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THE LEGITIMATION OF AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CLASS: THE CASE OF ENGLAND

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\* This is a preliminary report on a larger study in progress. In this study the ideologies of entrepreneurial classes are analyzed for several countries, at the inception of industrialization and today. For aid in this study I am indebted to the Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Berkeley.

# I

This essay is concerned with the ideological leadership of an entrepreneurial class. The material used in this discussion has reference to the English experience of the late 18th and early 19th century. But the questions with which this study was initiated, have general significance. It may be helpful, therefore, to begin with these general considerations.

Industrialization requires the creation of a non-agricultural work-force. Ideally, such a work-force will adapt its way of life so as to respond "adequately" to the incentives offered by employers. The adequacy of that response may be gauged in terms of a readiness to offer one's services and in terms of a willingness to submit to the discipline required in factory production. The manner in which workers originally become committed to factory work has varied widely. Yet this commitment has involved in every case a major break with traditional patterns of economic conduct. Social actions are traditional when they are animated by "the belief in the everyday routine as an inviolable norm of conduct."<sup>1</sup> And the everyday routine of economic conduct, which is broken by the creation of a non-agricultural work-force, consists in the subordination of work-performance to social rather than economic considerations. Perhaps the clearest manifestation of that subordination is that, ideally, work is performed to meet the needs of family-subsistence, needs which are not only defined by, but limited in accordance with, custom. Hence, when wages rise or a crop is unusually good, less work is done and less land is tilled, rather than more, because under these conditions less work and less land will suffice to support the accustomed way of life.<sup>2</sup>

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1. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 296.

2. A comprehensive survey of traditionalism in economic life, especially



This traditionalism of economic life has many ramifications. Workers often prefer tried methods of production; they may adhere to a way of life in which needs are limited; poverty at home may appear preferable to the risks of life abroad; and the neighborliness of economic relations within the community may seem desirable compared with the commercialization of life outside.

To be sure, we should guard against a nostalgic interpretation of this traditionalism. This mode of life is often "preferred", not because it is desired in itself, not because innovation as such is opposed, but because every proposed alternative creates more problems than it solves, socially and economically speaking.<sup>1</sup> Also, it is misleading to suppose that in a precapitalist society the laborer is spiritually and economically secure, while in an industrial society he is nothing but a commodity buffeted about by the operation of supply and demand. Without minimizing the burdens which industrialization imposes on the laborer, especially if it is rapid, it is well to remember that deliberate restraints and protections have been introduced in most instances and more or less promptly, where the restraints of custom prevailed before. But aside from these nostalgic interpretations of traditionalism the fact remains, that the creation of a non-agricultural work-force involves almost inevitably a major break with "everyday routine as an inviolable norm of conduct." And wherever this break with the past has been a prelude to industrialization, it has occurred under the ideological leadership of an entrepreneurial class.

as it applies to labor, is contained in Wilbert Moore, Industrialization and Labor (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1951), 114-139. A more analytical approach to the same problem is contained in J. H. Boeke, The Interests of Voiceless Far East (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1948). See however the judicious critique of Boeke's thesis in J. S. Furnivall, Netherlands India (New York: Macmillan, 1944), pp. 454-464.

1. For a striking, if extreme illustration of this point see McKim Marriott, "Technological Change in Overdeveloped Rural Areas," Economic Development and Cultural Change (December, 1952), 261-272.

Industrialization may result from the initiative of many social groups: government officials, dissenting religious groups, aristocratic landowners, craftsmen turned into small entrepreneurs, and many others.<sup>1</sup> In England it was bound up, more perhaps than in any other country, with the economic activities of a large and heterogeneous middle class. However, every group which stands in the vanguard of a successful movement for industrialization must prove strong enough, not only economically but also ideologically, in order to accomplish what industrialization requires: a break with the past. The question of ideological leadership on the part of an entrepreneurial class is not concerned with the origin of its capitalist spirit. Rather it is concerned with the ideological weapons by which representatives of such a class destroy the last elements of traditionalism in the relations between higher and lower classes. To study the development of entrepreneurial ideologies in England, as I do in this essay, is merely an indispensable introduction to studies of comparable or contrasting developments elsewhere. Hence, it may be helpful to state this "comparison and contrast" at the outset.

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1. Because of this diversity of origin, an entrepreneurial class is here defined in terms of its function rather than in terms of its social composition. In the words of Joseph Schumpeter, "the function of entrepreneurs is to reform or revolutionize the pattern of production by exploiting an invention, or, more generally, an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way, by opening up a new source of supply of materials or a new outlet for products, by reorganizing an industry, and so on...To undertake such new things is difficult and constitutes a distinct economic function, first, because they lie outside of the routine tasks which everybody understands and, secondly, because the environment resists in many ways..." See Joseph Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (New York: Harpers, 1950), p. 132. I should add that I am not concerned here with the further implications of Schumpeter's theory. However, I believe that to define an entrepreneurial class in terms of its function is more unequivocal at the beginning phase of industrialization than otherwise.



In England the rising entrepreneurial class of the 18th century found itself confronted with a working-class, which to some extent was already in the process of emancipating itself from the restricted beliefs and practices characteristic of traditionalism. Over a century ago John Stuart Mill made an observation which bears directly on this point.

Of the working men, at least in the more advanced countries of Europe, it may be pronounced certain that the patriarchal or paternal system of government is one to which they will not again be subject. That question was decided when they were taught to read, and allowed access to newspapers and political tracts; when dissenting preachers were suffered to go among them, and appeal to their faculties and feelings in opposition to the creeds professed and countenanced by their superiors; when railways enabled them to shift from place to place, and change their patrons and employers as easily as their coats; when they were encouraged to seek a share in the government, by means of the electoral franchise. The working classes have taken their interests into their own hands, and are perpetually showing that they think the interests of their employers not identical with their own, but opposite to them.<sup>1</sup>

Mill's statement makes it apparent that in Western Europe the independence of workers was a by-product of the same major historical changes which have led to the independence of the entrepreneurial class itself. Hence, when the spokesmen for English manufacturers in the late 18th and early 19th centuries demanded the self-dependence of the lower classes, they were merely responding to an historic fait-accompli. That they did so in an attempt to structure this independence of the workers in a manner agreeable to the interests of the employing classes, comes as no surprise and will be examined later. But whatever the reasons, they did demand the self-dependence of the lower classes and they denied, at the same time, their responsibility for the protection of the poor. One may say that the English industrialists of that time were more fearful of the obstacles, which

1. John Stuart Mill, Principles of Political Economy (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1848), II, 322-323.



traditionalism placed in the way of their economic pursuits, than of the risks inherent in advocating the independence of the workers.

It is appropriate to contrast this English experience with that of Russia, for today Russia is one of the major industrialized areas of the world. Industrialization in Russia was initiated in the 18th century on the basis of forced labor. All serfs, whether they worked in manufactures or on the land, were obliged to pay a poll-tax to the Tsar, a fact which established the tradition of seeking recourse for their grievances from the Tsar. This system led during the 18th and 19th centuries to a form of social protest which attributed all actual abuses to employers, landowners and government officials and which sought relief by direct appeals to the highest authority despite continued disappointments and cruel persecutions. Hence, the revolution of 1917 was used to overthrow the established authority of a Tsar who had failed his people, but it was not used to alter fundamentally the established traditions of the Russian masses. For in that tradition all the nation's resources belonged to the Tsar as the custodian of the people. When the Tsar fell, all resources reverted to the people, who would now work for themselves as they had previously worked for the Tsar.<sup>1</sup>

In his writings of that time Lenin accurately, if unconsciously, reflected this tradition. In an article on the "Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government" he deplored the prevailing lack of labor-discipline. The task of the government must be to teach the people how to work, for the Russian was a bad worker

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1. This direct collective obligation of the Russian people to the Tsar as a person did not allow conceptions of private ownership to develop much strength. Thus, the obligation of all citizens to render services to the state prepared the ground for the collectivist tendencies of the Russian revolution. A convincing elaboration of this point is contained in Boris Brutzkus, "Die Historischen Eigentuemlichkeiten der sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung Russlands," Jahrbuecher fuer Kultur und Geschichte der Slaven, X (1934), pp. 62-99.

owing to the Czarist regime and the tradition of serfdom. Elsewhere Lenin wrote that in the long run labor will be performed gratis for the benefit of society. But right now it was the duty of the Socialist government "to organize competition." Only now was competition possible on a mass-scale.

Model communes should and will serve as educators, teachers, helping to raise the backward communes. The press must serve as an instrument of socialist construction, give publicity to the successes achieved by the model communes in all their details, study the causes of these successes, the methods these communes employ, and on the other hand, put on the "blacklist" those communes which persist in the "traditions of capitalism," i.e. anarchy, laziness, disorder and profiteering. In capitalist society, statistics were entirely a matter for "official persons," or for narrow specialists; we must carry statistics to the masses and make them popular so that the toilers themselves may gradually learn to understand and see how long it is necessary to work, how much time can be allowed for rest, so that the comparison of the business results of the various communes may become a matter of general interest and study, and that the most outstanding communes may be rewarded immediately..."<sup>1</sup>

In retrospect it is possible to see that this approach sought to mobilize the enthusiasm of the masses for the tasks of the Soviet Government by appealing to their pride of collective ownership and control. Yet while the masses rather than the Russian Czar were now the nominal fountainhead of all authority, they remained duty-bound to render services to the state, **Eventually this duty** had to be enforced by the centralized organization of production and distribution and by an intensified form of competition which, according to Lenin, turned the work of the individual from a private affair into an important affair of state. Hence, the non-agricultural workforce which was mobilized in the West under the slogan of the "independence of the worker," was mobilized in Russia under the slogan of "labour performed out of a habit of working for the common good."<sup>2</sup>

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1. V. I. Lenin, Selected Works (New York: International Publishers, n.d.), VII, pp. 333-334.

2. Cf., for example, Lenin's praise of the unpaid, volunteer labor of Communist party-members ("subbotnik") in Selected Works, VIII, 238-246 and IX, 423-448.



A non-agricultural work-force may also arise along lines which differ both from the English and the Russian models. I have reference to those colonial countries, where capitalist enterprise has advanced to a considerable extent. In these countries entrepreneurial classes have been composed as a rule of one or several dominant and alien groups. These groups must employ a laboring class consisting of natives, who are ethnically and culturally distinct and who are moreover extremely weak both economically and politically. It is under these conditions of a plural society that a non-agricultural work-force has been created in such countries as South Africa, the Netherlands Indies, and others. Where capital and labor have developed together, the relation between foreign capital and native labor has been complicated by the clash of color and of culture. In addition, that relation has often been complicated by the need to import **native labor under contract** in areas where capital is abundant but labor scarce. It is undisputed that considerations of economic advantage have over-ruled all others, wherever the dominant group has differed greatly from the subject native work-force in terms of race, culture and religion. Under these conditions the spokesmen for the dominant group are prone to assert that the native peoples are inescapably dependent and inherently inferior. And this view leads either to the assertion that their inferiority accounts for their social and economic misery or again to the charge that the superior people must safeguard the natives against the fatal consequences of their own weakness. These views concerning the native worker have ranged from the strident doctrine of Apartheid to the tempered ethic of benevolent paternalism. But whether the responsibility of the dominant group is denied as in the first view, or asserted as in the second, neither can overcome the continued dependence of weak native peoples and neither can create a non-agricultural work-force which would facilitate intensive industrialization. It is this profound cleavage between the entrepreneurial class



and the native laborers which makes a case apart of these areas of the world, into which modern industry has been introduced by a Western power. For in the "plural societies" of these areas there is no political or economic community between the two groups. And if such a community were to be created, then the subject, native group would have first of all to acquire citizenship so that <sup>the</sup> decisions made would reflect the political activities of both the "foreign" capitalist and the "native" worker. Likewise, if such a community were to be created in economic terms, then the subject, native group would have to participate on equal terms in a national market rather than remain in native economic enclaves or leave them on condition of complete economic subjection. Changes in this direction would certainly alter the relationship between the entrepreneurial class and the native laborers, for they would remove that relationship from the twin dilemma of racist subjection and paternalistic tutelage. Such changes are taking place in the position of the Negro in the United States, and it is this fact which distinguishes the American pattern from that of the "plural societies". In these societies distinct social groups are related to one another much like independent<sup>1</sup> political societies, except that they exist within the same State. And it is obvious that in the absence of a national community nationalist uprisings have appeared to many native peoples as the only alternative to a foreign<sup>2</sup> domination which condemns them to permanent inferiority.

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1. See J.S. Furnivall, op.cit., 462-464 for suggestions along these lines.

2. These nationalist movements in underdeveloped areas run a special risk ever since the rise of communism in Soviet Russia. For the affinity of nationalism with communism ceases on the day after the "foreigner" has left, and then it may be too late for the native ruling class to stem the tide which it has used to "improve its own position."

The foregoing discussion has suggested a three-fold development of industrialization, which in each case has been reflected in the relationship between the entrepreneurial and the working class. While this typology needs considerable elaboration, it helps to point up the significance which may be attributed to the legitimation of entrepreneurial classes. Whatever their origins, the ideologies which justified the advance of modern industry, have helped to shape the vital legacies that affect the autonomy of the individual in the industrial civilizations of today. And they are the ideological weapons with which Russia and the West appeal to the peoples of underdeveloped areas. It is somewhat fanciful to suggest that communism in the 20th century is a counterpart to the Calvinism of the 17th century. But spurious as this statement may be, it helps us to visualize that in both cases we deal with an "entrepreneurial class" which is inspired by a sense of mission, which plays a major part in the industrialization of a nation, and which on that basis appeals to the loyalty of peoples elsewhere.

## II

English industrialization was spearheaded by an entrepreneurial class which attacked the prevailing traditionalism of social and economic life by demanding freedom from restraints for itself as well as for the lower classes. There are many instances in which a rising social class has championed the underdog. But there are probably few examples of an upper class which has continued to demand the independence rather than the subordination of the lower classes after its new position of power has been secured.

The English manufacturers of the 18th century were confronted by a traditionalism in economic life which has been characterized above in general terms. The following discussion is concerned especially with their ideological attack upon traditionalism in the relationship between "higher" and "lower" classes, and there is no more telling description of the object of that



attack than that written by John Stuart Mill in 1848:

According to the theory (of dependence) the lot of the poor, in all things which affect them collectively, should be regulated for them, not by them. They should not be required or encouraged to think for themselves, or give their own reflection or forecast an influential voice in the determination of their destiny. It is supposed to be the duty of the higher classes to think for them, and to take the responsibility of their lot, as the commander and officers of an army take that of the soldiers composing it. This function, it is contended, the higher classes should prepare themselves to perform conscientiously, and their whole demeanor should impress the poor with a reliance on it, in order that while yielding passive and active obedience to the rules prescribed for them they may resign themselves in all other respects to a trustful insouciance, and repose under the shadow of their protectors. The relation between rich and poor, according to their theory, (a theory also applied to the relation between men and women) should be only partly authoritative: it should be amiable, moral, and sentimental: affectionate tutelage on the one side, respectful and grateful deference on the other. The rich should be in loco parentis to the poor, guiding and restraining them like children. Of spontaneous action on their part there should be no need. They should be called on for nothing but to do their day's work, and to be moral and religious. Their morality and religion should be provided for them by their superiors, who should see them properly taught it, and should do all that is necessary to ensure their being in return for labour and attachment, properly fed, clothed, housed, spiritually edified, and innocently amused.<sup>1</sup>

Mill did not claim that such relations existed at the time he wrote; in fact, he questioned whether they had ever existed historically. He believed this to be an idealization which might be embodied here or there in an individual, but which was significant because of the feelings it portrayed, not because of the facts to which it supposedly referred.

The feelings which Mill had in mind, have a medieval origin. We must go back to a time when attitudes towards authority were profoundly emotional, buttressed by unquestioned sanctions, when all persons in authority stood in loco parentis, and when the exercise of rule as well as the expressions of deference by inferiors were couched in words and acts of dramatic intensity.<sup>2</sup> Even though rapid social change disrupted the actual

1. John Stuart Mill, Principles of Political Economy (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1948), II, pp. 319-320.

2. See Sylvia L. Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 16-27.



authority-relationships which had strengthened these feelings, ruling groups of all kinds were likely to cultivate them at the level of ideology.

The rise of absolute monarchy and the widespread adoption of mercantilist policies affected this traditional ideology of the relationship between "higher" and "lower" classes. For the concentration of power in the hands of the king implied that the exercise of rule and the obeisance towards superiors had become conditioned upon royal sanctions. While this did not necessarily undermine the traditional ideology which Mill described, it imparted to it the belief that the king had now the authority as well as the power to order the relations between classes.<sup>1</sup> Yet this claim of the Tudor and Stuart kings, that it was their responsibility to order the class-relationships of English society, did not go unchallenged.

Professor Nef has shown how difficult, if not impossible, it was for the central government to enforce compliance with the laws which were designed to implement this conception of kingship. Administration of these laws lay in the hands of justices of the peace, magistrates and other local dignitaries, who consistently refused to enforce laws which ran counter to their economic interests and which they conveniently regarded as unwarranted interference with their local jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the traditional conception of the relation between higher and lower tended to be used by the local gentry as well as by the king, in their struggle for power and authority. Both could legitimate their claims by idealizing

1. Cf. the explanatory preamble of the Statute of Apprentices (1563) quoted in George Unwin, Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1904), 137-140.

2. John U. Nef, Industry and Government in France and England, 1540-1640 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1940), 35-57.

the authority vested in them as a higher class. That in many cases they either did not or could not meet their responsibility for the protection of the poor, made it that much more necessary for each group to speak as if they were adhering to well-established practices and sentiments. It is true that the merchants and landlords who were actively engaged in many forms of industrial enterprise challenged the sovereign prerogatives of the king. But it is also true that the king's defense against this challenge as well as the middle-class support of it, were cast in terms of an appeal to the traditional prerogatives of the ruling class and the traditional subordination of the "lower classes."<sup>1</sup>

The ideology of traditionalism continued to prevail long after the "amiable, moral and sentimental" feelings of the higher classes were seriously affected by the intrusion of material interests. What requires explanation, therefore, is the continued advocacy of a traditional conception of the relation between higher and lower classes, long after this emergence of material interests might have suggested that these views be abandoned. To be sure, there were certain groups of industrial entrepreneurs, especially members of the dissenting sects, among whom both the ideology and the practice of labor-relations continued in the traditional mold—largely as an outgrowth of religious convictions. But there were probably many more among the rising middle class in England, whose

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1. If these ideological defenses, both the theory of kingship and the assertion of local autonomy, seem exaggerated during the 17th century, then this does not indicate an absence of traditionalism in the prevailing conceptions of authority, but their gradual decomposition. Exaggerated reaffirmations of an ideology are as clear an index as any of the existence of basic threats to them, however difficult it may be to specify the required degree of exaggeration.

traditional claims to authority continued intact, while their treatment of the laboring poor hardened under the impact of rapidly expanding economic opportunities. As a consequence the ideas of the laissez-faire doctrine were gaining ground rapidly in the late 17th and early 18th century. Nevertheless, traditionalism continued its "verbal hold" over all phases of economic life, and this must be clearly understood, if one is to understand also that the doctrines of laissez-faire as applied to labor had such a profoundly disturbing effect on the class-ideologies prevailing in England at the end of the 18th century. One must appreciate this setting of the ideologies of the English entrepreneurial class, if the ruthlessness, with which its spokesmen and representatives were advancing the "cause" of industrialization is not to appear pointless.

The hold of traditionalism upon the ideology of the higher classes in the 17th and 18th centuries is best appreciated perhaps in the debates over the position of the laboring poor in society. Dorothy Marshall has observed that during the 17th century most of the tracts dealing with the problem of poverty were written in years when the price of corn was high.<sup>1</sup> It was believed that the high price of provisions, was caused by a want of trade and money, and that poverty was consequently the result of economic factors over which the individual had no control. Hence, circumstances rather than personal depravity were held to be responsible for widespread distress, although towards the end of the century writers began to speak of the laziness and dissipation which prevailed among the poor. The measures suggested for the relief of

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1. Dorothy Marshall, The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1926), 20-21.



the poor, primarily consisted of schemes whereby the poor and the vagrants could be employed for the benefit of the nation.<sup>1</sup> Until the end of the 17th century poverty was regarded as a misfortune due to adverse circumstances, which the higher classes were obliged to alleviate. These views were still in keeping with Mill's description of the traditional outlook of the higher classes, whose harshness toward the laboring poor was attenuated as much by the emotionalism of tutelage as by the emotionalism of deference. The poor were children, they must be disciplined, they must be guided, and on occasion they should be indulged. In the context of religious doctrine this ideology implied that the duty of the rich to protect the poor was an opportunity to perform acts of Christian charity.

But towards the end of the 17th century, charity came to be regarded as a responsibility of the rich, and with this shift in emphasis went a reassessment of the character of the poor. They were children still, but they were no longer to be indulged. It is perhaps significant that during the 18th century a majority of the pamphlets dealing with the problem of poverty, were written during years when corn was cheap.<sup>2</sup> Poverty was now regarded as the result of indolence, not of circumstances; hence, laborers were thought to be poor despite the cheap price of provisions which made poverty unnecessary. There were several reasons for the judgment that poverty was the result of vice, not of misfortune. The increase in

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1. Several writers maintained that it was "our duty to God and Nature" to provide for and employ the Poor, even if such employment would not result in a material benefit to the nation. This is clearly an example of undiluted traditionalism. Cf. the discussion of 17th century writers in Marshall, op. cit., 18-30.

2. Cf. Marshall, op. cit., 32-33.

trade during the 18th century prompted an increase in the demand for labor, but merchants and manufacturers were hampered by a relative scarcity of labor despite the increase in population. Workers were reluctant to disrupt their accustomed way of life, in keeping with a traditionalism of their own, especially when the low price of corn enabled them to maintain this way of life with less work rather than more. Finally, the settlement laws interfered with, and the system of Parish relief discouraged, the mobility of the worker, even if he was willing. It is in this setting of the employers' unsatisfied demand for labor, the workers' reluctance to offer his services, and the institutional obstacles to labor-mobility, that 18th century writers asserted the depravity of the laboring poor. The trouble was, they believed, that the poor were idle and dissolute. And although these writers did not yet deny the responsibility of the higher classes, they maintained that it was no longer a question of finding employment for the poor, but of establishing workhouses in which all the poor could be set to work under the strictest discipline.<sup>1</sup>

The contention that poverty was the deserved punishment of the poor was certainly not a new theme. Nor was it new to assert that poverty was the result of indolence, insubordination and dissipation and that the poor must be instructed in the virtues of industry, humility and thrift. But, in the past it had been believed that poverty was a punishment sufficient in itself. And while the poor had always been admonished to be virtuous, that admonition had taken the form of sermons and of education.

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1. There were other proposals which did not become as widely accepted at the time. Some writers urged that the poor should be employed in separate enterprises, established for the purpose. Others already anticipated the later view of the laissez-faire economists by demanding that the poor should be forced, if need be, to find work for themselves. It is indicative of the persistence of traditionalist conceptions that the latter view did not become popular despite the fact that it was urged by such well-known writers as Defoe, Locke, and Dunning.

The significant fact is that the 18th century writers seem to have agreed on the sternest discipline as the only means by which the rich could meet their responsibility for the protection of the poor. They did not consciously deviate from the traditionalist conception: they were still in favor of regulating the lot of the poor, and they still discouraged the poor from thinking for themselves.<sup>1</sup> But to them poverty was no longer a misfortune to be alleviated. It had become the laboring poor. The dissertations on the utility of poverty, which Mr. Furniss has reviewed, are so many variations on the theme of Arthur Young, according to whom "everyone but an idiot knows that the lower classes must be kept poor, or they will never be industrious."<sup>2</sup>

But it was difficult to make the poor industrious as long as corn was cheap, labor was immobile, and poverty was relieved. It is not surprising, therefore, that the mercantilist theories were supplemented during much of the 18th century by the efforts of the evangelical movement within the established Church, as well as by the Methodist revival. These movements vigorously promoted various schemes for the education of the poor, and especially of their children. Such organizations as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, various Societies for the Reformation of Manners, and many others endeavored to instill in children and adults the necessary habits of industry together with a sense of subordination to the higher classes. It is too easy to decry the hypocritical mixture

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1. See the detailed exposition of these doctrines of 18th century writers in Edgar Furniss, The Position of the Laborer in a System of Nationalism (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920.)

2. Quoted in Ibid., 118.



of economic interest and religious piety with which these theories and movements were imbued. For all of them manifested a continued belief in the responsibility and in the ability of the higher classes to reform the poor. Only by a challenge of this belief could the intellectual destruction of traditionalism be accomplished.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

To accomplish the ideological destruction of traditionalism it was necessary to demand the self-dependence of the poor. Yet to do so was to run the risk that the independence of the workers would interfere with the freedom of their employers. Hence it became necessary to prescribe the code of conduct for the working classes, which they would have to follow in their "independence". To destroy traditionalism it was also necessary to deny the responsibility of the higher classes for the protection of the poor. Against the contention that this was the function of the higher classes, the spokesmen of the English entrepreneurial class set the contention that it was not within their power to do so. Yet by so denying their responsibility and their power they ran the risk of relinquishing their claim to be recognized as the "higher class."

Of course, it is improbable that the early industrialists were explicitly concerned with problems which are inherent in the liberal approach to the relations between higher and lower classes. For them it did not appear

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1. In this essay I confine myself to an examination of ideas. That these ideas, which reveal the impact of economic interests directly, develop largely in response to economic changes, is not perhaps as illuminating a suggestion as is often supposed. It does not explain, for example, that traditional attitudes prevailed long after they had become detrimental to the economic interests of a rising entrepreneurial class. The intellectual challenge of traditionalism at the end of the 18th century can be understood only, if it is fully appreciated that traditionalism persisted although this conflicted with economic interests.

problematic to urge the workers to be self-dependent and to practice the Christian virtues, although the virtues they preached undermined the self-dependence on which they insisted. Also, the contention that it was not in their power to relieve the distresses of the poor was often little more than tough-minded expression of self-interest, while the soft-minded could argue the same point by reference to the omnipotence of God and the unalterable laws of nature. These problematic aspects of an ideological position are not the equivalents of psychological problems. But they do reveal the points of weakness in such a position. And since ideologies develop through controversy, it is at these points of weakness that ideological defenses are likely to be built.

These considerations help to explain why the liberal position became dominant only at the beginning of the 19th century, although liberal opinions had been expressed throughout the 18th century. For example, early in the 18th century Daniel Defoe had attacked the basic assumption of the English Poor Laws, which imposed on the higher classes the obligation of finding employment for the poor. He felt that the proper approach was to let the laborers find employment by themselves. But Defoe did not indicate, apart from his failure to suggest practical alternatives to poor-relief, on what basis the higher classes could deny their responsibility for the poor without relinquishing their claim to authority and esteem. Later in the 18th century writers like Townsend and Burke presented the view that the inborn idleness of the worker could not be overcome unless the Poor Laws were abolished and he was exposed to the promptings of hunger and distress. Burke conceived of labor as a commodity, which would be paid in accordance with what it was worth to the buyer; to consider the

actual want of the laborer in this connection, was entirely beside the point. At the same time Burke claimed that the interests of workers and employers were in harmony. The employer would pay his workers as much as he was able in order to obtain good work from them, while the suffering of the poor in times of scarcity was an affliction of providence which no human plan could alter. The weakness of his position was that Burke took no trouble to hide his defense of vested interests. For he recommended religious consolation to the poor in times of distress; but the religious duty to relieve the poor he left to the discretion of the higher classes. He made no attempt to show that the higher classes were meeting their obligation to the best of their ability.

It is in this respect that the doctrine of population succeeded, where these earlier and similar approaches failed. In the first edition of his Essay on Population (1798) the Rev. Thomas R. Malthus announced the universal law of nature that population tends always to increase faster than the supply of food. And the misery of the poor was the inescapable means by which population was brought in line periodically with the available supply of food. Many elements of the Malthusian doctrine were not new. That the poor will always be poor, was widely accepted. That they were improvident was believed throughout the 18th century. That the Poor Laws encouraged evil habits of indolence and insubordination was accepted by many influential men long before Malthus wrote. Many others had said also that poverty was a useful stimulus without which men would not exert



themselves. Finally, many of Malthus' specific doctrines on population had been anticipated by others, though the prevalent view of the 18th century had been to favor population growth in theory and as a matter of government policy.<sup>1</sup> Malthus' Essay brought well-known ideas within the compass of a systematic doctrine, and thereby it gave new strength to widely-held beliefs. Nevertheless, there was a startling novelty in his work, which it is important to isolate.

Malthus gave a new foundation to the demand for the self-dependence of the poor and to the denial of responsibility on the part of the higher classes. The traditional view had been to emphasize the duties of the laboring classes in the exercise of industry, humility and thrift. But Malthus succeeded in making specific and concrete proposals for the conduct of the poor, where these earlier admonitions had remained elusive. For he attributed the poverty of English laborers not to such vague and easily refuted shortcomings as idleness, but to the specific and entirely irrefutable fact that they had married at an early age and that they had had children.

"Almost everything that has been hitherto done for the poor has tended...to hide from them the true cause of their poverty. When the wages of labour are hardly sufficient to maintain two children, a man marries and has five or six; he of course finds himself miserably distressed. He accuses the insufficiency of the price of labour to maintain a family. He accuses his parish for their tardy and sparing fulfilment of their obligation to assist him. He accuses the avarice of the rich,...the partial and unjust institutions of society,...perhaps the dispensations of Providence...In searching for objects of accusation he never adverts to the quarter from which his misfortunes originate. The last person that he would think of accusing is himself, on whom in fact the principal blame lies..."<sup>2</sup>

1. See Kenneth Smith, The Malthusian Controversy (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), 3-43.

2. Thomas R. Malthus, An Essay on Population (2nd ed., Everyman's Library; New York: F.P. Dutton, 1933), II, 170.

The cutting edge of this argument was not the traditional commendation of Christian virtue to the poor, but the startling contention that the evils of poverty could be avoided by the deliberate destruction of the family. Of course, Malthus disavowed this intention; he was not, he said, actuated by prejudice against any class but solely by the love of truth, though he admitted that the "wretchedly poor" through want of foresight could not be expected to exercise moral restraint.<sup>1</sup> But in the eyes of the poor, Malthus had condemned them to a life, from which all passion and sentiment had to be barred if they would save themselves from semi-starvation.

This conception of the lot of the poor had its counterpart in a new conception of the higher classes. The principle of population introduced a new distinction between the damned and the elect which was made to rest, not on the doctrine of predestination, as the Puritan Divine had done, but on the exercise of moral restraint.

By moral restraint Malthus referred to the postponement of marriage, and to sexual abstinence in marriage.<sup>2</sup> The desire for sexual gratification and for the familial continuity of life was here subordinated to money-making, or at any rate to the exercise of foresight which was indispensable to money-making. Hence, sexual gratification and the satisfactions of

1. Ibid., II, 143.

2. I should mention parenthetically that Malthus buttressed his doctrine of population by a theological argument. In this he described "moral restraint" as "those exalted qualities of mind which will fit (men) for His high purposes," and he suggested that the principle of population was the divine instrument by which the world has been peopled, for without this instrument men would have remained "inert, sluggish and averse from labour." See T.R. Malthus, First Essay on Population, 1798 (London: Macmillan & Co., 1926), 352, 363-64.

family-life were made, by implication, the reward of wealth, while deprivation in these respects became the added punishment of poverty. Consequently Malthus favored a national system of education in which the principle of population would be taught. He advised the higher classes that they should better the lot of the poor by teaching them the principle of population. In this way the poor would learn "what they can and what they cannot do." Such education will improve the condition of the poor; everything which is done for the poor without having this specific effect, will only increase their misery.<sup>1</sup>

By his demonstration that poverty resulted directly from the folly of the poor in marrying early and having children whom they could not support, Malthus denied the moral claim to relief on the part of the poor. By the same token he exempted the higher classes from all responsibility, other than education, for it was within the power of the poor, and within their power alone, that misery could be averted by moral restraint. In the Puritan doctrine poverty and wealth had been seen as the innerworldly reflection of an inscrutable divine judgment. In the Malthusian doctrine poverty had become evidence of unruly passions and lack of foresight, while wealth had become the manifestation of virtue and reasoned judgment. Poverty, in this view, had become an unredeemable condemnation of the English working-class, for by the time poverty had befallen a man, no practice of virtue could free him of its yoke. The uncertainty of salvation which the Puritans had preached to the poor had given way to the certainty of self-inflicted ostracism which the Malthusian doctrine now explained

1. Malthus, op. cit., (2nd ed.), II, 259-260.



as an inevitable law of nature.

#### IV.

The doctrine that poverty was the fault of the poor, while only the education of the poor was an obligation of the higher classes, had a certain inherent weakness, however widely this doctrine came to be utilized at the time. In the past, responsibility for the poor had been the justification of authority over them. Now this responsibility was denied in the face of constant agitation for reform. It became necessary to spell out the particular advantages derived from the development of industry, before which all criticism could be shown to be absurd. It became necessary to identify the success of the manufacturers with the benefit to the nation if the fortunate were to be allowed the belief that their good fortune was also a "legitimate" fortune.<sup>1</sup>

Alexis de Tocqueville has suggested that ruling groups become vulnerable politically when they fail to render the services which give

1. This necessity follows from a proposition of Max Weber, that the "fortunate are seldom satisfied with the fact of being fortunate." The weakness of the Malthusian doctrine was that the fortune of the successful was attributed entirely to a purely human trait: the exercise of foresight. The fact that a merely human quality was said to account for the acquisition of wealth and that this quality involved, moreover, the subordination of human passions to "the hope of bettering our condition, and the fear of want" severely reduced the moral stature of this doctrine. It is not surprising that many English industrialists and their spokesmen would not let go of this convenient justification of their every practice merely because the tender-minded could not stomach the consequences. But it is not surprising either that the argument suffered in the long run from being much too closely identified with a mere defense of material interests to carry much conviction to anyone who did not profit from it more or less directly. How readily fault was found with the Malthusian argument even by those who were convinced by his major thesis is analyzed in great detail in Kenneth Smith, op. cit., 47-169.

meaning to their rule while their high status remains. It is a logical consequence of this observation that ruling groups seek to make a case for their contribution to society. Of course, this case can be made in many ways. It may be an unconscious affirmation of innate superiority in every word and gesture, or again a self-conscious apologia of rulers under attack. However the case is made, the fortunate who believe in the legitimacy of their fortune want to see their case established before others. And while they may never fully succeed in persuading the humble and downtrodden, they always try anyway, and they succeed more often than is generally supposed.

In England at the beginning of the 19th century, many industrial entrepreneurs denied their responsibility for the poor and asserted their claim to authority over them simply by the praise of machinery and by reference to their economic achievements. What was good for their economic success was also good for the nation as a whole; all else was beside the point. And the principal fact which made this success possible was the use of machinery which facilitated man's labor while it increased his output. This ease of labor at power-driven machinery in the factories was contrasted constantly with the drudgery of the home-worker in his unhealthy hovel. These claims were so simple that they must have seemed most persuasive to practical men of affairs, who could not be troubled with the complexity of abstract ideas.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, this simple ideology had its weakness also. The English entrepreneurial class was on the ascendance. But it had still to win

1. The classic statement of this position is contained in Adrew Ure, The Philosophy of Manufactures, originally published in 1835.

political and social recognition for its contribution to the nation's welfare. Such recognition was difficult to attain as long as the spokesmen of this class denied that industrialists had either the power or the responsibility to provide for the welfare of the laboring poor, while radical agitators and spokesmen for the landed aristocracy denounced the manufacturers for their inhumanity to women and children. In the face of such agitation it was not persuasive to praise the machinery which was the very symbol of oppression in the eyes of the critics.

At this juncture the emergence of the entrepreneurial class as a political force gave rise to an essentially new ideology. I have reference to the agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League, founded in 1838. Of this agitation John Morley has written that

"the important fact was that the class-interest of the manufacturers and merchants happened to fall in with the good of the rest of the community . . . The class-interest widened into the consciousness of a commanding national interest. In raising the question of the bread-tax [i.e., duties on all imports of corn], and its pestilent effects on their own trade and on the homes of their workmen, the Lancashire men were involuntarily opening the whole question of the condition of England."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the use of free trade as a political issue caused an ideological realignment of the English class-structure. Before the agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League, the poor had been condemned to economic destitution, a celibate life, or a "voluntary" confinement in a "well-managed" workhouse, while the spokesmen of the manufacturers had denied the miseries incident to industrialization, or had blamed them on others. Now, the entrepreneurial claim to authority was changed from a denunciation of the poor and a mere denial of well-publicized abuses into a claim based

<sup>1</sup>. John Morley, The Life of Richard Cobden (London: Chapman & Hall, 1881), I, 141.



on moral leadership and authority on behalf of the national interest. Now, industrialists could demonstrate as well as claim that their efforts to advance the wealth of the nation benefited employers and workers alike. The appeals of the Anti-Corn Law League were weapons in the struggle of the entrepreneurial class to assume leadership over an increasingly restive working class and to wrest leadership from the politically entrenched, landholding aristocracy.

The buoyancy of this new and different spirit stood in marked contrast to the pessimism of the Malthusian doctrine. In one of his campaign speeches John Bright, the famous spokesman of the League, gave a new interpretation of the relation between higher and lower classes.

"I am a workingman as much as you. My father was as poor as any man in this crowd . . . He boasts not - nor do I - of birth, nor of great family distinctions. What he has made, he has made by his own industry and successful commerce. What I have comes from him, and from my own exertions . . . I come before you as a friend of my own class and order; as one of the people; as one who would, on all occasions, be the firm defender of your rights, and the asserter of all those privileges to which you are justly entitled . . . It is on these grounds that I solicit your suffrage . . ."

And after pointing out that the workers had a vital interest in the abolition of the Corn laws, for themselves and their children, Bright pointed to the consequences which were sure to follow if these laws were not abolished by the time their children had become adults.

"Trade will then have become still more crippled; the supply of food still more diminished; the taxation of the country still further increased. The great lords, and other people, will have become still more powerful, unless . . . the working classes stand by the working classes; and will no longer lay themselves down in the dust to be trampled upon by the iron heel of monopoly, and have their very lives squeezed out of them by evils such as I have described."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in George M. Trevelyan, The Life of John Bright (London: Constable and Company, 1913), 113-114.

It is apparent that such an appeal no longer adhered to the Malthusian view according to which the working class was by nature "inert, sluggish and averse from labor." Perhaps Bright was in advance of his fellow-manufacturers, though his agitation on behalf of the Anti-Corn Law League was not exceptional aside from his personal vigor. At any rate, this agitation was inspired by a new image of the self-dependent workingman, as well as by a new image of moral leadership by the middle class.<sup>1</sup> Yet, this ideology had difficulties of its own. The more the propagandists of the Anti-Corn Law League attempted to rally the workers behind them, the more they ran the risk of having their middle-class agitation turn into a vehicle of a more radical, working-class movement. On the other hand, safeguards against this risk could not be pushed too far, either, since the agitation of the League had to be carried on in all-out opposition to the landowners and the politically powerful aristocracy.

This new orientation of the English entrepreneurial class should not obscure the fact that even the most "radical" spokesmen of the League were vigorously opposed to all factory legislation. While a man like Richard Cobden acknowledged the need for limiting the hours of child-labor, he opposed the idea that this should be done by legislation. He made it incumbent upon the "resolute demands and independent action of the workmen themselves" to accomplish this end, yet he opposed the "combinations"

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1. To be sure, workers were more self-dependent by that time, and the middle class had to claim leadership in national affairs, if it wanted political recognition. But ideologies are not simply reflections of changing circumstances. Andrew Ure's Philosophy of Manufactures, for example, was not altered in subsequent editions despite these changing conditions.

of workers which might have done so.<sup>1</sup> But as long as the landholding aristocracy was regarded as the major opponent of the League and its backers, this basic hostility to working-class demands did not become apparent. Once the Corn Laws had been repealed in 1846, it could no longer be hidden. The alliance of all manufacturers in their fight against the Corn Laws gave way to a split between liberal and conservative elements. Liberals like Bright sought to continue the middle-class leadership of the masses which had been initiated under the League. Conservatives like Cobden were satisfied with their successful rebellion against the landlords and were apprehensive about the possible consequences of further agitation, especially with regard to the suffrage. While Bright fought for the remainder of his active political life for the enfranchisement of the working class, it is probable that the majority of businessmen and manufacturers did not share his belief in universal suffrage. But it is significant that the entrepreneurial ideologies which became popular after the repeal of the Corn Laws clearly reflected the optimistic creed of the free-trade agitation, and could no longer go back to the dismal views of the Malthusian doctrine.

#### V.

To examine the entrepreneurial ideology after the repeal of the Corn Laws, we must turn away from colorful figures like John Bright and consider, instead, the drab successors of Andrew Ure. Among them Samuel Smiles was perhaps the most popular. He elaborated a theme which Ure had barely touched upon, but which had figured prominently in the agitation of the

1. John Morley, op.cit., I, 298-299, 464-468.



League: that the successful men of business had worked hard and had done well, and that the means by which they had become successful were within reach of everyone. The writings of Smiles reflect these two themes accurately enough. A series of his volumes were devoted to biographical accounts of successful merchants, engineers, manufacturers, inventors, and others, in which the chronological details of each man's career were interspersed abundantly by moral homilies, describing the virtues of the businessman-hero and upholding him as a model to be emulated by all. Another series of his books was designed to demonstrate the specific, if old-fashioned, virtues, which could be cultivated by everyone, and which would lead to success. Eloquently entitled Self-Help, Character, Thrift, and Duty, these four volumes contained didactic essays on virtues and vices, each of them illustrated abundantly by biographical and other documentation. It is important for us to see the significance of this ideological position in the context of the development which this essay has traced.

As Smiles pointed out, his counsel to young men of ambition was as old as the Proverbs of Solomon. Biblical passages extolling the honor and dignity of hard work had been cited for centuries,

in order to teach humility and resignation to the poor. This had been the traditional view, on which the demand for the self-dependence of the poor had made inroads only slowly. Malthusianism had taught that the poor should exercise foresight and moral restraint, but it had held out little hope for the majority of the "wretchedly poor." The debates over Poor Law Reform, which were partly inspired by Malthus' views, had made the opinion prevail, though perhaps unwittingly, that the poor were idle and dissolute. Once the higher classes had renounced their responsibility for the poor, they began to assert their

authority in the manner of Andrew Ure, exonerating themselves and attributing riot and treason to the workers who wanted to assert their much-advocated independence by trade-union organization. Then the agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League had sought to rally the politically restive workers to the support of middle-class agitation against the Corn Laws and against aristocratic supremacy. And in the middle of the 19th century, this evolving ideology of the entrepreneurial class found its culmination, not in John Bright's agitation for suffrage, but in Samuel Smiles' message of virtue and success for the humble.

Smiles stated his belief, and he reiterated it constantly, that the poor need not remain dependent and impoverished. The higher classes had demonstrated by their own success that it was possible for each to "secure his independence." To be sure, Smiles continued the old theme that the workers were idle and dissolute. But he did so, not to discourage them, or teach them the Christian virtues so that their inevitable poverty would be spiritually alleviated. Instead, he wanted men to know the enemies of idleness, thoughtlessness, vanity, vice, and intemperance so that they may "employ their means for worthy purposes." At considerable length and in wearying detail he recounted the many ways in which even the most humble could aspire to higher things, by hard work, attention to detail, and systematic savings.<sup>1</sup>

Smiles preached a gospel not merely of work, but of hope. He founded the industrialists' claim to authority and leadership on a creed which attributed their success to qualities readily accessible to the poor. In

1. See, for example, Thrift (London: John Murray, 1875), 30-64, 159-178.

fact, he enjoined upon the higher classes the task of doing all that lay in their power, to instil these qualities in their workers. Consequently, Smiles took a new look at the relations between the higher and the lower classes. He deplored the prevailing lack of sympathy between masters and men. Of course, he made the usual arguments against indiscriminate charity, yet he did not leave the definition of their duties to the caprice of the higher classes. Instead, he chastised the character of the rich man of business, whose all-absorbing love of gold would make him "almost invariably disposed to be idle, luxurious, and self-indulgent."<sup>1</sup> Instead of interpreting economic success as evidence of virtue, Smiles claimed that the vast majority of businessmen are of "no moral or social account." And by taking this forthright stand against the immorality of the rich, Smiles could advance the claim to authority and leadership on the part of the entrepreneurial class. He formulated an ideology, which avoided the political risks involved in the extension of the franchise without abandoning the claim to moral leadership which had inspired the agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League. For in his view the rich have a great opportunity for influencing the working class, and they have therefore the social responsibility for doing all they can. Malthus had denied the ability of the higher classes to do anything for the poor beyond educating them in the exercise of moral restraint. Smiles recognized that the worker was a citizen, who gave daily evidence of his rising social power, and whose very discontent was "only the necessary condition of improvement." That Smiles could criticize severely the actions of the rich and think constructively

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1. Ibid, 290.



about the discontent of the poor, is perhaps the clearest indication of how much entrepreneurial ideologies had changed since the beginning of the 19th century.

But by the 1860's the workers of England had already won major victories on many fronts. Trade unions flourished, suffrage was extended. The individual independence of the worker which Malthus and Senior wanted enforced, which Ure decried, which Cobden and Bright wanted to lead, had by then changed from a demand of the employers and their spokesmen into a political force which the doctrine of self-help could not undo. For the worker had used his independence to join in organizations of his own, which could oppose the employer with commensurate power as the individual could not. The workers had helped themselves. And the doctrine of self-help would henceforth appear to them as a device to undermine the solidarity of their organizations.

## VI.

I break off this very brief survey of ideological history to return to the questions raised in the first section of this essay. Weber's concern in The Protestant Ethic was to explain a significant change in the ethos which animated economic activity. Present-day experience in the so-called underdeveloped countries points up the continued relevance of this analysis. However, the type of question I have raised is not concerned with the origin of the capitalist spirit in an entrepreneurial class. It is, rather, concerned with the ideological weapons by which representatives of such a class destroy the last elements of traditionalism in the relations between higher and lower classes. It is also concerned with the use of these ideological weapons which, along with the coercion and exploitation they sought to

VI

I break off this very brief survey of ideological history to return to the questions raised in the first section of this essay. The distinctive feature of the English experience was that an entrepreneurial class legitimated its power by the demand that the poor should imitate them. Though this demand was amplified by exhortations which often seemed hypocritical to those to whom they were addressed, it is historically significant that economic success alone was made the touchstone of compliance with this ideology of industrialism. The contrast of this approach with the legitimation of other ruling classes is striking. An aristocracy insists upon the inferiority of the common man, so that his every imitation of the aristocratic way of life is either farce or presumption. A class of colonial entrepreneurs views the native working class much as the aristocrat views the common people, only that race purity takes the place of family lineage as an unalterable criterion of status; but since membership in a race confers upon the individual neither quality nor personal dignity, nor ancient and hallowed prerogative, and since moreover it is made the ground for rule under conditions where the ruled cannot accept it without losing their self-esteem, coercion cannot be given effective legitimation. Finally, a successful communist party claims for itself the undisputed and unerring leadership of the masses, it claims to act as the faithful representative of their general will; hence everyone who fails to fulfil the Party program has wilfully ostracized himself from the community and must be punished accordingly.

It will be useful to formulate these considerations as if they were the theoretical alternatives which are open to an entrepreneurial class.



Assume that industrialization requires the creation of a non-agricultural work-force and that this involves a break with "everyday routine as the inviolable norm of conduct": an entrepreneurial class may then take one or another of the following positions.

(a) It may demand the self-dependence of the lower classes and deny its responsibility for their protection; theoretically, the danger of this position is that the lower classes become too independent.

(b) It may assert that the lower classes are inevitably dependent and take responsibility for creating a non-agricultural work-force solely in terms of economic self-interest; theoretically, the danger of this position is that the continued dependence of the lower classes seriously interferes with the labor-requirements of industrialization.

(c) It may demand that all power be placed in the hands of the working class and enlist the full participation of all in the exercise of that power. But the final authority for detailed planning and supervision is vested in a party, which represents itself as the organ of the most progressive section of the working class and excommunicates all who challenge this claim. Theoretically, the danger of this position is that the independence of the workers suffers as the "organized spontaneity" of supervision gains in importance.

Now it will be useful to relate these considerations to an earlier study of legitimation. More than a generation ago the German sociologist Max Weber analyzed the religious doctrines which made the pursuit of economic gain legitimate and which were used to justify that pursuit against older religious doctrines which condemned it.

"Religion has psychologically met a very general need. The fortunate is seldom satisfied with the fact of being fortunate. Beyond this, he needs to know that he has a right to his good fortune. He wants to be convinced that he 'deserves' it, and above all, that he deserves it in comparison with others. He wishes to be allowed the belief that the less fortunate also merely experiences his due. Good fortune thus



wants to be 'legitimate' fortune."<sup>1</sup>

Weber showed how the doctrines of the Puritan Divines made the fortunes of their parishioners seem legitimate. These doctrines helped to buttress the self-esteem of a rising entrepreneurial class: it had been Weber's intention to explain the "innerworldly asceticism" of this class, i.e., the emergence of a new code of conduct. Religious beliefs accounted for this change in conduct and justified the economic success to which it led.

Much valuable work is still being done along the lines which Weber suggested originally. Yet it is probable that today the interests of many social scientists are shifting away from this perspective, even if they accept his thesis without reservations. There is less concern today than a generation ago with the uniqueness of Western rationalism as it manifests itself in economic life, or with the way in which the economic activities of a middle class are strengthened psychologically by certain religious doctrines. For the East-West conflict of today presses upon us less academic questions than those dealing with the origin of capitalism in the West and its failure to develop in India and China. While Calvinist doctrines probably account for the rationality of capitalist enterprise at the time of its first development in the West, there are today other than religious bases for the emergence of a new ethic of economic conduct. Among these nationalism ranks perhaps first of all, and communism runs a close second.

To mention these ideologies as if they were on a par with the Protestant Ethic which Max Weber analyzed, opens up problems which need at least to be stated explicitly. We have seen that in England, the need

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1. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ed., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 271.

for legitimation remained after the spread of Calvinism had succeeded in undermining the general acceptance of earlier religious precepts which had been inimical to unrestrained economic activity. The doctrines of Calvinism had given strength to a class ideology. But when major technological and economic changes during the latter half of the 18th century began to give real scope to the economic enterprise of this class of merchants and manufacturers, more was needed in the way of ideological defenses than a reiteration of Puritan formulae. These formulae had applied to the conscience of the individual; now they needed elaboration, to say the least. For the ideology of the English entrepreneurial class was to justify the rejection of government interference in economic affairs in an age when such "interference" was accepted as a matter of course. It was to justify the means needed to create a cheap, docile and readily available labor-force in an age when wages were low but labor was neither docile nor readily available. And it was to justify the demand for social recognition of the middle class in an age when the ruling aristocracy regarded the trader and manufacturer with contempt and ill-concealed derision. It is apparent that the rising entrepreneurial class in England was still confronted with a preference for traditional modes of life on the part of the workers and the landed aristocracy, long after it had overcome the religious restrictions on its own economic conduct. But its ability to legitimate its rise to economic and political power by an appeal to the independence of the working classes depended upon certain preconditions which are largely absent from the underdeveloped areas of the world today.

In the England of the early 19th century workers were asserting their independence long before their employers were willing to grant it, or before they were ready to give that independence a positive meaning ~~in line~~ with their own interests. To be sure, Smiles and others like him were accused of hypocrisy, partly because their slogans were used to undermine the solidarity of trade-union organizations, and partly also because independence and success appeared as a travesty to the worker who could barely earn enough to make ends meet. But this accusation is irrelevant, for every ideology which defends material interests will be called "hypocritical" by its adversaries. The point is rather that the legitimization of the English entrepreneurial class was meaningful because the independence of the worker, which it extolled, had a history of its own. The workers were demanding their independence and using it as they saw fit; and there was evidence of independence on the part of men who had achieved economic success by overcoming the formidable obstacles of their environment. Hence, there is a certain disparity between the Protestant Ethic which aided the formation of a new code of economic conduct and thereby helped to initiate English industrialization, and the Ethic of individual striving and success which in its secularized, 19th-century form proclaimed a doctrine of individual opportunity that mitigated the sharp differences between classes which were a legacy of feudalism. That is to say, the Protestant Ethic initially served to legitimate a change in the economic conduct of a numerically small class. In England it took a century and a half before a more general acceptance of that ethic inspired an upsurge of industrial activity;



and it took several further decades before the upheaval of the industrial revolution gave way to an established industrial society and a widely accepted ideology of industrialism.

There is, then, a disparity in time and in content between the ideology which helped to initiate industrialization and the ideology which defends the practices of its successful development. That disparity is absent from the patterns of industrialization outside the European and American orbit. For today there is no interval of two centuries between the initial phase and the full development of industry. Since techniques of industrial production are theoretically available in all their modern complexity, countries will either industrialize quickly or continue for a considerable time as plural economies, if not with one foreign capitalist then with another. But if they do industrialize quickly, then this requires the total organization of a country's resources. And the ideology which is to inspire that total organization must create at the same time a new ethic of an entrepreneurial class and an ideology of industrialism which is widely accepted among the masses. There is no reason to believe that either the Protestant Ethic or the ideology of striving and success are suitable for inspiring the total organization of a country's resources.