

WORKERS, PROLETARIANS,
AND INTELLECTUALS

The term proletariat became ambiguous when it no longer denoted industrial workers alone.

In the writings of Marx himself, one can trace the origin of a distinction between the working class and the proletariat, between factory workers as such and the total dehumanization which the term proletariat suggests. This distinction remains a virtual one for Marx and Marxists, because neither the prophet nor his disciples questioned, officially, the coincidence of these two definitions: it is the industrial workers who possess, *par excellence*, the proletarian characteristics of exclusion from the community and of disintegration of all special traits. And so one does not feel the need to separate the concrete group to which the term applies from the social condition or the state of mind that it evokes.

This separation has become indispensable ever since the spread of what we propose to call the “Toynbee interpretation” of the concept. According to this definition, any group of men is proletarianized that is *in* a civilization without really being part of it, that has lost its traditional conditions of existence and believes itself to be the victim of injustice. “The true characteristic mark of the proletariat is neither poverty nor lowly birth but awareness of and resentment at being disinherited.” And elsewhere: “The

Workers, Proletarians, and Intellectuals

proletariat, indeed, is a state of mind rather than the consequence of external conditions.”¹

Thus defined, the “proletariat”² is less the effect of economic causes than of wars, internal strife, urban contacts and civilization. Doubtless the peasant proprietors of Italy, victims of Hannibal’s depredations, or ruined by the influx of wheat from the empire’s provinces, and, even more, the English peasants, driven from the country by the enclosure of common fields, by the substitution of grazing for the cultivation of cereals, belong to this category: they have been uprooted, hurled into the anonymity of streets or factories. They have neither a recognized status nor the feeling of belonging to a class that performs an honorable and indispensable function in the collectivity.

Peasants (farmers or agricultural workers), impoverished shopkeepers, specialized workers or artisans, rendered useless by heavy industry, are “proletarianized” when they are thrust toward the machine or the assembly line. But emigrants who belong to political or religious communities that are outlawed (the French Huguenots, aristocrats of the Revolution); the privileged groups of conquered countries (the ruling minority in India under the English); members of a society considered by the colonizer as more or less primitive, who are reduced to slavery far from their own country—all these victims of civil and foreign wars—exhibit the characteristics of the proletariat to a greater degree than industrial workers.

I

The industrial workers that Marx knew a century ago, who abounded in Russian cities at the time of agrarian collectivization when the kulaks were uprooted, are obviously “proletarianized.” Are English workers who live in houses built by municipalities on the outskirts of cities, who own a radio and television set, who are members of trade-unions and are pro-

1. A. Toynbee, *L'Histoire*, ed. Gallimard, p. 416, Eng. ed. (London, Oxford, 1934).

2. The word *proletariat* is placed within quotation marks when it is used to convey the Toynbee interpretation.

I do not believe that “a state of mind” is the best interpretation of the word proletariat. It results in ambiguities that I point out in the following pages. The state of mind of exiled French Huguenots, of industrial workers or of South African negroes can exhibit certain similarities. The objective situation of each of these is extremely different. But the matter of definition does not affect the facts and the ideas that I feel it is important to stress. Industrial workers are not the only ones who are excluded from the community. In many countries this is less and less true, while victims of racial and political persecution are increasingly penalized in that way. Other groups, intellectuals, for example, genuinely experience the alienation which the doctrine of the proletariat deals with.

tected by social legislation, nonetheless “proletarians”? And the same question could be asked about American workers.³

The difficulty of answering such questions is well illustrated by points that Colin Clark developed in this periodical.⁴ The kulak deported to Siberia, the Congo Negro transported to Virginia, the shopkeeper who sought a livelihood in the realm of production, are obviously “*disintegrated*.” But “integration” is a vague concept. Many French workers harbor the feeling that they are unjustly treated: are they alien to the French community like the Huguenots who were driven out by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, or the Jews who were persecuted by the Third Reich, or the Algerians who work in France? In other words, if integration is measured by the individuals’ state of mind, there would be many shadings between radical dissidence and a sense of complete belonging.

Most observers do not refer to this state of mind alone, which is frequently difficult to assess. To what extent is propaganda able to create, even for the most disinherited, the feeling of belonging to the community, and what right has one to decree that this feeling is illusory? Colin Clark defines integration more or less clearly by two terms: *tradition* and *assured ownership*, which mainly characterize his own idea of a normal existence or of the “good life.” One can readily approve of the description of the society of the future as one in which a man would enjoy security without suffering from the harshness of authoritarianism, in which the majority of the population would work in industry and in the civil services without experiencing “the merciless impersonality of a large modern city”; in short, as a “traditionalist society without rigidity and mobile without agitation.” But who can fail to see that such a society is a utopia, not in a derogatory sense of the word, and that it is unwise to compare present and future societies with this utopia?

Colin Clark cites some statistics on *occupational mobility* in the United States and draws the conclusion that positions have altered within the same class, making for the two-fold drawback of hereditary stratification and occupational instability. Studies of social mobility are far from numerous and general enough to warrant categorical judgments on the degree of “hereditary stratification” and of “occupational instability” in countries and eras. One of the difficulties consists in distinguishing between the mobility that is caused by change in occupational distribution (a change

3. And eventually about Russian workers of the second or third generation who are established in cities.

4. “The Future of the Proletarian,” *Diogenes*, No. 2.

that is inevitable when technological progress takes place) and the movements toward the maximum and minimum potentials of individuals, assuming this distribution is a stable one.

The latest studies that I have been able to read, those of Natalie Rogoff,⁵ J. M. Lipset, Reinhard Bendix and F. T. Malm,⁶ all lead to similar conclusions. The occupational instability that impressed Colin Clark is here confirmed; most of the people questioned had tried many trades, it is true, but this instability is evident more particularly within a single category. Those who were employed in a manual trade spent 80 per cent of their careers in this trade. Those employed in a non-manual trade spent 75 per cent of their careers in it. The major class barrier in the United States is that which separates manual and non-manual workers. Nonetheless, according to the same study, 47 per cent of manual workers have done non-manual work at one time or another and 62 per cent of white-collar workers have worked with their hands.

Social mobility does not seem to have decreased appreciably between 1910 and 1940. The change seems rather to be in the direction of increased mobility. For example, in the higher category of occupations, taking into account the growth of social categories, the number of those whose fathers did not belong to the same category increased by one fourth. Social mobility, on the other hand, seems scarcely less in Great Britain than in the United States. In Great Britain, as in all countries, there is inequality from the very beginning—a man's education furthers his career; nonetheless, mobility toward the top or the bottom is considerable. Thirty-nine per cent of those in the higher categories (professional people and high administrative officials) had fathers who already belonged in this category. In the four highest categories the proportion of sons who descended in the hierarchy is, respectively, 61 per cent, 62 per cent, 67 per cent, 62 per cent. Reforms in the educational system obviously increased mobility.⁷

In other words, it is not evident, it is even improbable, that stratification tends to be rigid in western societies. As for occupational instability, it is indeed very marked in the United States, more so it would seem than elsewhere. Should this be confused with "disintegration," with "proletarianization"?

5. *Recent Trends in Occupational Mobility* (Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1953).

6. "Social Mobility and Occupational Career Pattern," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 57, pp. 366-74.

7. These figures are taken from a book published by D. Glass, *Social Mobility in Britain* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954).

Rapid changes from one employ to another entail certain social and psychological consequences that a moralist is right to deplore. A worker is attached neither to his surroundings nor to his enterprise if he changes jobs often. His trade becomes a mere livelihood, the enterprise remains anonymous to him—a source of income, not a community enterprise in which he feels he has an interest. This state of mind seems fairly widespread in the United States. On the one hand, it has to do with the very nature of industrial society (the multiple efforts of the Soviet government to forbid workers unjustifiable migration from one plant to another proves that this phenomenon is independent of any one system); on the other hand, it can be attributed to the peculiarities of American culture, to a job with status, to the prestige accorded to strictly monetary values, to the state of mind of pioneers and emigrants, to the weakness of the individuals' roots in the community and of the communities' roots in the land. But before classifying this occupational instability as "proletarianization," we must ask ourselves if the American worker believes himself to be unjustly treated. For is it not the sociologist who decrees that the worker without a steady trade is disintegrated?

One is tempted to ask the same question about Colin Clark's condemnation of large cities, about the utopia of small communities. Perhaps humanity would enjoy a more ordered, more stable life if enormous metropolises disappeared. We can only conclude that all, or the majority, of the inhabitants of large cities feel the frustrations and resentments that the observer attributes to them or believes they must feel.

If we return to stated facts, to definable states of mind in this century, evolution in the United States as well as in Europe has been toward the "deproletarianization" of factory workers. The rise in the standard of living, improvement in housing conditions, social legislation, the power of the trade-unions, have rendered Marx's formulae on the "dehumanization" of industrial workers an anachronism. Are they *in* society or do they belong to it? The Social-Democratic or Christian-Socialist worker from Belgium or Germany, the English laborer, seems to me to "belong" to Belgian, German and English society; the American workman "belongs" to American society. These points are open to discussion because the concepts used are, in essence, ambiguous. In a mechanistic society, with endless technological upheavals and a marked urban concentration, workers cannot be integrated into local or occupational communities as tightly as into regimes with a stationary economy and personal relations. The rise in the standard of living in the wake of technological progress makes it possible to give

Workers, Proletarians, and Intellectuals

the workers ownership of their dwellings or at least durable consumers' goods. Traditions are still lacking but one cannot help thinking that in the United States the philosophy of values and aspirations that is called the *American way of life* fulfills the integrative function formerly attributed to traditions. A society composed of men of different nationalities, language, religion, and color cannot be integrated by beliefs or habit in the same way as were historically homogeneous societies. It may well be that the Soviet version of Marxism is fulfilling an analogous function in the former empire of the tsars, where the immensities of space, the rapidity of industrial construction, the exploitation of virgin lands increased the social and geographical mobility of populations.

I do not claim that workers in European industries are radically "deproletarized." Probably the very notion indicates an ideal limit rather than a true situation. The sense of belonging to the national community that factory workers feel varies according to many circumstances: their standard of living, their relations with employers, ideological influences, the prosperity of the nation, the ruling group's manner of thinking, etc. In all the working classes "proletarian" minorities subsist, and even the majority remain in part "proletarized," either because they are against the principle of private property, which to them is a principle of exploitation, or because factory work seems inhuman to them, or because the individual feels his dignity is offended. The trend seems nonetheless incontrovertible: in the twentieth century, in Europe, in the United States or in the Soviet Union, it is no longer the industrial workers who seem to be the incarnation of the "proletariat."

II

Marx directed his attention to two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In his opinion the bourgeoisie destroyed the framework of feudal society and spread the capitalist method of production over the entire world. "The bourgeoisie destroyed all the feudal, patriarchal, idyllic conditions of life. Pitilessly, it severed the various feudal ties that unite the individual to his natural superior and left no other tie between men than that of naked self-interest, of the impassive payment in ready cash. . . . The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the tools of production, therefore the conditions of production, therefore the whole of social relations. The bourgeoisie, in exploiting the world market, made production and consumption cosmopolitan in all countries. . . . More and

more the bourgeoisie suppressed the diffusion of the means of production, of property and of the population. . . . The bourgeoisie, during its scarcely century-old class supremacy, has created means of production more massive and more enormous than all the earlier generations in their entirety. . . .”⁸

Today we can compare the rise of the bourgeoisie within feudal society to the rise of the proletariat within bourgeois society. To justify the comparison of these two “ascents,” Marx employs the same formulae—the resistance of social relationships to the development of productive forces: bourgeois property would paralyze the growth of productive forces just as feudal property had become an obstacle to the productive forces that liberated the bourgeoisie. “The bourgeois conditions of production and trade, the bourgeois conditions of property, the modern bourgeois society that gave birth, as if by magic, to such powerful means of production and trade—remind one of the sorcerer powerless to control his diabolical power to conjure. For scores of years the history of industry and commerce is no more than the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against conditions of property, which are the vital conditions of the bourgeoisie and of its supremacy.”⁹

This analogy is entirely verbal and it would not be at all difficult to illustrate, by referring to Marx’s own descriptions, the major differences between the rise of the bourgeoisie and the rise of the proletariat. If, according to current Marxian formulae, the forms of future society evolve within the old order, the rising class grows, gathers strength before the moment of definitive rupture. This was actually the fate of the bourgeoisie which, before assuming political power, retained or controlled a larger and larger fraction of the productive forces. How could a similar growth of the proletariat occur if the differences within it tend to become obscured in a universal misery? The bourgeois grew richer and more powerful within the *ancien régime*, the proletariat more and more miserable within the capitalist system.

Can one say that they are more and more powerful thanks to the organization of an entire class into a mass party? Perhaps; but there is another difference, a major one, between the rise of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie itself exerts power when it becomes the ruling class. The proletariat, as such, cannot by itself exercise the governing

8. *Communist Manifesto*.

9. *Ibid.*

functions of society. The formula—the proletariat itself constitutes a ruling class—can have two different meanings: either the leaders of the proletariat become the ruling class, or the decentralization of power abolishes the reality of a ruling class. The first meaning goes back to the Jacobin version of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the second evokes the Commune of Paris and the interpretation that Marx placed upon it.

The bourgeoisie of merchants and industrialists was a creative, privileged minority. The proletariat is the immense mass of the non-privileged. How can these two classes play comparable roles historically? The bourgeoisie is opposed to aristocracy in accordance with a process repeated a thousand times throughout history: merchants, entrepreneurs or artisans, the initiators of economic activities, the administrators of a common endeavor, occupy an ever-growing place in a society dominated by an aggressive aristocracy or by a regime of noble families. In the ancient cities, in Roman history, probably in all civilizations, one can find at one time or another an equivalent to the rise of the bourgeoisie. Never do we see the under-privileged masses rising to the dignity of the ruling class.

In contrast to the aristocracy the bourgeoisie brings with it another way of thinking, another hierarchy of values. It places the struggle against nature above the struggle against men. It aims at mastering the forces of nature, not at challenging death. An aristocracy of work and not of war, it opposes the virtues of severity, honesty, prosperity for all to those of heroism and generosity; it believes in a progress whose benefit is not reserved for the few; it denies inequality of rank, the pessimism of the Catholic doctrine; it is virtually democratic. The proletariat does not oppose to the bourgeoisie's view of the world and its scale of values any other philosophy of the cosmos or any other system of ethics. It, too, believes in progress, in mastering the forces of nature, in raising the standard of living. To create the impression of a fundamental ideological conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat one would have to presume that capitalism does not deliver the advantages it promises and make the legal status of prosperity the stake of a fundamental quarrel; and, finally, one would have to believe a certain interpretation of materialism to be the necessary expression of the proletariat as such.

It is not clear in Marx's writings why the bourgeoisie, "which cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the tools of production, therefore the conditions of production, therefore the whole of social relations," necessarily becomes a brake on the development of productive forces. One can conceive that the laws of ownership prevent the accumulation of

capital required by technology, or that the distribution of buying power provokes crises of overproduction, or that the opportunities for profitable investment become more and more rare. All these causes of paralysis have been analyzed by Marxist and non-Marxist economists, but it is difficult to see why the obstacles are insurmountable and why the bourgeoisie could not introduce elements of collective ownership, redistribution of income, or planning as experience dictates.

The hostility of the proletariat toward private property, its confidence in collective ownership, are not the inevitable consequences of the nature of things. Hostility toward the private entrepreneur is understandable enough in the initial phase, when the entrepreneur resembles the feudal lord of earlier days and merits the name of industrial baron, and when, as a consequence of the need for a preliminary accumulation of capital, the worker is reduced to a low standard of living at the very moment when he suffers from being uprooted, from "proletarianization." When directors of large corporations are on a salary and the ownership of stock is dispersed among hundreds of thousands of individuals, "proletarianization" subsists in the sense that men live "*en masse*," without traditions and without property; but it would subsist to the same or to a greater degree if the managers were appointed by the state and backed by political commissars.

In countries whose governments claim to be proletarian, it is the Jacobin and not the "communist" interpretation that has prevailed. At least in its present phase, dictatorship of the proletariat is that of a minority party and not the dispersion of authority among local and industrial groupings. A Soviet regime holds objectives and values that are, in many ways, similar to those of an American type of government. The development of productive forces is the final aim here as well as there; the progress of science and of technology is the indispensable means for this development and, in both cases, governments are the representatives of the working people. In the United States the term "working people" is extended to include the entire population; in the Soviet Union it embraces the proletariat, the peasantry, and perhaps the intelligentsia, but the party alone is entitled to express the authentic will of the proletariat.

This explains the ambiguous character of the ideological quarrel that is tearing the western world apart. Viewed from Tokyo or from New Delhi, Sovietism and capitalism are merely two modalities of the same civilization, one that possesses everywhere the same essential features—urban concentrations, accelerated industrialization, new technological methods of production, the cult of the machine, etc. The controversy over

Workers, Proletarians, and Intellectuals

ownership, private or public, and over the way it should function, free-market mechanisms or planning, seems to involve means rather than ends, methods rather than values. Even in Europe, although there is greater awareness of the political and intellectual implications of systems of ownership and operation, similarities between the two economies with their large markets are often stressed. In both these societies, the working class is “integrated” into a regime that is represented as the best or as the only possible one. Nowhere has it become the ruling class; everywhere one governs by invoking it. In one sense it is no longer a “proletarian” class, since it is part of the society in which it lives. In another sense it has remained in both societies “proletarian,” because the American worker sells his labor in the market; because the Russian worker is subject to an allotted task and an entire system of planning whose secrets he no more understands than he does the mysteries of the market.

Marx’s error in comparing the rise of the proletariat to that of the bourgeoisie was confirmed by events. These have demonstrated that, within the bourgeois framework, working conditions do not grow worse but, on the contrary, they improve; that capitalism progressively “deproletarizes” the working class. Events have also shown that power was never wielded by the non-privileged, that the working masses never become the ruling class, although they remain the mystical source of sovereignty and are supposed to want what the “*avant-garde*” wants in their name.

Events have also shown that these errors are usually made under circumstances that Marx himself evoked. He decreed, in apocalyptic and ambiguous terms, that the bourgeoisie’s social relationships would block, in advance, the productive forces. This blocking is neither an impeding phenomenon nor an inevitable one. But in some cases the system of property—not so much its legal status as its distribution—actually paralyzes economic progress by forbidding the application of the most efficacious procedures (this is true in regard to agriculture and in part to industry in France). The more a capitalist enterprise resembles a feudality, the more it provokes protests in the Marxian manner, the more workers and ideologists are tempted to believe that the cause of all ills is individual appropriation of the means of production. From these two propositions, it follows that the favorable climate for Marxist ideology is not mature capitalism but capitalism in its initial phase, or retarded capitalism—in other words, Russia at the beginning and France in the middle of the twentieth century. Furthermore, if the Marxist interpretation stems from a spurious assimi-

tion of the historic role of the proletariat (against the bourgeoisie) to the historic role of the bourgeoisie (against the aristocracy), this interpretation will have fewer repercussions, since society will retain fewer aristocratic vestiges. Marxist revolutions succeeded in countries which did not have bourgeois revolutions. Marxism never pervaded the United States because America never experienced an *ancien régime*. The role of the proletariat was conceived by an intellectual in a Germany that had neither destroyed thrones nor constructed large factories. The so-called proletarian revolutions destroy “feudalties” and increase productive forces. It is after the assumption of power that the proletariat, in whose name the revolution is made, gathers strength.

That the troops of Marxist revolutions consist of workers from major industries or of peasants does not alter the essential fact: the function of the proletariat in revolutions resembles that of the popular masses in all revolutions. The masses help to hasten the destruction of a ruling minority, to elevate another ruling minority to the throne; they do not put an end to the circulation of elites.

III

That the working class tends to be “deproletarized” by the development of industrial society, that it is not expected to transform itself into a ruling class, are two facts that seem to me obvious. I would not feel the need to mention them if they were not challenged so often. The tendency toward the “deproletarization” of the workers is misunderstood by observers, who contrast to the reality of urban civilizations the image of quite a different civilization composed of small communities, and who stress the element of disintegration which concentration of the masses and perpetual improvement imply. The governing mission of the workers is maintained by their attachment to a utopia, the dream of a collectivity without Power. But these two errors remain incomprehensible as long as one forgets that they are committed, not by the workers, but by intellectuals. The situation of intellectuals in industrial society, their activity in so-called proletarian movements, and what they like to believe about these movements, take into account these illusions.

Karl Marx, as well as Arnold Toynbee, established a close relation between the working class and the intellectual class. In Hegel's *Introduction to the Critique of the Philosophy of Law*, philosophy is baptized the head, the proletariat the heart of human emancipation. The philosophy is complete;

Workers, Proletarians, and Intellectuals

it remains to be realized. The proletariat rises above the philosophy by achieving it.

Toynbee links the intellectuals with the proletariat in quite a different way. The *intelligentsia*, in the sense that the Russians used this term during the last century, was the prototype of the "proletariat." "Any community that attempts to resolve the problem of its adaptation to the rhythm of a foreign civilization is obliged to appeal to a special class to maintain the role of a transformer destined to change the voltage of an electric current. We designate the class thus created to answer this need, in a general way, by the name the Russians use: *intelligentsia*" (*op. cit.*, p. 433). The *intelligentsia* is "proletarized" since it lives within two societies without being part of either of them. Russian students or writers who had absorbed western culture no longer belonged to the old Russian regime and yet were not entirely part of the western world. Alienated from the milieu of their birth, yet not integrated into the life of their acquired culture, they expressed their unhappiness by revolt.

However, is it not true that the intellectual classes of modern times, in all countries, represent the more or less attenuated features that characterize the *intelligentsia*? Let us pass over the frequent strikes staged by university graduates (although the reserve army of intellectuals is just as common a phenomenon as the reserve army of workers). Industrial civilization—that is to say, technological, optimistic, rationalist, democratic civilization—is *different* from the French *ancien régime*, just as the west is *different* from the Russian *ancien régime*.

In the initial phase of industrialization, the intellectuals are no less "proletarized" than the working people of the *faubourgs*. The former are uprooted from the land or from their work as artisans, the latter are indignant at the gap between science's promises of abundance and the scandalous misery of the workers, even though they are equipped with machines. Both have lost their old universe and are all the more apt to feel angry, since their dominant belief is animated by greater confidence in man and in society.

The ideology that attributes a unique mission to the proletariat seduces the "proletarized" intellectual the more since the latter actually plays a leading role, attributed erroneously to the working class. It is never the former that becomes the ruling class and that wields power, but a party; and this party is, to a large extent, created, backed and governed by the intellectuals. When the old structure breaks down, when tribal chiefs, large landowners, administrators of the old school, and merchants are in-

capable of erecting or of administering a modern state, the new ruling class is recruited from graduates of western universities. The intellectuals like to think of themselves as serving the proletariat, as the executors of the great achievements of history.

Does the development of industrial society have the effect of “deproletarizing” intellectuals as well as workers? Here again, the trend toward “deproletarization” seems to me to be incontestable, but with many exceptions and relapses. Industrialization rapidly increases the number of intellectual and semi-intellectual occupations and therefore helps to open up new opportunities for university graduates. As the number of workers grows trade-unions are organized and older workers take over positions of responsibility. Secretaries of trade-unions, men of working class origin, are often more anxious, at least in western countries, to become integrated into their surroundings than to subvert them. A working class such as that of Germany or Great Britain has demonstrated, over the last fifty years, that it had more to lose than its chains, that it preferred the advantages made possible by reforms to the dangers of violence. The intellectuals find it harder to manipulate a true working class than peasants hungry for land and a working class that is three-fourths mythical. As technology provides more and more of the benefits that are expected of it and as people become accustomed to living in a constantly changing community, the intellectual feels less and less alien to industrial society.

This “deproletarization” is always precarious, provisional, incomplete, because the intellectual who truly belongs to the community in which he lives often is not aware of this or explicitly rejects this sense of belonging. The French “revolutionary” writer of 1955 mirrors his country with remarkable faithfulness; he reflects its situation, its prejudices, denials, dreams. But he does not know this and does not care to acknowledge it, because his country, like himself, is characterized by verbal revolt against the real world. Nationalistic and optimistic, modern intellectuals cannot be critics. They do not lose, by the mere fact of criticizing, their sense of belonging; but to escape, to break away, is a temptation.

For intellectuals as well as for workers, industrial civilization contains certain permanent causes of “proletarization.” The cultivated man suffers from inevitable specialization. Prestige and money generally go to the savants or, more generally, to the experts. The predominant importance accorded to output, to efficiency, to the standard of living, to power or to wealth shocks those who have a more subtle sense of values. Nothing is

Workers, Proletarians, and Intellectuals

easier for the intellectual than to turn his back on a world where Babbitts, entrepreneurs, financiers and managers reign.

At the same time this displeasing world is the only one that can honor the promises of abundance to which the rationalist intellectual subscribes. He cannot take exception to technology, but only, here and there, to the uses to which it is put. In all societies that tolerate ideological disputes, the protests of the intellectuals against industrial society which, as such, is in the process of enveloping the planet, may, thanks to deliberate or involuntary misunderstanding, be directed against a modality peculiar to this society. The difference between what the university graduate believes is normal and what reality offers him is sufficiently great to give rise to a kind of dissidence.

And so we find several kinds of "proletarianization" of the intellectual class: "proletarianization" of the *intelligentsia* in countries where the west undermines or destroys a different basic culture; "proletarianization" of intellectuals in western countries during the initial phase of industrialization, when the contrast between expectation and reality is striking; "proletarianization" of certain intellectuals, contemplative men, men of culture, in a flourishing technological society; "proletarianization," more verbal than real, of intellectuals in a declining nation whose regime seems incapable of guaranteeing either greatness or prosperity.

The ideology originated by Marx of the "mission of the proletariat" gains followers among intellectuals for the very reason that they are necessary to the construction of a western type of state. In other words, intellectuals justify their own acquisition of power (perhaps indispensable) by claiming to be the delegates of the proletariat. Moreover, in France for example, the dream of the rise of the proletariat expresses confusedly the revolt against national humiliation, the resentment against American influence, the hostility to certain forms of industrial civilization. Disappointed by the trend of politics, French intellectuals have a vague yearning to attain power themselves; a nostalgia quite unrealistic: they would rather long for power than gratify their ambition.

These analyses perhaps help us to understand the state of ideological disputes in our time. Arnold Toynbee, in works published before the war, held that "the religious phase in the evolution of communism seems to be ephemeral. Stalin's nationalistic and conservative communism has definitely defeated Trotsky's universal, revolutionary communism in the Russian sector" (*op. cit.*, p. 440). In volumes he has written since the war,

the religious aspect—Christian heresy—is once again emphasized,¹⁰ particularly in the version of the ideology that is presented to other peoples. I, myself, would be tempted to believe that Marxism is a form of prophecy which retains a religious potential only in its militant phase. Once the party is victorious, the ideology vindicates the state and the masters of the state. One can look beyond the socialist edifice or any five-year plans to the coming of the millennium, and substitute, for the faltering enthusiasm of revolutionary fighters, the enthusiasm of builders. Inevitably, as the years go by, the ideology is affected by reality. Unless men are able to find satisfaction in a religion of the state, and this would be surprising within a civilization that bears the Christian imprint, the ideology, once it becomes official, will degenerate into a verbal habit.

The consequence of this is not that it will be inoperable. Quite the contrary; just as American ideology tends to attenuate the “proletarianization” of Negroes, of the yellow race and of European nationalities considered inferior to the Anglo-Saxons, in the same way Marxist ideology is a factor in the integration of the diverse populations within the Soviet Union, even of those “converted” by the strength of the Red army. The integrative function of politico-social ideologies is a fact in the United States as in the Soviet Union, and for a similar reason: the racial and national diversity of the population and the rapidity of economic changes tend to fill the void caused by the lack of what Colin Clark calls “traditions and insured property,” with the sense of participation in a collective enterprise, whose grandiose designation will be the universal republic of workers.

The true ideology, the one practiced in the United States, is probably as different from the theory of *free enterprise* as the Soviet ideology is from Marxist theory. But both countries maintain, although by different means, an orthodoxy, one of society, the other of the state. Practically no dispute subsists, either here or there, in regard to principles. Communism does not seem to be an alternative to the *American way of life*, save for a ridiculously small minority, any more than capitalism would be an alternative to Sovietism, even in the eyes of those citizens of the Soviet Union who are hostile to the regime.

The ideological conflict remains alive in a few European countries that are hesitant to choose between these two international systems, and in so-called undeveloped countries, that is to say, those of the external proletariat. In such places the dispute is continued, by shuffling comparisons between the great powers, contrasts between the two methods of industrial-

10. Cf., in particular, *A Study of History* (London, Oxford, 1934), IX, pp. 583–84, 620–21.

ization (private or public ownership, mechanisms of the market or planning), comparisons between the two classes of workers and bourgeois. To understand the matter clearly we must distinguish between these three comparisons.

Problems of the status of ownership in regard to the means of industrial production,¹¹ are nowadays more technological than political. The struggle between factory workers and entrepreneurs is nowhere the center of social or political conflicts. The controversy, in countries outside of western civilization or in European countries where economic progress has been slow, is, in reality, over the most efficient methods of industrialization. People are concerned with which system increases the volume of collective resources the fastest and reduces the disparity of status between the groups.

The Marxist form of prophecy is one reason for the influence that the communist parties' propaganda exerts throughout the world. But this influence is not stronger, perhaps it is less strong, upon factory workers than upon peasants and intellectuals. If there is one class that is sensitive to the truly spiritual seduction of Marxism, it is less the working class than the intellectuals. The latter are at home in an ideology that gathers the chaos of events into a single and universal interpretation, that allows undeveloped countries to surpass the west on the road of history by the mere adoption of a Soviet type of regime, which concedes the most important place to the intellectuals by invoking the will of the masses.

Social ideologies, of which Marxist-Leninism is the latest, are introduced into the class struggle and the struggle among nations without transcending them. These ideologies contribute to the reintegration of the masses and of the intellectuals; they do not provide them with any outlet outside of profane history. In this sense, they are precarious and provisional substitutes for religion. Arnold Toynbee points to the fact that no superior religion, for the moment, has arisen from the proletariat within western civilization. Such a religion, if it is to emerge, will not be an intellectual creation.

11. The question of ownership of the land is a decisive one for the peasants.