

## NOTES ON THE INTELLIGENTSIA

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### I

THERE has been an intelligentsia of some kind in every society, from the days of the soothsayer to the Academy of Sciences; men, that is, not merely living by their wits (otherwise crystal-gazers and Stock Exchange operators would have to be included), but in some fashion occupied with abstract or general ideas of meaning to mankind. Like other social groups this one has had a chequered history, with its heroes and leaders and deserters. It bears the scars of its past, and has many ancestral defects to overcome. In every region there is a special study to be made of its evolution; a task surprisingly little undertaken hitherto, because scholars in the modern West, scattered over a complex social spectrum, have been little conscious of an intelligentsia as an entity; they no longer have a common name for themselves, like the "clerk" of the middle ages. Historians have been drawn to the study of peasantries, aristocracies, groups that may on the surface have a clearer outline, though in reality they too have nearly always been conglomerates. Social categories have seldom coincided exactly with the economic categories of class, and it might be as reasonable to speak of the intelligentsia as a class, in the looser sense, as of the nobility or the "middle class". In placid times it is taken for granted, or thought of as a harmless chewer of scholastic cud; when those who want things to stay as they are find them going unaccountably wrong, they have the habit of blaming intellectuals, and seem to credit them with marvellous faculties of causing trouble, like Prospero raising a tempest. By so doing they betray their lack of real confidence in their own solid-looking world, as happened last year in both eastern Europe and the U.S.A. At the same time reports about the mood of the working class appeared to show it, in strong contrast, as torpid, and at one with the ruling circles in resenting efforts by intellectuals to disturb its lethargy. This has already proved untrue of workmen in Prague, and may come to prove untrue of workmen in Pittsburg. But disappointment in recent years with the political inertia of the working class in advanced capitalist countries, America above all, has led to the intelligentsia being thought of by socialists as an alternative force capable of bringing about fundamental change. To expect it to do this single-handed is unlikely to be more than a pipe dream. To expect it to con-

tribute far more than socialists used to reckon on it for is, on the other hand, realistic enough. What its contribution may amount to can only be judged from a scrutiny of its past and its present.

## II

Intelligentsias have always been liable to increase and multiply beyond their means of subsistence. With its double appeal to ambition and to thirst for knowledge, education has always attracted more aspirants than could be, in the old phrase of the Kirk of Scotland, placed. Underlying every battle of ideas, that of Reformation and Counter-Reformation for instance, there has been a battle for jobs, as bitter as the competition of politicians for the sweets of office, or of feudalists for land. Professional corporations tried to protect themselves by restriction of membership, but ruling classes have usually been tolerant of an indiscriminate increase, which favoured them by making the patronage they had to bestow more eagerly sought. British education in India was designed to produce a swarming surplus of clerical labour famishing for loaves and fishes, even for crumbs and sardines. When Curzon was viceroy he wanted to limit university admissions, realizing that the disappointed were becoming a menace to authority as well as to educational standards; most governments have been too indolent to perceive this, and in any case to curb overproduction of brains, once well under way, is as hard as to curb overpopulation. In China the dominant landlords wanted a plentiful supply of literati just as they did of peasants; many of them, from snobbery or for culture, wanted to be literati themselves, the more so as there was no attractive army career for them as in Europe. In the old novel, *The Scholars*,<sup>1</sup> we can see how hard was the struggle to make a living out of laboriously acquired learning. By the 19th century the grievances of a lumpen-intelligentsia were a potent ingredient in the chronic unrest, with anti-foreign riots as its chief outlet, in southern China.<sup>2</sup> Eventually the Chinese revolution was to be heavily indebted to the inability of the old society any longer to absorb its scholars. In Europe clerical marriage after the Reformation helped to release a flood of men in search of professional employment. This was markedly visible in Sweden, for instance, by the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> To some significant extent Protestant countries were developing towards industrial modernity because of this intellectual capital seeking investment, this restless energy in want of opportunity. One relief available in some places was an overflow of the educated from surplus to deficit areas : some areas indeed came to produce them for export, while others had reasons for preferring to import them. Muslim India always preferred to import both intellectuals and soldiers, because governments found

them more dependable than their own subjects. Persia was a great purveyor of poets, scholars and mercenary soldiers to Muslim Asia; Germany of musicians, scholars, missionaries, and, like Switzerland, of mercenaries. Eighteenth-century Italy bred enough fiddlers and painters to stock half Europe. In the age that the Wordsworth clan belonged to the north of England with its grammar-schools supplied churchmen and college men to the southern England of squire, pauper, and fox-hound. Scotland did the same, and went on to lead Britain in doing so for the whole empire; that imperialism meant more posts for educated men was one reason why they yielded so meltingly to its seductions. The U.S.A. was another big absorber. There are still regions from which intellectuals migrate—New Zealand in the English-speaking world, Kerala, largely Christian and well-endowed with schools, in India. But as higher education spreads more widely all the non-socialist régimes will be embarrassed both by pressure of demand for employment, and by a pressure of ideas which experience suggests will be at least as hard to contain within an old social framework as expanding material production can be.

### III

Making a virtue of their isolation, intellectuals have been as Gramsci said too fond of seeing themselves as a permanent category, "independent of the struggle of groups".<sup>4</sup> This is not altogether illusion. Learning does, like religion, have a continuity of its own, linking together its practitioners from epoch to epoch. Corporate organization strengthens the feeling, and although in class society the intelligentsia is itself bound to be stratified, its inner divisions may be softened by a certain egalitarianism, as those of an aristocracy are. No-one is born with a mastery of calculus or counterpoint, all have to gain it by the same effort. Newcomers from "below" may have a particular sensation of having entered a separate estate of the realm, because they have not yet got to know it familiarly, and it has for them the air of a self-sustaining world. In reality there has been a perpetual and multiple interaction between the intelligentsia and other classes, especially those in power or moving towards power. Its outlook and behaviour depend very much on how close its leading sections stand to the ruling class, by origin or by habit and interest, and on how many different, broadening influences they are exposed to. Some of its members have been born in the dominant class, and in a narrow environment may simply reproduce its prejudices. Gramsci speaks of the vicious intelligentsia of southern Italy in recent times, sons of middle and smaller landowners who set the tone in the local bureaucracy and looked on the wretched peasantry with the true landlord mixture of fear, cupidity, and deceit-

fulness.<sup>5</sup> Higher up the scale we may recall Marx's reference to intellectuals, scions of the ruling class, who "make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood".<sup>6</sup> At the other end, the more self-assertive newcomer from below may want to quarrel with his social superiors for not accepting him as an equal, as Beethoven did with the Viennese nobility, or as a Muslim scholar in mediaeval India did with a Sayyid who presumed on his blue blood.<sup>7</sup> Whenever the intellectual has found himself treated too much as an inferior, because the gap between him and the upper class has been too wide, he has been likely to hate his employers, even if he usually had to hide his resentment. In general however the intelligentsia, convinced of the ordinary man's blank indifference to it and its work, has accepted and found arguments to defend class division, the principle of subordination, without which, Johnson maintained, "intellectual improvement" would end, and men degenerate into animals.<sup>8</sup> The first sermon Mr Jorrocks heard when he arrived in Handley Cross to be Master of Hounds struck him as excellent: it was "all about 'onering one's superiors, meaning the MFH doubtless".<sup>9</sup> Sermons on this theme must have been preached by the million. But the more authentic views of the intelligentsia, nervous system as it has been of all class societies, have always been more complex. It has had to partake, however imperfectly, of the feelings of all classes, even to identify itself, intermittently, with each of them. It has had ancestors among all of them, its status and functions have analogies with those of all the rest, it knows, or can learn when the times are out of joint and compel it to, all their histories and all their dreams: the intellectual has his portion among the inheritors and the disinherited, the respectable and the outcast, in the hall and in the lock-up. Hence the temperamental instability, the veering from one point of the compass to another, that an intelligentsia has so often displayed, the more so when the social fabric has been loosened. Normally aligned for the most part with ruling-class interests, it has always vibrated in some degree to feelings opposed to them, and its strongest incentive to think on new lines, to open new windows, has been derived from the tension between the two.

#### IV

A learned class well settled and well endowed is prone to ape the tastes and manners of those above it. Stalin's artless complaint about linguistic studies in the Soviet Union having fallen under an "Arakcheyev régime", the despotism of Marr,<sup>10</sup> touched a recurrent weakness of intellectuals given authority within their own sphere, their tendency to wield it in the same style as those in political power. Universities in modern England have had a structure corresponding with that of a

relatively easy-going State, in Germany of a far more heavy-handed one. Avicenna collected women *con amore*, but also because a bulging harem was the grand status-symbol of western and middle Asia. Oxford and Cambridge with their silver plate, their port and banquets, have insisted, a trifle over-elaborately, on living like gentlemen as well as scholars; England is the home of a family of genteel hybrids, the gentleman-farmer, gentleman-jockey, gentleman-politician, and the rest. Aristocracy has welcomed this pose, which pays it the sincerest of flattery. A late eminent, but very unpretending, mathematician at Trinity, Cambridge, told a story of a duke saying to him across the table at a dinner, with no observable trace of sarcasm—"In our class, Professor, we must. . ."<sup>11</sup> France before 1789 displays another mode of intimacy between upper class and upper intelligentsia, favoured by the long continuance of monarchy there after the bourgeoisie had already grown up. Talented writers could rub shoulders with men of fashion, at some risk of a cudgelling if they gave offence, such as befell Voltaire. Corporations of privileged jurists formed a second nobility, not far removed from the nobility of the sword, though the sober magistrate kept a certain distance between himself and the giddy courtier.<sup>12</sup> In the atmosphere of eighteenth-century France display of intelligence was contagious, and wit came to be esteemed as part of the department of a gentleman. In itself it was a dilettante amusement for a class in decline, still in possession but no longer directly governing; but the French intelligentsia of later times may have inherited a mental culture owing something to Versailles as well as to Paris, the social intercourse between two vanished classes prolonged in the realm of the mind. Even in Hohenzollern Germany some intellectuals, as modest associates of the ruling power, could enjoy a share of its prestige, a better status than democracy might seem likely to give them. Mao observes that in old China scholars were held in an esteem that might make them conceited.<sup>13</sup> Generally speaking in feudal Asia and aristocratic Europe there was a mild respect—mildest in England—for learning and the arts, that helped to prevent total Mammon-worship, or admiration of wealth and power alone. America lacked this preservative. Tocqueville was struck by the absence there of any regard for intellectual attainments, except those of lawyers, who had an obvious utility and therefore came to the front in public life.<sup>14</sup> America started in a mood of radical protest against the pretensions of all would-be superiors, and this had an invaluable liberating effect, but something was lost with it; and this negative side was worsened when industrialism produced a new hierarchy of incomes, a new inequality that American democracy has tried to shut its eyes to in the odd way that communities often do manage to shut their eyes to what is most glaringly evident in them. Academic work (though also the military profession) remains to this

day less honoured than in the Old World, by comparison with the grand business of life, making money. This situation must have helped to bring about the relative supineness or tameness of the American intelligentsia in recent decades; it is a welcome sign of change that it is now bestirring itself enough to be an attractive target for presidential candidates to cannonade.

## V

The more morbid the condition of the body politic, the more hectic will be that of the intelligentsia; or it may be split between a reactionary and a progressive file. In nineteenth-century England it felt all the complacency induced by England's long lead in progress. It could feel that it was playing an estimable part in forming opinion, guiding civil servants, promoting sound public morals. Comfortably linked with Property, custodian of a half-mythical, half-genuine tradition of upper-class social responsibility, it thought along solid, useful, not very adventurous lines. At the other extreme has been the position of the solitary intellectual tied to the chariot-wheel of despotism. One may feel it poignantly in the self-reproaches of Barani, the most gifted historian in mediaeval India, at his lack of courage to open his mouth against the crimes of his paymaster Mohamed Tughlaq, a patron of letters (himself a man of high culture) of unbounded liberality, a tyrant of unbounded ferocity.<sup>15</sup> Profoundly anti-democratic, the nerve-racked Barani could not appeal from Sultan to People; he could only take refuge in religion, one of whose constant feeders has been the thinking man's disgust at his own servility —

**"That I am pigeon-livered, and lack gall  
"To make oppression bitter!"**

—It is no accident that the intelligentsia, in England and then Germany, in Russia and then India, as the centre of the revolutionary cyclone drifted eastward, has recognized in Hamlet its own prototype. "Germany is Hamlet", a poem of Freiligrath in 1844 began.<sup>16</sup> Somewhere between modern England and old Delhi we find in tsarist Russia the men and women to whom the title "intelligentsia" first stuck. They were a species that might well feel, like the hero of Gissing's novel, "born in exile", a fraternity stranded on the edge of civilization, with a gnawing conscience because the higher classes, to which some of them belonged by birth, were so largely parasitic. For them the normal gap between intellectuals and masses was enormously widened: while they received the latest ideas of the West the peasants were centuries retarded by serfdom. It was their lot, as Trotsky said, to have to act as substitutes or proxies for social forces still immature or inarticulate.<sup>17</sup>

All of them felt in some manner this call, if only a few were ready to obey it. To taciturn westerners the Russian intellectual was no more than the acme of Slav verbosity, and every intelligentsia is indeed coloured by national characteristics. A Dutch diplomat returning to Petrograd in 1917 found his train resounding with "endless discussion", everyone talking and nobody listening: "heaven only knows what grandiloquence every ordinary Russian can develop when once started on his favourite scheme of improving humanity and the world. . . .<sup>111</sup> This expansive, even nebulous idealism had been nurtured by ages of a mystagogic religion, and by the giddiness of an uneasy footing between Europe and Asia. Ordinarily such a temperament works itself off in mere talk, but it can at certain junctures make for startlingly original action. Britons in those days were reacting to Bengalis in much the same way as this Hollander to Russians. It is in the colonies, with the rise of national movements inspired by intellectuals that alienation between rulers and intelligentsia, latent if no more in every society, has come most prominently into the open, with difference of outlook emphasized by difference of race. With its roots in a rotting countryside, a bastard Indo-European agrarian system, the Bengali intelligentsia exhibited even more extremely some of the same traits as the Russian, or as the Irish under English rule. It was born to oscillate wildly between moods of revolt and moods of pessimistic withdrawal. The two lives of Aurobindo Ghosh, first as rebel against the British, then as religious mystic, are an example.

## VI

Ideas may lag far behind material changes, but they may also, at particular moments in history, run far ahead of them. In the intelligentsia's collective consciousness past, present and future merge in a perpetual flux, and individuals have been able at times to look remarkably far ahead. This is true for instance of the sixteenth-century Humanists, with their first glimmerings of socialism, though these also had parallels in contemporary life in Anabaptist experiments in communal living. The door then closed on both for centuries. Where these philosophers were deficient was not in distant vision but in practical ability to bring the future nearer by realistic comprehension of the forces that make and change societies. An intelligentsia, because it looks through the eyes of all classes, may see more clearly than any of them the general route of humanity's Long March, but for the same reason be a poor pathfinder in the zigzags of the hour. In its attitude to government it has habitually been reformist, never revolutionary except when a régime has appeared impossibly bad by contrast with others near it (as Tsarism did), or when a large proportion of intellectuals can no

longer find room within the existing framework. A typical point of view was the Confucian concept of the Superior Men, the élite whose good example would be as surely imitated by the commonalty as, in the time-honoured image, the grass bends whichever way the wind blows.<sup>19</sup> A taste for conjuring up Utopias must have been fostered by bureaucratic patterns of government like China's, and the illusions of omnipotence they nourished. "Bureaucracy is, in the first place", Fidel Castro has said, "a concept, the belief that the world is made from an office."<sup>20</sup> In post-Roman Europe the first model of bureaucracy was the Church, the Catholic Church that Thomas More was brought up in and died for. He like Plato wanted philosophers to take service with princes.<sup>21</sup> In modern Europe bureaucratism developed first in France, and the curious absence of any revolutionary party there until after the revolution of 1789 had got going may be put down to illusions spread by the Philosophes, those eighteenth-century Fabians, about reform from above by an enlightened State. They were always looking for amiable kings whom they could play guide and counsellor to, as the Labour Party looks for amiable capitalists. Scientists sometimes thought on the same lines, like Count Rumford, the American Loyalist carrying on scientific experiments in England and on the Continent in the age of the French and industrial revolutions, vastly admired by the upper classes because his work seemed to promise a short cut to prosperity without any need of political strife. Rumford earned his title as army organizer to an amiable king of Bavaria.<sup>22</sup> It would be worth while to enquire how often intellectuals have found a charm in military studies. Armies are the *ne plus ultra* of bureaucratic organization. Newman was a keen follower of colonial campaigns,<sup>23</sup> finding we may conjecture in the swift acquisition of new British territories some compensation for the painful slowness with which the spiritual conquest of Britain by Rome was proceeding. H. G. Wells played with toy soldiers, and wrote about war-games as well as about his *Modern Utopia*. Various more realistic students of politics, from Machiavelli to Engels and Mao, have set great store by their first-hand acquaintance with military matters.

## VII

Party politics in Europe go back to the Greeks, and there have always been intellectuals in them, as individuals or groups. Dante was one, Milton another. The *Areopagitica* shows how great Milton believed the intervention of the whole intelligentsia in public life ought to be; as a revolutionary propagandist he typically overestimated the force of arguments like those of his Latin pamphlets,

"Of which all Europe rings from side to side" —

or so he fancied, though Europe was full of the louder noises of war. On the other hand the intellectual has very often abstained as long as conscience could allow, or longer, from the political hurly-burly to which he must sacrifice not only his favourite pursuits but his cherished, half-real liberty, in order like Ariel to toil for an arbitrary master, with Calibans for fellow-servitors. Coleridge lamented how many enthusiasts had, since "the complete failure of the French Revolution", sunk into selfish retirement." It was only their own ideal hopes of it that had been a complete failure, and some of them must have in a way welcomed this, because it set them morally free to return to their own interests. Like a collectivised peasant who is allowed a private plot of ground to lavish himself on, the intellectual can be content with a very small patch of freedom so long as he is left to himself with it; though in his alternation between spells of political excitement and longer spells of apathy he only displays more prominently a tendency that has been common to all classes. A shrewd tyrant does not lightly deprive him of his little corner. It was an observation of Pavese, who was not content with his little corner but preferred one of Mussolini's prisons, that fascist culture was rooted in cynicism: writers or artists could survive well enough, so long as they acquiesced in what was going on; the régime feared only a coming together against it of the intellectuals and the workers.<sup>23</sup> Here is one of innumerable testimonials to the importance that an intelligentsia can have, if it wishes.

## VIII

Long before fascism was born, intellectuals helped to make straight its path by promoting nationalism. This had its progressive side, but too many indulged in uncritical adulation of it, and of its bastard offspring, imperialism. However much they wished to feel content with their own rarified sphere, they needed some emotional tie with their fellow-men; and in the wilderness after the failure of the Liberal revolutions of 1848 they found a tie, a questionable one, by feeling patriotic. The "ideologues" for whom Bismarck, the man of blood and iron, professed so much contempt, served him and his like well by romanticising nationalism, much in the same spirit—frequently in the same terms and metaphors—as they romanticised sex. In 1914 when the grandson of Bismarck's Kaiser plunged Germany into war, the "ninety-three intellectuals" came to his defence with their manifesto. Their cousins in the rest of the belligerent countries did the same for their governments. From its long history of being advocate-general to every kind of ruling class, and from its own propensity to mental prestidigitation, the intelligentsia has often been found purveying arguments to bad causes as well as good. Those who have entered

modern political parties have probably as a rule gravitated towards the left wing of progressive parties and the right wing of reactionary ones. In the latter case we may charitably blame the party more than the individual whose worse qualities it brings out, while it stifles his better ones. Anyone who recalls Mr Enoch Powell in his college days will remember, with regret, that he was once a far better man than the man we see today, dried up by the withering air of Delhi in the bad last years of British rule from well-intentioned as well as brilliant young scholar into that dreariest of human kind, a hardened Tory.

## IX

Industrialism for a long time pushed intellectuals still further apart from the people, by calling into existence a new working class that seemed to them to concentrate in itself all the people's baser, more menacing qualities. While the revolutions of 1848 were breaking out, Strauss, the bold German freethinker, wrote gloomily to a friend that for his taste the old police state, bad as it was, had been better than what was happening now—"at least peace reigned in the streets", there were no alarums, no frightening beards or fantastic hats. "I learn to recognize myself in these days more clearly than ever before as an inheritor of that age of individual development typified by Goethe, and its limitations I neither can nor will *overstep*."<sup>26</sup> With these or similar words most of the European intelligentsia soon turned its back on the people, and on progress. It was this divorce that socialism undertook to abolish, by revealing the working class in a new light, and opening the way to a fraternal relationship with the common man far healthier than the hysteria of nationalism, or the older corpus *mysticurn* of religion. Here was a vital highroad to the future, which has already brought us very far, but which like other roads has not always run smooth. Awkwardest of all, from Highgate where Marx first plotted it the route has made a huge loop or diversion eastward. The fact that socialism established itself first in backward Russia, then China, instead of in the advanced West, has affected it deeply, and in most ways that concern intellectual life unfavourably. Here indeed is the fundamental paradox of our age. Gramsci drew an analogy between western and eastern Europe after 1917, and Renaissance and Reformation in the sixteenth century, the one too élitist and refined, the other popular (at first) but *unlettered*.<sup>27</sup> The analogy is certainly striking: Christianity as dogmatized by Luther resembled Marxism as dogmatized by Stalin, and neither could make much appeal to the "super-subtle Venetians" of its time. To add as Gramsci does that the German Reformation was intellectually sterile because Humanists like Erasmus deserted the cause of progress out of fear for their *lives*,<sup>28</sup> is far from

the whole truth. Erasmus was an intellectual stranded in a no-man's land between two camps; he and his fellows were timid because they were alone. Intellectuals with a cause to identify themselves with have been the most heroic of all social groups. Those in tsarist Russia who planned and led the revolution of 1917 displayed, in addition, something of the same masochistic self-devotion that carried most of their European contemporaries into the trenches and graves of the Great War. In its times of ardour for joining in collective action the intelligentsia is apt to rush from one extreme, of anarchic individualism, to another, the self-imposed discipline of monk, Jesuit, Roundhead, Jacobin: to seek in church, army, party, an armour against its own waywardness and self-mistrust. In Lenin's party, which by its success became the model for too many others, organization was determined by conditions of underground struggle, but the temper was that of an intelligentsia craving to overcome by a convulsive effort its chronic aloneness and impotence; it was a deliberate antithesis to the volatile, verbose enthusiasms of other Russians. This led towards an almost anti-intellectual attitude, a conviction of being as far removed from intellectuals outside the party as these were from the peasant or worker. An intelligentsia has either overrated its own distinctive attributes, or underrated them. Bukharin's Historical Materialism, amid all its discussion of class forces, had nothing better to say on this subject than to list among a string of practical problems for a socialist government that of "how the intelligentsia is to be utilized".<sup>29</sup>

## X

Gramsci remarks that the Catholic Church kept a careful eye on its intellectuals, to prevent them from drifting too far away from the rank and file.<sup>30</sup> This must be recognized as a genuine problem for every church, party, or government that takes ideas seriously. When however the Inquisition was set up to regiment ideas too strictly, they came to an end altogether. More harm is done to socialism, experience in communist countries seems to indicate, by intellectuals and artists being trusted too little, than too much. Capitalist individualism brought free competition of ideas as well as of goods; socialism ought to combine the virtues of the two previous epochs and foster a kind of thinking both free and socially responsive. If instead it drills the intelligentsia into a phalanx of tame or unwilling conformists, it may produce a worse situation than that of western countries where a progressive minority can exert some gradual influence over a conservative or indifferent majority. Too many of those who hoped and worked for the revolution in Russia must have been left feeling in the end that like the prisoner in Monte *Cristo* after twenty years of tunnelling

through a stone wall they had only dug their way out of one cell into another. In China too the "cultural revolution" breathes a deep distrust of intellectuals, and at times looks suspiciously anti-cultural, as if China's two thousand years of bureaucratic centralism, which began with a persecution of scholars accused of feudal leanings and a burning of their books by the first emperor Shih Huang-ti, is to end in much the same way. Mao's writings prove the importance he always attached to intellectuals, but—not surprisingly, in desperate conditions of civil and foreign war—what he was concerned with chiefly was the host of young men, many with no more than middle-school education, who could be enrolled by millions on the side of the *revolution*.<sup>31</sup> Lately he has been turning in the same spirit to a fresh reserve army, the newest, most impressionable students, an intelligentsia with a mind still blank for his ideas to be stamped on as on wax. Among intellectuals in a more European sense of the term he is doubtless not mistaken in detecting some feudal or bourgeois leanings, but official condemnation of these is so sweeping as to seem likely to put any independent thinking, however genuinely Marxist, under the ban. By contrast with Stalinist Russia, Maoist China aims at far more social and economic levelling, which is to be welcomed; but also at far more levelling of minds and ideas, a more questionable goal. In the cult of Mao there is an echo of the absolute monarchies of Europe which were supposed to establish equality among their subjects by placing themselves at an infinite height above them all. Under Mao's towering shade all smaller superiorities become insignificant, all selfish ambitions are forgotten. China still faces desperate difficulties, which cannot be overcome without unity of purpose. But a country may move unitedly in wrong directions, and this is the danger that has always been incurred by unity based on suppression of all dissident or critical thinking.

## XI

Outside the communist countries intellectuals have been on the whole chilled by what has been learned of the situation of intellectuals inside them. Where there may be most willingness to follow in the footsteps of the old Bolshevik intelligentsia is in regions resembling tsarist Russia, on the fringes between "civilization" and primitivism, where men of modern outlook are most conscious of being aliens or *émigrés* in their own countries. In such a setting they are likely to move towards opposite poles, some identifying themselves with the U.S.A. as guarantor of the vicious social system from which they draw their incomes, others groping for a new identification with the people, which they can find only by breaking with the social order. The Cuban revolution was initiated by intellectuals, and the programme that now

goes under Che Guevara's name is an attempt to repeat this over the rest of Latin America. There, at any rate, "the formation of a dissident intelligentsia in revolt against the social order as a whole" is under way.<sup>82</sup> It is noteworthy that in parts of Latin America a section of the priesthood has been making common cause with revolutionaries: priest and lay intellectual, descended from the same religious origins, are reunited. In the developed countries, where the intelligentsia is much bigger, and could, as is asserted, paralyse the existing order if it unitedly wished to do so, it is for the same reason more amorphous, more affected by division and sub-division of labour, and to most of its conditions do not seem to demand drastic change. In total size it multiplies rapidly, as skilled knowledge becomes indispensable, even in unexpected quarters. Most of this increase is narrowly professional, some of it morbid as any mental activity detached from human sympathy is likely to be. New ideas moreover of a sort congenial to technological society rapidly sink to the level of routine, so that many types of mental workers may be little more "intellectual" than a mechanic, and may even share anti-intellectual prejudices with him. Thinking is drowned in a flood of knowledge. While more and more people live by using their minds, true intellectual consciousness, as social reagent, or focus for impulses of change, does not expand in anything like the same ratio. "The intelligentsia is always a minority", a student banner of 1968 proclaimed. Historically this has been and remains true; the question of our time is how an inspiring sense of differentness, of "vocation", can be preserved, while isolation is overcome.

## XII

Taken in bulk, mental workers in the developed countries are, as regards desire for political progress, a not less depressing spectacle than the manual working class. This is as true of their most concentrated species, the academic corps, as of the mass, and in Britain particularly so. University teachers here very often combine a bland distaste for parliamentarism, or for its apparatus of canvassing, signatures, meetings, which they consider a waste of time, with an automatic condemnation of any non-parliamentary methods of getting things changed. The future historian will be struck by their almost Trappist silence all through the wars of Algeria and Vietnam. These wars, the grand crimes of the past two decades, were not direct British responsibilities, and Southern Rhodesia is a sin of British omission rather than commission. The Suez adventure did provoke an appreciable, if transient, protest. Whenever it can, the academic body along with the rest of the comfortable middle class takes shelter behind the comfortable catchphrase: "A plague on both your houses".<sup>83</sup> There was a marked

flavour of hypocrisy about academic approval given to Mr Muggeridge when he resigned in 1968 from the Rectorship of Edinburgh University because women students wanted contraceptive pills; no-one can have less right to preach to students than teachers who have had nothing to say about things infinitely worse than any that Venus or Bacchus can mislead young people into. Such approval was not, it is true, widespread. Teachers are under no official pressure to take sides, and abstention is what comes most naturally to them; if they have few principles about anything outside their own walls, they have also nowadays not many prejudices. There are no political movements in the country of a character to enlist many intellectuals. They have plenty of hard and in its way useful work to do, and—an instinctive compensation for neglect in other directions—an exceptionally high standard of professional duty. An academic worker's time is of value to him, since he is used to working vastly longer hours than most people; a fact ignored by idealists who try to draw him into good causes, where chronic shortage of money is made up for by prodigal spending, and wasting, of time. Aloofness or absenteeism from public affairs comes to feel all the more normal as universities expand into self-contained commonwealths, each with its own proliferation of senates and councils and committees. Medical and some other research workers can feel that they are doing their best for humanity. Scientists working for destruction instead of health are not asked what they feel, and there are not nearly so many of them here as in America.<sup>34</sup> Altogether, social ideas, or the new feelings, intuitions, aspirations out of which new ideas crystallize, may be looked for, now as in earlier times, on the borders of the learned world, rather than in its citadels.

### XIII

Throughout history the struggle of the generations has, like that of the sexes, formed a counterpoint with the struggle of classes, and at certain moments even taken priority over it. More than any other group the intelligentsia is divided, though not in all respects, by age and youth. There is less difference between a young and an old duke, except for wrinkles, or a young and an old docker, than between a young scholar not yet tied to the academic cart and an older one; because what both joins and separates them, the study of ideas, is more vital and penetrative than either duking or docking. Exposure to ideas sharpens youth's sensitiveness to the moral and mental atmosphere. Each new generation, lacking as yet any experience of its own, reacts to that of its predecessor, and is in a way more keenly aware than this predecessor itself of what it has learned or failed to learn from life; just as we all see our neighbours more distinctly, if less intensely, than we

see ourselves. Today the prevailing outlook of college seniors is uncertainty, scepticism, far removed from the dogmatic conservatism of pre-war Oxbridge; in political terms, a tacit agreement that existing institutions are fairly poor things, though anything that might replace them would probably be worse. It is an attitude that when viewed from the Right, as it often censoriously is in America, looks as unsatisfactory as when viewed from the Left. By itself it engenders only negative withdrawal; filtered, as is happening in universities up and down the world, through the more sanguine temperament of youth, it becomes a more positive form of scepticism, a wish to discard everything antiquated and wormeaten in order to put something better in its place.

#### XIV

For any collective enterprise youth has the great asset of being outgoing, overflowing, trustful, drawn towards others, whereas its elders have learned to be more cautious and secretive. It is of course an asset that these elders have known how to exploit, most successfully in the fascist movements of this century. With it youth possesses a certain audacity, even recklessness, which counteracts the common failing of the intellectual: he sees more clearly than others both the ideal to be aimed at and the obstacles in the way, and is, typically, a Plekhanov, bold in thought but hesitant in action, given to "thinking too precisely on the event". Youth has borne an active part in many fields, above all on the battlefield, but it is only in the shape of student movements that we can as a rule trace its doings in history; of all "classes" the student population is the only one that is always young. There has always been a student restlessness, the ever-curling crest of a wave. One of Sinclair Lewis's novels pictured a "Flaming Youth" in the America of the 1920s, some of whose spokesmen sound quite up to date forty years later. One of them was all for 'lining up the faculty and the president—and particularly that damn dean—and giving them the choice of joining the revolution or resigning'.<sup>10</sup> Only at odd intervals has the curling wave broken seriously, and then for reasons less easy to decipher than those of labour conflicts. It would be highly instructive to have a history of student movements, with their two interacting themes, collegiate grievances and interest in wider political issues. The first sort go back to the earliest days of the university, to episodes like the row at Paris in 1259 that ended in an exodus of teachers and scholars to Oxford and other places. This was partly a town-and-gown riot, one of innumerable scrimmages of the kind in university history—another expression of the uneasy relationship between intelligentsia and society. In modern politics, student groups came to the front chiefly where society was agitated but progressive

forces, middle-class or proletarian, were still weak; we find them most conspicuous on the margins of the most advanced region of Europe, and later in Asia. Students and a few of their more public-spirited teachers were the life and soul of the German liberal agitation after 1815. Spain was another country where Youth could often be reckoned as a force on the progressive side. In Portugal in the 1820s we read of students showing a lively interest in politics by meeting and passing sentence of death on two professors and shooting them next day in a field.<sup>10</sup> Students were to the fore in most of the revolutionary movements, liberal or national, of the period whose climax came in 1848. They and the workers defended Vienna then against the Hapsburg army: a new and promising alliance, but unfortunately abortive, because as the middle classes in these countries fell into timid conformism the middle-class student body too receded into the background. Russian students took up what German students were leaving off, Young Italy was succeeded by Young Turks. In Asia it was an immense and explosive innovation when European power or influence set up a new educational system that checked juvenile marriage and created a western-type student body, an educated adolescence with all its restless and romantic energies, virtually for the first time. In Europe the political parties now everywhere in the field drew young people into them or towards them. Rectorial elections in Scottish universities earlier in this century were contests between Conservative and Liberal champions. In the 1920s and 1930s large numbers of students followed communist and fascist parties. After 1945 there was a prevailing disillusion with all the parties that youth had been persuaded to support. Lately it has been rousing itself again, but striking out on lines of its own. In this it bears some resemblance to the Suffragettes and their breakaway from established political parties, and it has also turned to unorthodox tactics not unlike those with which the Suffragettes shocked but impressed their contemporaries.

## XV

Simple increase of student numbers in recent years must have had a transforming influence. Youth feels able to act on its own because it has a mass basis of its own. University expansion may have a cutting-off, neutralising effect on teachers, but an opposite one on students. Everywhere that technology spreads, the university becomes a focal point of class contacts and social tensions. It is increasingly the portal through which individuals have to pass in order to get a "good place" in the world, and this helps to make it a microcosm of society, sensitive to its ideals and dilemmas. There has been a diversity of student "outbreaks" lately, turning as in past times either on issues affecting

student interests, or on wider public issues—in America the presidential campaign with its "children's crusade" against militarism, in Spain and Pakistan the demand for democratic government, in Japan opposition to American bases. In most instances the two kinds of issue have run together more than in the past, and in all of them one overriding question, the war in Vietnam, has probably been in the student mind (though it has been noticeable in this country of late years how few students, as well as practically none of their teachers, have wanted to attend meetings on Vietnam of the traditional lecture-and-discussion sort). Among them these things have generated a vast amount of debate, ideas still in a confused state of fermentation. There is a curious medley of small local grievances with fundamental criticisms of the established order, the *contestation globale* that the Paris students in May 1968 talked of. It has almost seemed at times as if these—mainly middle-class—students were setting going again the bourgeois-democratic revolutionary movement of the last century, everywhere left incomplete, and now reviving with a new character because of the presence in the world, however imperfectly as yet, of socialism. Access to ideas, which in static times wraps the intellectual in a cloud of superiority, when the times are out of joint reveals to him his insufficiency, his community of need with all the discontented who want to put them right. In Britain more than elsewhere the public has felt mystified by the mood of revolt in the colleges, not only because this country still likes to exist in a kind of weightlessness, as though it were a spacecraft in distant orbit round a troublous planet, but also because here both taxpayer and teacher have made a real effort to give the student better treatment than he gets in almost any other capitalist country. Traditionally youth has been sent to college to amuse itself, or to *better* itself, that is to make sure of a better income. It was only for stating too frankly this philosophy of egotism that Lord Birkenhead, an epitome of the successful man, was reproached, when as Rector at Glasgow he told students to fix their eyes on the "glittering prizes" waiting for them outside. Young people are capable of a distaste for the ingrained mercenariness of bourgeois life, a wish to learn how to better the world as well as themselves. By way of meeting this, British universities have provided the institution of the annual Charity Rag, which invites the student to collect money for hospitals and enjoy a mild saturnalia at the same time. It was a harmless enough channel for good-will and high spirits, but inadequate for a generation dissatisfied with all old patterns.

## XVI

Whether youth takes refuge in drugs and freakishness, or takes up arms against a sea of troubles, its own and mankind's, it is clear that things as they are do not satisfy it. This it must be said is partly because things as they are have improved, grown more respectable; bourgeois society has reached the same sober time of life as monarchy reached with Louis Philippe, the citizen-king with an umbrella. Most of its fire and colour was borrowed from its aristocratic forerunner, and military reviews, pageantry, empire, which fascinated no-one more than the young, had their last flare-up with fascism. Most of what service, or servitude, it has to offer now looks, from the college window, unattractive. Students in the middle ages, who were often riotous, had to look for employment chiefly to the Church, and would be lucky if they found a vacancy. Today jobs are more numerous, but the student's education is a great deal more liberal and stimulating, so that he may feel the coming transition from study to work more painfully. As life goes on we reconcile ourselves to being squeezed into the pigeon-hole of a profession; youth, not yet packaged for sale, resents this, and feels something not far distant from the "large and liberal discontent" that Matthew Arnold praised.

## XVII

Student militants or "ringleaders" may be relatively few, but what has been significant has been their finding a responsive mass ready to take up some at least of their proposals. What has drawn this support seems to have been, at bottom, the idea—in the broadest sense a political one—that men in general and students in particular ought to have a voice in running their own affairs. It is a reaction against the creeping shadow of bureaucratism; it ranges from protest against tyrannical government in Spain or Mexico to the protest, all the way from Britain to Japan, against universities being run by seniors without reference to the opinions of juniors—run, as one student here said, by despots, even if in this country benevolent despots. This persistent desire for "participation" expresses itself in all kinds of ways. One way is the preference for seminars instead of lectures. Seminars may not necessarily be more effective, simply as a method of instruction, but they have the virtue of leading towards a co-operative style of work, in place of the competitive individualism that has had too much place in the past. It can be quite striking to see how readily and naturally a group of students will set about a problem collectively, stimulating one another and pooling their resources. And on every level the wish to

"participate" deserves the warmest welcome, even if it sometimes asserts itself rather obstreperously. A sense of having part and lot in the common affairs, which came to Indian village or Greek city with the air they breathed, is too easily lost in larger agglomerations; a university is another polity of finite size—comparable in size with a smaller Greek city—where this sense can be recovered. In modern times it has unhappily been easier for the soldier than for the citizen to experience it. "There is one feeling which I recall gladly", wrote a young Anglo-German who served in the Turkish army at Plevna in 1877, after recounting the horrors of the long siege: "that of witnessing, and having an individual, however infinitesimal, share in the making of history."<sup>27</sup> On the battlefield history must seem to be moving at a hundred times its usual imperceptible rate, and this must have been part of the fascination of war, especially to peoples without any true collective life in peacetime. The grand aberration of modern man, for which conservatism in every guise or uniform stands condemned, has been his willingness to trail like a docile sheep behind his leaders—politicians, capitalists, bureaucrats, jailers; and against this reversed evolution of men into sheep any rational or even half-rational protest ought to be applauded. One protest, rational enough when no less hopeless one could be made, was that of the French conscripts on their way to Verdun in 1916 who baa'd in imitation of sheep on their way to the slaughterhouse.<sup>28</sup>

### XVIII

Students are always being told about history and its great doings, hut too rigid a separation has been interposed between learning and living, and youth has been struggling to overcome it. It may learn more about history and politics by taking part in one college campaign than from fifty books. "Student power" may be as vague a slogan as "Black power"; how to give students a share of control raises a score of practical difficulties unknown to them, and giving it might not always, in the short run, improve administration. On the other hand modern Germany has always been well administered, but not well directed. For students to get the hang of college affairs is not more difficult than for voters to get the hang of national affairs, as they are supposed to do. College teachers may do well to recognize that they themselves are under fire, as idle, expensive, undisciplined creatures, from the same sturdy John Bulls who find fault with their students. Tolerant amusement and mild irritation, their two commonest reactions to student participation, are both inadequate. They reflect the mind of an older intelligentsia that has virtually contracted out of public affairs, content to be merely a corporation with a guaranteed position of its own: ready indeed to defend its principle of academic freedom,

but this by itself is a somewhat negative one, implying a conception of the university as a self-contained oasis in a Sahara of ignorance and folly. Within university staffs a democratising process has been at work for some years, of which student participation would be no more than a logical extension. Departments used to be controlled (some still are) by autocratic heads; now they are managed much more by consultation and committee. Bureaucratic fiat gives way to co-operation, and the climate becomes better, more "human", because more individual feelings and opinions come to influence decisions. But the same is happening in many other realms too, under pressure both of democratic ideas and of technical necessity. Numerous voices among Roman Catholic priests are calling for collective policy-making instead of unquestionable decisions by authority.<sup>39</sup> Junior members of the National Farmers' Union complain of "oligarchy" and press for "participation".<sup>40</sup> More unexpectedly yet the American army has been discovering that the old chain of command, so dear to the military mind, cannot function any longer, because warfare includes so many technicalities that even a routine operation has to be planned by a group of officers consulting as equals.<sup>41</sup> Hierarchical society is cracking at the top, as well as being sapped and mined at the bottom. Authority *must* be delegated, power *must* be shared. An organization of any size that is run by one man is run badly. Napoleon did the thinking for his eighty million subjects, it has been said; today it would be beyond him to direct a single university.

## XIX

Like Shelley's writings, last year's student manifestations have stirred

**"The gentle spirit of our meek reviews  
"Into a powdery foam of salt abuse",**

and there has been heated talk about irresponsibility, violence, anarchism. As to irresponsibility, nobody could be fuller of it than the respectable Tory voter. As to violence, the students who put up barricades in their corner of Paris were only doing what disgruntled farmers had done in a dozen corners of France, and it was under the stimulus of police brutality that their movement took on a more aggressive character. Only in a few places has there been more lawlessness than used to occur every 5th of November in Cambridge, where on occasion police reinforcements had to be called up from as far away as Northampton; but this was one of the stereotypes into which student ebullitions could be easily fitted. Disorders are inflated nowadays by the Americanisation of newspaper diction. Not long ago the *Times* had a photograph of Japanese students "hurling rocks at the police", and

the Guardian reported that students at Rome had "hurled rocks at a police barracks"<sup>11</sup>—as if they were so many Polyphemus-giants trying to sink Odysseus's ship. They were, of course, average-sized persons, throwing stones. As to anarchism, it is afloat already in everyday life. Every society has its licensed forms of defiance. America prides itself on a spirited refusal to obey traffic-policemen or to stand, like slavish Britons, in queues; middle-class England works off its repressions by drunken and dangerous motoring. Compared with this even the most startling of juvenile nonconformities are laudable. And insistence on a share in the running of universities can hardly be called "anarchistic", even if the methods used to back it may sometimes be; there was more of moral anarchism in either the uncritical acceptance by average students in the past of whatever they found at college, or the tendency of left-wing students in the past to turn their backs on the university, as nothing more than a slot-machine with buttons to press and degrees to produce.

## XX

It would be as pointless to be too optimistic about the student community, as it is to run it down indiscriminately. It is a miscellaneous body, its membership changes rapidly, its views are often nebulous. Much can be said in criticism of the student as an individual. In Britain he reads, on the average, remarkably little, just as he takes too little physical exercise; his fund of general information, though he picks some up in other ways, is inadequate and inaccurate; in general culture he is worse off still; his writing of his own language may be childish, his ignorance of Shakespeare and the Bible astonishing, of Horace and Homer appalling; he is as ready to write off the old culture as the old society. Milton and Wordsworth mean nothing to him, and he has nothing to put in their place as lifelines to hold on to when he is by himself after the exhilaration of the college crowd. If socialism in Russia was needed to civilize the "Scythian", as men like Trotsky held, in the West part of its mission must be to rescue civilization from a relapse into Scythian or Stygian darkness. Where the sectional interests of students are concerned they are as capable as any trade union of slipping into an egotistic view of things, and the lazier among them of blaming teachers, or libraries, or seating accommodation, for their failures. India offers warnings of this. Student activity there started as part of the national movement, but sometimes before independence, and oftener since, it has degenerated into a racket, and candidates have wanted to get degrees more cheaply by intimidating examiners or thrashing invigilators. When on the other hand student campaigns are not directly linked with corporate interests, there is a risk of the activists pressing too far ahead and

dwindling to a sect. This must arise especially with those militants who accept the label of Anarchist that conservatives try to pin on all, and whose philosophy is to break down whatever exists in the hope of something better emerging to replace it—beginning with the university, which might be broken down a hundred times without any State collapsing. In America the serious extent of corruption of academic life by war-research and its profits makes this attitude understandable, but scarcely even there makes it look reasonable. A quite different, far less philosophical impulse to destroy the university—and one more likely to spread in some countries—could be seen in the rioting of November 1968 at Allahabad. Students from poor Indian families, with meagre educational backgrounds, short of money for books, with little hope of getting through their examinations and less of getting jobs in the feverish competition to be faced afterwards, gave vent to their resentments by breaking college windows and destroying office files.<sup>42</sup> There are many defects to be set right in Indian universities, but clearly the basic problems agitating them are incapable of solution within their own limits, and demand a reconstruction of society. Only socialism can provide this, in India or anywhere else. It is an unlucky symptom of how the beacon-light of socialism has been dimmed by the behaviour of socialist régimes or parties, that its defeated rival of a century ago, anarchism, has been coming back to life. Anarchism has no more to tell us now than when Bakunin was alive; one lesson does need to be learned from its reappearance, that dictatorial socialism is no more acceptable today than any other kind of authoritarianism.

## XXI

No single class or social force can be expected to drag us out of the rut, though one or other may take the lead for the time being. There is no chosen class, any more than a chosen people. Many destined leaders of progress have been hopefully nominated: priests and prophets, great men and great races, aristocracies and, even, by romantics, women; but no such vanguard turns out, when scrutinized, to be at all like what its uncritical admirers have imagined: H. G. Wells is a warning of how far into mere fantasy this search for a deliverer can decline; at one moment he fixed his eye on an enlightened newspaper-owner,<sup>43</sup> at another on the airmen of rival nations at war, coming to realize the futility of war and joining hands to end it.<sup>44</sup> Marx's choice was more realistic, and the working class remains indispensable to any thorough-going social change, though it can no longer be expected to make one by itself. Something similar can be said of the intelligentsia. Mao's dictum of thirty years ago about a Chinese revolution being impossible without the intellectuals<sup>45</sup> may safely be applied to any

big, progressive transformation; but again, and still more, they cannot bring it about by themselves. Nor can students, or Youth collectively, which has already before now been fancied for the first place, and is now again being hailed by some as a new version of the "noble savage", redeemer of a decrepit civilization. Things look more hopeful when we think of working class and intelligentsia, always in the past so far apart, coming together; and it is at the level of youth that a possibility of this seems to emerge. In Paris in May 1968 students and young workers were to be seen side by side, and student action was followed by a massive general strike. Conservatives were indignant; to them the thought of intellectuals allying with plebeians against them is always a kind of treason, a summoning of barbarians into Rome—even if they themselves have always been ready to summon heavy dragoons and bishops to their aid. A metaphor has come into circulation about students providing a "trigger" to set off a revolutionary movement of the workers. This or any other metaphor from the realm of mechanics—the avalanche started by the casual shout, for instance—may present too simple a picture, and be too much an attempt to fit the novel phenomena of 1968 into the framework of classical Marxism. What may really be in prospect is a slower process, an interchange of ideas and feelings and hopes, between students and younger workers, who have in common youth, and problems of employment, or conscription, an interchange that may spread further.

## XXII

In most times and places education for a child of humble family meant being drawn away from it, nearly as completely as a Moorish child in Spain forcibly removed from its parents to be brought up a Christian. Today when there is more of a continuum between the working class and its neighbours, higher education for members of it may lead to different results. Britain has apparently a higher ratio of working-class students than any other capitalist nation in Europe. This country has fits of absence of mind in which it forgets its Tory principles and behaves surprisingly well. It cannot be said to have been compelled by industrial needs to give higher education to workers, since the industrially more active Continent has not yet done so. Working-class students do not appear to have been in the lead in recent campaigns, any more than abroad. These newcomers may be pre-occupied with finding their feet and thinking about jobs, like immigrants in a new country. It would be of interest to compare them with first-generation factory workers in the earlier days of industry, each making a difficult transition to a better life. But wherever this new element comes into the university, contact with it may have a

radicalising effect on the middle-class student, an influence likely to be reciprocal. A university is in many ways a perfect meeting-ground (better even than political jail or detention-camp, where so much of our century's serious thinking has been done); and just as children are unconscious of racial barriers, young people not too heavily indoctrinated beforehand are able to forget, or to cross, class boundaries. Out of this mingling may grow a new kind of intelligentsia. Forty years ago Gramsci hoped to see socialism "giving personality to the amorphous element of the masses, which means working to produce *cadres* of intellectuals of a new type".<sup>47</sup> He was well aware that this formation of a new intelligentsia of labour, in place of an old "aristocracy of labour", would be a long and difficult task, but it has proved even slower and harder than he expected. A class advancing towards power, he also wrote, endeavours to "assimilate and conquer 'ideologically' the traditional intellectuals".<sup>48</sup> On the whole, Labour in the west since he wrote has not been striding towards power, and consequently has lacked this incentive towards thinking for itself, winning mastery in the field of ideas before achieving it in reality. Labour has come to seem content with its share of the pillow; it now seems ironically possible that its reawakening will come not from within itself and its own immediate needs, but from outside. Western capitalism, with a mixture of philanthropy and calculation, brought modern higher education into Asia, only to find American colleges supplying China and the Arab lands with Marxists and revolutionaries, much as the theological seminary at Tiflis produced Stalin. Now that it has started giving higher education to its own workers, and will be compelled by technical needs to go on doing so, capitalism may find the weapon turning in its hand in the same way. In the meantime "student participation" has evident affinities with "workers' control" in industry.

### XXIII

Women, like the working class, are in need of an intelligentsia—not a fenced-off one—of their own; and young women, like young workers, form an increasing proportion of the student population. In their case too it is still hard to say what the effect has been on them, but safe to say that their presence must have a transforming effect on college life as time goes on, and through it a modifying effect on society as a whole. Equal opportunity at college and equal pay for working women cannot be treated for ever as quite separate things. As a meeting-ground for the sexes, as well as the classes, a big modern university could hardly be surpassed. Here they may learn respect for each other without too many artificial illusions. Freedom of meeting between them has been a frequent student demand, and was the original start-

ing-point of the disturbances at Paris. This contact forms a valuable part of a general social ferment, a continuing experiment carried on, as if on behalf of society, by the groups best fitted for it. All rational and equal coming together of the sexes is a tremendous improvement on the moral and mental estrangement that all conservative régimes and religions have sought to maintain between them, the oldest and most fundamental form of dividing and ruling. The scientific understanding of sex and control of reproduction that western society has developed is another challenge to its own hierarchical structure: it furthers the emancipation of the young from the tutelage of their elders, from the awe of authority that has always owed a great debt to the atmosphere of mystery in which sex has been wrapped. On this side too the perennial isolation of the intelligentsia is being reduced, for this new generation of it that has the chance of a fuller integration into society than any before it. As a separate entity it will then partially disappear, as the priesthood did when the Reformation relieved it from celibacy, or condemned it to matrimony,—while acquiring a more widely diffused influence, providing a leaven for the whole social lump.

#### XXIV

Student life can be a gathering together of peoples too, a revival of an internationalism that may in a sense be regarded as native to the intelligentsia. In mediaeval Europe it spoke a single language, and Kohn has pointed out how universalism lived on through the Renaissance in the new secular guise of the “republic of letters”.<sup>49</sup> In this there was much unhealthy élitism, akin to the shallower cosmopolitanism of a European aristocracy that floated, an iridescent scum, over the surface of the continent. It was a necessary evolutionary stage for the intelligentsia to steep itself in national languages and cultures, and where folk arts survived, as in the Russia of Tchaikovsky or the Bohemia of Smetana, this could bring it into contact and sympathy with the people. England lost its folk arts, and with them any such common ground, three centuries ago. But the nation was also the State, over most of Europe, dominated by a selfish ruling class, so that the national stage in the intelligentsia's growth meant also its subjugation to aggressive nationalism. It was induced to write English economics, Italian philosophy, to argue endlessly whether Charlemagne was a Frenchman or a German, exactly as it had to argue whether the barren wastes of Patagonia belonged to Chile or to Argentina. Where national liberation movements are still astir, intellectuals still have to join them, though they can do so in a better way when nationalism is also, as in Vietnam, socialism. At a lower level the Flemish agitation in Belgium has been both national and social, professional and business

life in Flanders having been monopolised by French-speakers, and working-class students have been prominent in it. Happily for most of Europe this stage of self-assertion, so liable to narrow clannishness, is over and done with. There is no more hopeful sign today than the spectacle of students, youthful citizens of the world, strolling about Europe, and even into Asia, in informal two's and three's, instead of in organized squads—as young people wandered about Germany before they were rounded up into the Hitler Youth. In Britain universities have remained largely free from racial prejudice: it should be acknowledged that Oxbridge, even at the worst of imperialism, set a good example here, which owed something to a lingering aristocratic cosmopolitanism. All the late student excitements have caught fire from one another, the spark has blown to and fro as it did in 1848. There is even a risk of one movement copying another too closely; what is heroic in Madrid may be only a nuisance in London. But the spirit of emulation is full of promise, and is spreading far and wide. If Europe's ideas, Marxism above all, have found their most receptive soil in other continents among students, ideas from these other shores are being wafted to Europe and being welcomed by students there. Mao and Che Guevara were names to conjure with in Paris in the spring of 1968, even if it was not altogether clear what these names stood for. Imperialism had a malign effect on European development; now the ghosts of the old empires haunt capitalism's uneasy couch. The strategy of civil disobedience travelled with Gandhi from South Africa to India, and has now travelled to England. It was a more startling adoption of an eastern mode of protest when the student Palach set fire to himself in Prague in January 1969.

## XXV

In primitive conditions which required early initiation of boys into the duties of tribal manhood, or in Asia with its early marriage and initiation into family duties, youth was integrated into society after a fashion, but really at the price of ceasing to be young; and the community remained old and unchanging. Modern upper-class and intellectual Europe may be said to have invented youth, and with it a unique force of social mutation, an antidote to men's besetting readiness, once they have built up any social life, to take it for the best that **can** be achieved, to turn their dwelling into a prison and finally a tomb. But European conservatism has done its best to sterilize the incalculable force that educated adolescence represents, by sealing it off, by surrounding students with high college walls, inside whose limits they were expected to digest whatever books and ideas were placed before them, but were allowed certain prescriptive rights of dis-

orderliness, outlets for energies that dull-witted elders could think of only as "animal spirits". In Hohenzollern Germany, where respect for order and discipline went so far that Jerome K. Jerome professed to have seen a gardener in a park carefully directing a snail on to the right track, he also noted the tolerant view taken by the police of beery students lying in gutters.<sup>80</sup> Students were allowed a few years to enjoy privileges of this trivial type, except when they had to be initiated into sensible grown-up life by being carried off to Verdun or Vietnam. It was an arrangement that no longer satisfies a student population far bigger and more heterogeneous, dimly at least conscious of living in a decisive epoch where its elders have lost their bearings, and with a certain seriousness of outlook to which both religion and socialism have contributed. Today students are trying, however fumblingly, to be part of the community, instead of an artificial enclave within it, though at the same time with an identity of their own; at once youthful and adult, learning to be citizens (better citizens than the majority of their teachers are), not simply to be accountants or civil servants. This collective self-initiation into public life, if it makes their college years less carefree than college life has conventionally been supposed to be, may also as time goes on make less common the sad old spectacle of the free-thinking, idealistic student sinking into conformity and class egotism the moment he leaves college and is swallowed up by a profession. From student to adult life used to be so long a stride that at the end of it the young man no longer knew himself. Notoriously the German student of the years after 1815 who scared Metternich by growing a shaggy beard and drinking confusion to the government in hogsheads of beer was often to be seen a year or two later, at a government desk, the sedatest of employees.<sup>81</sup> Much the same it appears is often true in Japan today, and very much so in a country like India when the student returns from abroad to be suddenly enveloped again in a mesh of social custom he has half forgotten. Student participation in both college and public affairs should make the transition from one life to another far less abrupt, less of a chilling shock. If students come to remain, in far greater numbers than ever before, under the sway of ideas and ideals of college days, the student body at any one moment will be part of a broader young intelligentsia, extending into many realms of society, a continuing movement instead of an occasional eruption.

## XXVI

The barrier fortresses of class power remain, and will not fall down for any blowing of trumpets, intellectual or other. Class struggle remains as necessary as Marxism has always said. But the fortresses may be cut

off and invested, by a widening combination of opponents, as those of the *ancien régime* were in France before they collapsed in 1789. Through nearly all history it has been the progressive vanguard, instead of the forces of reaction, that has found itself cut off and alone. Now the tables may be turned; not so much by a formal alliance of classes under any single party direction, as by the interfusion of ideas and feelings—the "molecular agitation" that Trotsky spoke of as the fundamental revolutionary process<sup>81</sup>—among all social groups that stand in need of radical change, little as they may have recognized this so far: intellectuals, workers, women, young people. In this process students can have a vital part. They cannot lead a country, but they can help to bring together its progressive elements, thanks to their capacity, as a mixed body with multiple connections and wide horizons, for finding links with many others, and interacting with them. Students can interact in this way first and foremost with other young people, and help to rescue some of them from the morbid isolation that Youth, like other groups, can fall into, with the mixture of self-pity and self-complacency that this condition produces, as drooling pop-songs and bellowing juke-boxes dismally proclaim. With the older intelligentsia too an expanding student population can make contact in new ways, each learning from the other—the older learning a less desiccated philosophy than that of the writers and scholars "who with few exceptions bury their heads in the sands of the past and notice the present only to express their disgust. . . ." These older men have few positive convictions, though many inertias, to set against youth's intuitions. And this applies in a good measure to all the older generation, non-collegiate as well. We all live longer, age more slowly, are less closely fettered to work-places and duties; everyone nowadays is eager to be, or at least to look, young. Old China venerated age, however foolish; new China may be going a little too far the other way; but it is part of the socialist hope that the world should stop growing old and grow young instead.

## XXVII

There is a new fluidity and vitality of ideas, both good and bad, as there was when the printing-press was invented, thanks to the new means of communication that make everybody's experience part of everyone else's, and bring continents, classes, generations into closer contact. Everywhere, not only at university gates, portcullises are lifted and drawbridges lowered. In spite of all impediments, our world is a more perfect conductor of ideas than there has ever been before. If socialism is not the principal beneficiary, it will have itself to blame. Socialists may have been too sanguine at times about the student ferment; in assuming for instance that the Paris students in May 1968

were all looking towards a classless society and culture, with no selfish thought for their own future.<sup>54</sup> Intellectuals are apter than others to dramatize the sudden emotions of an hour of struggle, which may be brief. But it is not over-hopeful to think that the drift of the tide is towards socialism. A group of students working together and sharing their stock of notes and ideas make no bad model of a socialist approach to life. None of the basic problems that students up and down the world have been wrestling with can be solved without the aid of socialism. Without too much optimism the world student movement, this new intelligentsia of our day, may be expected to move towards, and sometimes lead the way towards, the re-born humanist socialism that is the need of our age.

## NOTES

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F. Wakeham, *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China 1839-1861* (1966), p. 128.
3. M. Roberts, in *Past and Present*, No. 22 (July 1962), p. 51.
4. A. Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and other writings* (trans. L. Marks, 1957), p. 113.
5. *Ibid*, p. 43.
6. *The German Ideology*, pp. 39-40.
7. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (1967), p. 77.
8. *Boswell for the Defence 1769-1774*, ed. W. K. Wimsatt and F. A. Pottle (1960), p. 190.
9. R. S. Surtees, *Handley Cross* (1843), Chap. 13.
10. J. V. Stalin, *Concerning Marxism in Linguistics* (1950), p. 23 (official English text, 1950).
11. The late Professor Hardy.
12. M. Rouston, *The Pioneers of the French Revolution* (trans. F. Whyte, 1926), pp. 117-8; and see Chap. 4 generally.
13. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Lawrence and Wishart), Vol. 4 (1956), p. 32.
14. A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (trans. H. Reeve, 1946), Chap. 15.
15. See S. Moinul Huq, *Barani's History of the Tughluqs* (Karachi, ?1960), pp. 6, 84-85.
16. J. G. Legge, *Rhyme and Revolution in Germany* (1918), pp. 146-7; he gives a good translation of the poem.
17. See I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed. Trotsky: 1879-1921* (1954), p. 190.
18. W. J. Oudendyk, *Ways and By-Ways in Diplomacy* (1939), p. 213.
19. See M. C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism* (1957), Chaps. 4, 5.
20. Speech of 2 January, 1965, p. 19 (official English text).

21. A. L. Morton, "Utopia as a Reflection of Social Ideas", in *Marxism Today*, November 1962, p. 337.
22. See S. C. Brown, *Count Rumford* (1962), pp. 37ff.
23. G. Faber, *Oxford Apostles* (Penguin ed., 1954), p. 268.
24. H. M. Margoliouth, *Wordsworth and Coleridge, 1795-1934* (1953), pp. 131-2.
25. C. Pavese, *This Business of Living* (Diary, 1935-1950, trans. A. E. Murch, 1961), 5 March, 1948.
26. J. G. Legge, *op. cit.*, p. 181.
27. A. Gramsci, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.
28. *Ibid*, p. 88.
29. N. Bukharin, *Historical Materialism* (Englished., 1925), p. ix.
30. A. Gramsci, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
31. *Selected Works*, Vol. III (1954), p. 17.
32. R. Blackburn, in *New Left Review*, No. 21 (1963), pp. 76-77.
33. An observation of my colleague Dr. N. T. Phillipson.
34. There has however been "a conspiracy of silence" among British scientists and others about preparations for chemical and bacteriological warfare, as Lord Ritchie Calder said when opening a "teach-in" on this subject at Edinburgh University on 24 January 1969, for which the group who organized it deserve great credit.
35. Sinclair Lewis, *Gideon Planish* (1943), Chap. 2.
36. Earl of Carnarvon, *Portugal and Galicia* (3rd ed., 1848), p. 213.
37. F. W. von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877* (1911 ed.), p. 153.
38. A. Horne, *The Price of Glory. Verdun 1916* (Penguin ed., 1964), p. 318.
39. The *Guardian* reported on 17 January, 1969 a challenge supported by 425 French priests to the existing structure of the Catholic Church.
40. In an interview on the B.B.C., 25 January, 1969.
41. See M. Janowitz and Lt. Col. R. Little, *Sociology and the Military Establishment* (revised ed., 1965), pp. 31ff.
42. *Times*, 18 January, 1968; *Guardian*, 4 December, 1968.
43. There was an interesting account of the disturbances at Allahabad University in *Link* (Delhi), 17 November, 1968, pp. 22-25.
44. *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham* (1930).
45. *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933).
46. *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 69.
47. A. Gramsci, *op. cit.*, p. 73; *cf.* pp. 67-68.
48. *Ibid*, p. 122.
49. H. Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (1945), p. 158.
50. J. K. Jerome, *Three Men on the Bummel* (1900), Chap. 9.
51. See J. Russell, *A Tour in Germany* (1828), Vol. I, pp. 134-5. The whole of Chap. 3, on the German universities, is instructive.
52. L. Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (trans. M. Eastman; 1967 ed.), Vol. III, p. 74.
53. N. Gabor, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
54. The reader may feel this here and there in the striking studies of the Paris movement in *New Left Review*, No. 52 (1968), e.g. p. 63.