CI.

At the third level there was a multitude of languages. In the CI archives more than 120 languages are found. The users of these languages had to translate from one of the top languages and had to invent new words to secure the right translation. Words which might have sounded 'natural' in Russian or in German became words which in Chinese, Arabic and Danish sounded odd and by their use exposed the users as marginal in their own language.

1.2

As already stated it very quickly showed who had the power and the money in the CI, but it also determined the uses of meaning, content, and even words. The language of communism very quickly showed a process with very little feed-back.

This is peculiar because of the very structure of communism. 'Communism' by and large consisted of two entities: 1) the Soviet Union, i.e. the realized Utopia, and 2) the communist movement inside 'hostile' societies, of whatever kind they might be. The ultimate aim of communism was world revolution - the realization of Utopia everywhere - yet the conditions of class struggle were very different in each country. Therefore it might be thought that a great deal of feed-back would be necessary to the Russian-speaking leaders. Although some ideas (e.g. United Front and Popular Front) came from outside, the fundamental rhythm in the flow of meaning was *from* the VKP(B) *to* the other parties.

This wasn't done without protests, clashes, splits and even bans on parties but it was nevertheless upheld throughout the CI period.

1.3

The two components of communism developed very differently in terms of language. The Soviet Union developed a language characteristic of a dictatorship. Words didn't correspond to reality and signifiants and signifiés became opposed to each other. George Orwell has used this fact in a very perceptive way in his novel *1984* with the language *Newspeak*. First of all the word 'socialism' and later the word 'communism' was attached to the reality of Soviet society. The dictatorship of the proletariat was attached to the dictatorship of the party. Lawsuit was attached to the special kind of tribunates used in the Soviet Union. Although there was this tearing apart of the signs of the political language, it was at least realized by a huge part of the population in the Soviet Union. For them communism was *not* a sign of positivity, instead it meant: the GULAG, queuing up, hierarchies; in short the defeat of enlightenment and working class culture.

The other component, the communist movement, consisted of lots of parties fighting for revolution in lots of countries under very different conditions. In some places the parties were legal while in others illegal. In some places they existed in highly developed capitalist

countries, in others they fought against imperialist rule or feudal lords. In some countries, they were the only or the biggest working class party, in others they were minority parties. Nevertheless, in all these very different places the parties had to use the same language of communism (translated into their vernacular) and to change politics to the same rhythm.

For the movement throughout the world many of the central words fetched their meaning from a non-existing entity - 'the Soviet Union'. To them 'communism' meant something very positive and something they could often describe very precisely. The non-existing entity from where they fetched the meaning attached to the words to form the signs of their political language came from many sources. The most influential was the authority which their imagination attached to the Russian revolution and to the establishment of the Soviet Union. This non-existing, fantasized entity was developed from the late twenties by visitors, who wrote accounts of their visits to 'Utopia'. Because they had actually been there, their accounts carried a lot of authority, and what is more important: their accounts had authority enough to destroy any deviating account of which there were plenty, at least in Western Europe.

How could this so be? I won't go into detail here, but only give a sketch of it. The famous Danish author Martin Andersen Nexø, who wrote the classic novel *Pelle the Conqueror*, visited Soviet Union already in 1922. He wrote in his book with the revealing title *Towards Dawn* that in some way he hadn't had to go there to know what a workers' empire would be like. He said, that in deciphering the Russian reality you have to *read forwards*. This means that you have to look for all the growing signs of the new society and write about them. All the signs of the old, vanishing society, you should not deal with, because they're not socialism. This seems to be at least one procedure used in some 'Travellers' Accounts'. But in the construction of the fantasized Soviet Union an amount of control is also present. The organization VOKS which was in charge of delegations and visits controlled to a large extent what was to be seen. Finally, one has to count also on a certain degree of cynicism in many accounts: authors who knew better, but who lied to serve the cause, some later admitted this.

In this respect a large part of the vocabulary and even the language of communism used the same signifiants as did the citizens of the Soviet Union, but the signifiés were very different. The central signs in this language were marked by a fundamental ambiguity. You could say, that the same signifiants were used in two different language communities: the Russian community and the language community of communism.

A second feature was that many word/term loans from Russian found their way into these many versions of the language of communism. A word like *Б@BJHR48*, [poputnik], meaning somebody who makes the road with somebody, was used by the Bolsheviks to designate in a rather negative fashion those who agreed to a certain point with the communists, but who didn't want to become a member of the party. This word was especially designed to be used in connection with intellectuals. In English the word is *fellow traveller* and in French *compagnon de route*. These words existed already in English and French and if you consult bigger dictionaries, they'll have the pejorative meaning as a special feature. In Danish an already existing word was used, too. The word is *medløber*, and it is even very close in meaning to the Russian word and means: somebody who at least in part opportunistically runs with the powerful. Here the word has only a negative connotation and cannot be used in a neutral way. That means, that these translational 'loans' have a different meaning in different language communities. In other cases like 'central committee', 'politbureau' etc. words were simply constructed the same way as in Russian as latinizing loans while in others entirely new words had to be constructed, as for instance in connection with the publication of

the minutes of the big show trials many Russian invectives had to be constructed. For instance the Russian words like *vreditel'* or *diversant* were in English translated with the word *wrecker*, an already existing word. However, in Danish the translators constructed a new word, *skadegører*. The word is easy to understand, but it is odd, because it doesn't exist. The word was later used in the Soviet)"HF8@-DJF846 F:@&"D\[Datsko-ruskij slovar], but in no Danish dictionary.

By and large the biggest lingual problem is connected with the uniform and monolithic use of political language in the CI. From the beginning of the twenties the language of communism was created by translating the words like: united front, cells, unity from below, class against class, social fascism, revolutionary trade union opposition, popular front etc. All these words were used uniformly by all sections. In principle they meant the same but in reality they meant very different things. They were constructed as signs, but they were primarily signifiants.

In the history of research into the movement of communism the idea of the monolith has a strong tradition. It dissolved in the 80s due to new knowledge, but in reality this idea as well as the idea of totalitarianism was a mirror picture of the 'will of the system'. What the researchers saw was the monolith of signifiants.

The idea of the CI as a centralised world party is based on the notion of a collective and panoptical knowledge. There is no doubt that Lenin meant it that way: the party could produce knowledge in such a form, that it would be possible from a certain spot to act as the general staff of world revolution. The number one weapon of this general staff is the knowledge of the Laws of History. Since the CC or the ECCI can survey History and comprehend its hidden meaning, it is possible for this Panopticon to shorten the road History has to go. This might lead to heightened pain for a while, but in the long run it will be a relief. This panoptical and teleological form of knowledge is probably an illegitimate child of the Enlightenment and Jacobinism or of the Enlightenment and Tsarism one might say. Because in modern science it has become more and more clear since the beginning of this century (beginning with Einstein, Bohr and Rutherford), that the structure of knowledge doesn't have this form unless you have the resources to try to form it that way. Hence the problem of any modern ministry of science or planning institute of research.

When it comes to relatively abstract knowledge like tendencies in capital accumulation or the like, it might be possible to set up a uniform language for a greater part of the world. This is what actually is going on in many sciences. But when it comes to the construction of policies for the transformation of social organisms with historically shaped social classes, factions and groups panoptical knowledge is a phantom. The dream about the world party was more and more modelled on the reality of the Soviet Union. The idea of the monolith is this dream. In reality no history of any party can be reduced to the same schema.

In reality, but to a lesser extent, the same problem reproduces itself on a national scale if you go into detail with more than one local party unit, which I have tried to do in Denmark. The conditions of work varies to an extent that makes the variety of signifiés that big, that it sometimes seems artificial to use the same signifiant.

What possibilities did the CI's leading strata have, when they were confronted with this ambiguity in the signs of their political language? If they wanted to uphold their idea of the panoptical knowledge of the world party, they could either choose to change their knowledge of the local realities and change the signifiants accordingly, or they could choose to change the reality and uphold the signifiants. In fact we see both in the history of the CI.

In the period from the beginning of 1933 through the 13th plenum of the ECCI to sometime in 1934 the CI would not acknowledge the reality of nazism. Then the leadership

accepted the formula of popular front for France. This was a victory of local knowledge over the panoptical but very soon - at the 7th World Congress - this local knowledge was again turned into a general tactic and applied to any section of the CI.

I think, in this question a language of pragmatics confronts a language of the universal and the last has a religious appeal, which the first one doesn't have. To the movement of communism, there was a clear link between the fundamental ambiguity of their political language and the social construction of communism as a rational world view with a secret religious room at its heart. Communism presented itself as a rational world view in accordance with scientific discourse but right at its heart there was this secret place. In this chamber of the heart was placed the most fundamental question: 'is the Soviet Union a socialist society', and henceforth: 'what is socialism?'. These interconnected questions were put outside parenthesis, they could not be posed. Everybody was expected to know the answers - answers that made the Soviet Union a holy country, a country that could not be analysed rationally and scientifically, because the answers were known in advance.

When we're speaking of the language of communism, an interesting problem is connected to the problem of continuity or rupture in the use of a certain set of signifiants. We see in the history of communism a whole series of drastic ruptures or shifts in tactics and connected with this, shifts in language. It seems as if in the communist movement there was both a strong feeling for the continuity of language and on the other hand a masochistic lust in the ruptures. Paradoxically both are connected to the religious level of communism. The language of communism (like many of its rituals, e.g. the 'Red Front'-and-fist salute) pointed the users out as 'such ones'. This could be positive but also marginalising. For the users this became an important part of their identity and therefore important to maintain. We know from the history of the Christian sects, that especially the continuity of language has to do with authority and identity and we know of many fights in the history of Christianity over the question of translation or the change in translation of the Bible. But on the other hand it became an integrated part of the life as a communist, to learn very quickly to use a new vocabulary, sometimes overnight. Paradoxically the sacrifice of continuity became a confirmation of identity through the endorsement and acceptance of the Party's panoptical knowledge, possibly unreadable to the layman. The sacrifice had a price, but the benefit was in a masochistic way a strengthening of your identity.

2.

In the history of Danish communism there are lots of examples of these mechanisms. I won't recount them all. Instead I will give a series of examples, that show the range of the problem.

First of all there is the typological problem: Denmark is a country with an expansive, self-confident and dominant social-democratic working-class-culture. This fundamental issue was never really understood by the CI leaders. In fact many of them (except for the very few who had been to Scandinavia) understood each country in accordance with their *own* experience. One of the old leaders of the Danish CP once told me, that in the twenties the chairman of the Danish party was advised by a Hungarian in the CI: "Remember: never forget the Catholic workers". This might be very important in Hungary, but in Denmark Catholic workers were probably not counted in more than hundreds.

A special feature of the Danish left emerging in the period 1910-18 was that it was ultra-democratic in its outlook. There is a very simple explanation for this: they were opponents to the ruling Social-Democratic Party which in fact was a democratic centralist party. If we look at the written organizational rules of Socialistisk Arbejderparti [Socialist Workers' Party], Venstresocialisterne [Left-Socialists] and the DKP [the Communist Party of Denmark]

between 1918 and 1930 we see a very clear development. Initially in the statutes' principles the rights of the members in respect to the leadership was clearly expressed. This principle was developed to such an extent, that it was stated, that the minutes of the leadership had to be read out at the general assembly. As the decade unfolded the opposite principle began to dominate: now the statutes underlined the rights of the leadership with regards the members. This was due to the homogenization of the statutes in the CI. However, in reality it took a decade to erode the tradition emerging from this first period: the tradition of common general assembly in the Copenhagen Area.

2.1

When the Danish Left Socialist Party after the second congress of the CI discussed the implications of the 21 conditions for entry, the question was raised: what do periodic purges mean? And the chairman answered: I believe, this can be discussed. Probably he meant by this that the 21 conditions were merely expressing general principles. He assumed that it must be possible to discuss these matters with the CI, in a language of pragmatics. But he soon found out, that discussion was neither needed nor possible.

In 1921 a students' group contacted the party. This group developed in the following years into an important cultural initiative. It was organized as an autonomous unit although this was against the rules of the CI. According to these rules a students' group should form a part of the Youth organization. Despite the fact that the Youth organization was in a state of dissolution the party had to conform to the rules, or as one might say: change the signifié in the sign 'communist students' group' accordingly. By pressure and infiltration the party succeeded in ensuring the dissolution of the students' group. Conforming the sign to communist language succeeded, but the signifié disappeared.

2.2

The bolshevization of the Danish CP was delayed to such an extent, that in 1928 the CI sent the German communist and later Soviet super-spy Richard Sorge to Denmark for half a year to change the organizational structure into cells. The structure of the party was geographical according to the structure of Danish parliamentary system. He tried to establish factory cells. However, at that time Danish factories were predominantly small plants with only a few medium and really large factories. This meant, that it was only possible for him to create factory cells in the very limited number of big factories in Copenhagen, all the other cells were so-called street-cells. Thus in reality he merely changed the system from one geographical principle to another geographical principle. And then the party was bolshevized. Or was it?

There were many difficulties in applying ultra-left policies to Danish realities. Although the leader of the Danish party, Thøger Thøgersen, after the 6th world congress wrote in the ultra-left tongue of class against class, he had some very bad marks in Moscow, especially after the general elections in 1929 when the party got its lowest percentage at the polls in the decade. And around new year the CI simply dismissed Thøgersen and his central committee and found some new 'factory workers' to lead the party. This inaugurated a fierce factional fight for 12 years, ending with the victory of Aksel Larsen, who became the chairman for more than 25 years.

The new leadership proved more ultra-left by applying the Strasbourg theses to trade union struggles. In 1931 there was a big conflict in the shoe industry led by a

left-wing-alliance in the Shoe-factory-workers' union. According to the Strasbourg theses the leadership of the strike should be elected directly from the factory floor without the interference of the union. The person responsible for union-politics in the secretariat of the CP found this completely incomprehensible since the CP was rather strong in the union, but relatively weak in many factories, due to the relatively small size of the average shoe-factory.

The leadership of the party excluded the secretary responsible for union politics and demanded, that the communists in the Shoe-factory-workers' union should go against their union and demand strike-leaderships elected directly in the factories. They actually did so and the left-wing alliance split in two, losing the leadership to the social-democrats and losing the strike. But it was done in accordance with the Strasbourg theses. This means, that upholding the sign of 'unity from below' led to a defeat.

2.3

An example of more linguistical interest might be the story about translating Stalin into Danish. When translating one of Stalin=s speeches for a booklet in 1936, the leader of the publishing house of the Danish CP cut out some of the ovations. These were passages which we all know of, passages where people stand and make interjections such as 'Long Live the Great Stalin', bursting into 'International' in countless languages etc. He felt, that these passages might seem a bit too much for an average Dane.

In the CI publishing department this was discovered and somebody was sent to Copenhagen to ask what the 'hell was going on'. The leader of the Danish CP publishing house was told by the envoy, that when the party published a collection of the speeches from the 8th All-Union-Soviet-Congress he should do it as precisely as it was in the Russian edition. The envoy told him, that maybe it had not happened exactly the way the ovations were described, but they expressed the deep love of the Russian people towards the great Stalin.

In fact he wrote a critical note to Dimitrov, who urged Florin to set up a critique of the Danish CC. He wrote in this letter, that there was a big difference between a speech of the day in the Danish parliament and a speech of world historical importance by the leader of the world proletariat. The Danish CP had to realize this important difference.

In this rather ridiculous story we see, that the leaders of the CI know, that the ovations described in the speeches were a 'pure' sign, i.e. a signifiant without a signifié. The pure sign has to create its own reference, its own signifié. The importance of this sign is its ritual bearing: the presence of the sign in the translation is the mark of the difference between a speech of the day of , say Aksel Larsen, and of historical importance, that of the great Stalin.

Read in a Danish context, these ovations said something different. This was shown by the leader of the publishing house who omitted the ovations. Maybe he felt, that they actually ridiculed Stalin. That they were so much 'overkill', that they diminished him instead of enlarging him. I think he corrected the text in accordance with his deep feelings towards communism and Stalin. He tried to correct the sequence of signs constituting the cloud of connotations around the denotation of Stalin.

In linguistics a verbal sign has a lexical precise meaning, this is called *denotation*. But around this is a lot of extra-meaning coming from previous use of the sign in other verbal sequences, this is called *connotation*.

The discussion - or whatever one would like to call it - between Copenhagen and Moscow could then be described as a contradiction between different uses of the sign. The 'public sphere' ('öffentlichkeit') of the CI was like the Russian representative and accordingly

the CI leaders gave much attention to rituals of power. The 'public sphere' of the Danish CP was bourgeois or democratic, and accordingly the party had to work inside the meaning of the verbal signs. The orders from the ECCI then, had the opposite effect of the intention: Stalin was ridiculed instead of enlarged.

2.4

If we look at the period of the popular front 1935-39, it is in many ways a good period for the Danish party. The membership is growing, influence in trade unions is growing, the party press is growing.

An important feature of this period is a distinct change in the language of communism. The language of this period is marked by its Danish character. Much of the sect-language of the ultra-left period was put aside and a new assimilation to Danish political culture is evident. This is both apparent in the use of words and in the insistence of being a part of a Danish tradition. For instance at the all-country party conference in 1938 Aksel Larsen made a famous speech in which he used the expression "We call for gathering". He didn't use the word 'unity' (*enhed*), but 'gathering' (*samling*) and precisely this difference, calling for connotations like 'the gathering of the village', 'the gathering of the workers', signals roots in Danish political culture. The word 'gathering' seems much more concrete than unity, although their denotations are the same. In this speech he stated, that the Danish CP was a *Danish* party opposed to anything like a violent seizure of power.

This new language we interpreted for a long time as expressing a greater degree of autonomy from Moscow. But we now know this is not so. With the new knowledge from the archives, we know that the period of Terror paradoxically showed a new and freer language. But it didn't correspond to greater autonomy, but to new political forms and aims.

The policy of the popular front was greeted by the Danish Party and actually in the years 1935-37 plenty of efforts were made to create the united front that could be the basis of a popular front. In the Danish social democrats archives we can read all the proposals put forward by the Danish CP to create a united front. Before 1935 they were written with the intention to get a 'no' to the proposals. The 'no' could then show the social-fascist character of the social democrats. But the proposals put forward after 1935 were not of that kind, they were very realistic, for instance a proposal to conduct a common public meeting on the Spanish civil war instead of arranging two on the same evening in the same town or a proposal to hold a common May-Day-demonstration, with the condition, that the SD-speaker would talk about fascism. However, all proposals were turned down, ridiculed in the press or simply not answered and when the communists actually joined the May-Day-demonstration, Thorvald Stauning, the social democratic premier, did not mention fascism but made a speech against communism.

This shows the fundamental problem of being a communist in Denmark. At the general election in 1935 the SD got 46% of the votes, the CP 1,6%! There was no need whatsoever for the social democrats to make unity with the CP. They felt they were the unity themselves.

Estranged by this frustrating development Aksel Larsen proposed a new policy especially designed for Denmark in the ECCI. This policy aimed at possible contradictions between the social democrats and their governmental partner, the Radical Party. I'm not so sure, that this policy would do either, but at least it was a concrete response to Danish circumstances. In the summer 1937 Aksel Larsen was called to Moscow to negotiate this policy. He very soon found out, that there was no hope for any special Danish arrangements: the policy was popular front and nothing else.

This visit to Moscow became a visit of destiny for Larsen. When living in Russia from 1925-29 he had belonged to the party opposition in the Russian party and his *spravka* had this underlined in red. In the papers we find a drawing of Larsen in the spider's web: he had threads to Trotskyites like Marie Nielsen (excluded in 1936), to a homosexual count and to other dubious activities. In fact the NKVD had decided to arrest him. However, Dimitrov probably intervened by saying, that they couldn't arrest a member of the Danish Parliament as it would be too risky with regards to Russian foreign policy. He was then given back his passport after having accepted popular front-policies in Denmark. The Danish ECCI envoy to Moscow, Arne Munch-Petersen, who was actually about to return to Denmark after 3 years in Moscow was arrested instead of Larsen by the NKVD. We know of his interrogations, since they have been found in the archives of the NKVD - 300 pages of interrogations around the question of Trotskyism in the Danish party. Probably the NKVD went for 'proofs' against Larsen for later use. Despite this they never arrested him although he returned to Moscow several times in the following years. Munch-Petersen was not so fortunate as he died of tuberculosis in Butyrka in 1940. We did not get to know this until 1989.

If we reconsider this sequence of events from the linguistic point of view there are two different directions we can go:

2.4.1

When Larsen was called to Moscow, the Centre insisted that popular front policies could and should be applied to Danish circumstances. Although the foundations for this policy evolved and was laid down in areas where the mutual relations of size between communism, social-democracy and the petty-bourgeois centre were more equal than in Denmark, the ECCI insisted, that the signifié of the sign 'popular front' could be anything. It could be France or Spain, but it could just as well be the countries of Northern Europe with their huge social democratic parties. Then, when the ECCI insisted, that popular front was an over-all scheme, they insisted on the fundamental ambiguity of the language of communism.

In one respect this language however was anything but ambiguous. The ECCI didn't discuss, the ECCI gave orders and since 1935 NKVD has had its seat in the leading bodies. For Larsen this meant, that maintaining the over-all scheme of the popular front became a question of life and death. The other side of ambiguity was the very special philosophy of the individual laid down in the *spravka* of the cadre department. According to this philosophy the only constant feature of an individual is its failures, political as well as personal. A *spravka* is normally an outline of failures, that traces a current weakness or a failing of the present back to previous failures. The answer to the question: How come that Larsen does not support popular frontism? is to be found in his record of failures, not in the rationale of Danish class structures and struggles.

2.4.2

To Arne Munch-Petersen the question was very different. He was a very loyal and gifted Stalinist. He had no failures and had never been a Trotskyite. When he was arrested he was most obliging. He would tell his interrogators anything about his activities, because he had nothing to hide.

As matters unfolded Munch-Petersen became very astonished because the interrogators were not the least interested in reconstructing reality. Their job was a fictional one. They had written his testimony beforehand. His job was to sign it. This testimony had nothing to do with reality, but it was in harmony with a grand narrative of the Terror, the narrative of treason, wrecking, and Trotskyism directed at a counterrevolution in the Soviet Union.

Munch-Petersen refused to sign the fictional narrative and was tortured to do so. When he woke up after having signed the fictional narrative, he withdrew his signature and torture started over again. He thought, that he had been dropped by accident into a little corner of the system, where everybody had gone mad. He therefore wrote letters to Stalin, Dimitrov and Beria to inform them about this abnormality, but the letters didn't go further than his dossier. He was unable to see his own situation as a mirror of the system.

In this kafkasque process he was slowly absorbed into the fiction. He was trying to make the fiction fit with reality and made up theses about how the Trotskyism of Larsen could have worked behind his back. Both his reality and the language in which he could put reality into verbal terms was slowly altered and estranged. To him 'socialism' was a sign of truth, not a sign of fiction. He thought of the Soviet reality as 'socialism' and when he was forced into a part of this reality, that endangered this sign, he encapsulated this experience outside the sign. It could not be a part of its signifié. Reversely the reality he knew very well, the reality of the Danish party slowly changed and assimilated with the grand narrative of the Terror. To him this was also a question of life and death.

Some time after his arrest four members of the leadership of the Danish CP were informed by the Swede Sven Linderot, that Munch-Petersen had been arrested as a spy-trotskyite. They accepted this even if they had their doubts about Munch-Petersen's guilt. Actually we don't know anything about their doubts, since all four had died when the truth was eventually revealed. But we know how his wife reacted. She lived long enough to learn the truth. She thought that Munch-Petersen had been assigned to a secret job in the Soviet Union and that he had met another woman there. She tried for years to reach out to him by sending letters and by going there just to look for him. In a way she reacted the same way as her husband: she repaired the sign of 'reality', so that the sign of 'socialism' would not be changed or its value endangered.

2.5

When the war broke out, the relations between Copenhagen and Moscow were cut off. In the beginning there were some telephone or radio connections, but the chain of command was severed. In June 1941 the CP was sent underground and resistance began. In this process politics had to find new signs to live in. And it did so very successfully. It is very impressive that the most successful part of Danish communist history is from 1943-1947. The dissolution of the CI was greeted by the party by an offer to all other resistance organizations to join an underground government, the Freedom Council. The occasion of the CI's dissolution was the beginning of a policy of unity never realised before - although without the social democrats. The down-fall of the CP began when it from 1947 again was reintegrated into the communist movement and language with the acceptance of the two-camps-policy.

3.

This rather short exposé has shown, that the language of communism is a language of ambiguity. This ambiguity has its roots in two very different but connected problems. One problem is the dual reality of the realised Utopia in Soviet Union *and* the Communist Movement. Some of the signs of the language of Communism were rooted in the Soviet reality, but had a different content in the movement. The other problem is the very character of the movement as a general staff of world revolution. This notion was upheld although the function changed into a part of Soviet foreign policy. But the political language of this movement was based on a uniformity, that made the signs of the language fundamentally ambiguous: the same signifiant corresponded to hundreds of signifiés.

After WW2 the people's democracies were created. During the long period from 1947 until Gorbachev the language of communism developed further as a more and more ritual and 'empty' language. This process is outside the scope of this exposé.