

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
CONTEMPORARY  
HISTORY

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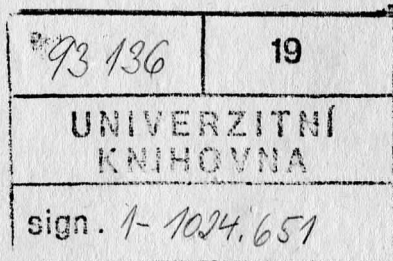
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in 1966, only registered the intractability of the problems facing the ex-colonial peoples. The essential feature of the new age was that the world was integrated in a way it had never been before; and this meant that no people, however small and remote, could 'contract out'. A century ago the Taiping rebellion in China was a distant event, which left Englishmen and Europeans untouched; today what happens in Laos or Vietnam is as likely to spark off the Third (and last) World War as Balkan affairs were to initiate the chain of events leading to the First World War in 1914.

The new period, at the beginning of which we stand, is the product of basic changes in the structure of national and international society and in the balance of world forces. It is a period of readjustment on a continental scale, and its emblem is the mushroom cloud high above Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the nuclear pile in which the old certitudes were consumed for ever. It is also a period which has experienced a breakthrough in scientific knowledge and achievement, and an alliance between science and technology, which has the power to change for all time the material basis of our lives on a scale inconceivable only fifty years ago, but which at the same time has brought us face to face with the possibility of self-extinction. It is, in short, a period of explosive new dimensions, in which we have been carried with breathtaking speed to the frontiers of human existence and deposited in a world with unparalleled potentialities but also with sinister undercurrents of violence, irrationality, and inhumanity. The views we take of this new world may differ, and it is easy to speculate on the course of development it will follow; all we can safely say – with Valéry<sup>1</sup> – is that, if historical experience is anything to go by, the outcome will betray all expectations and falsify all predictions.

1. cf. Paul Valéry, *Collected Works*, vol. x (London, 1962), pp. 71, 113, 116, 126-7.

## II

### THE IMPACT OF TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC ADVANCE

#### *Industrialism and Imperialism as the Catalysts of a New World*

WHEN we seek to pinpoint the structural changes which lie at the roots of contemporary society, we are carried back to the last decade of the nineteenth century; and there we come to a halt. Even the most resolute upholder of the theory of historical continuity cannot fail to be struck by the extent of the differences between the world in 1870 and the world in 1900. In England, where the industrial revolution had begun early and advanced in a steady progression, the fundamental nature of the changes after 1870 is less apparent than elsewhere; but once we extend our vision to cover the whole world, their revolutionary character is beyond dispute. Even in continental Europe, with perhaps the sole exception of Belgium, industrialization was a product of the last quarter rather than of the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century; it was a consequence, rather than a concomitant, of the 'railway age', which by 1870 had provided the continent with a new system of communications. Across the Atlantic the civil war had proved a major stimulus to industrialization; but it was after the ending of the civil war in 1865 and the uneasy post-war interlude spanned by the presidencies of General Grant (1868-76) that the great industrial expansion began which transformed beyond recognition the society de Tocqueville had known and described. When in 1869 the first railroad to span the American continent was completed at a remote spot in Utah, the United States 'ceased to be an Atlantic country



in order to become a continental nation' of a new, highly industrialized pattern.<sup>1</sup>

What happened in the closing decades of the nineteenth century was not, however, simply an expansion of the process of industrialization which had begun in England a century earlier, until it became world-wide. I have already referred to the distinction between the first industrial revolution and the second, or (as it is sometimes called) between the 'industrial' and the 'scientific' revolutions. It is, of course, a clumsy distinction, which does less than justice to the intricacy of the historical facts; but it is a real one. The industrial revolution in the narrower sense – the revolution of coal and iron – implied the gradual extension of the use of machines, the employment of men, women, and children in factories, a fairly steady change from a population mainly of agricultural workers to a population mainly engaged in making things in factories and distributing them when they were made. It was a change that 'crept on', as it were, 'unawares',<sup>2</sup> and its immediate impact, as Sir John Clapham made clear, can easily be exaggerated. The second industrial revolution was different. For one thing, it was far more deeply scientific, far less dependent on the 'inventions' of 'practical' men with little if any basic scientific training. It was concerned not so much to improve and increase the existing as to introduce new commodities. It was also far quicker in its impact, far more prodigious in its results, far more revolutionary in its effects on people's lives and outlook. And finally, though coal and iron were still the foundation, it could no longer be called the revolution of coal and iron. The age of coal and iron was succeeded, after 1870, by the age of steel and electricity, of oil and chemicals.

1. cf. J. Godechot and R. R. Palmer, 'Le problème de l'Atlantique', *Tenth International Congress of Historical Sciences, Relazioni*, vol. v (Florence, 1955), p. 186.

2. C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 27.

The technical aspects of this revolution do not concern us here, except in so far as is necessary in order to understand its effects outside the spheres of industry, science, and technology. It would nevertheless be difficult to deny that the primary differentiating factor, marking off the new age from the old, was the impact of scientific and technological advance on society, both national and international. Even on the lowest level of practical everyday living it is surely significant that so many of the commonplace objects which we regard as normal concomitants of civilized existence today – the internal combustion engine, the telephone, the microphone, the gramophone, wireless telegraphy, the electric lamp, mechanized public transport, pneumatic tyres, the bicycle, the typewriter, cheap mass-circulation newsprint, the first of the synthetic fibres, artificial silk, and the first of the synthetic plastics, Bakelite – all made their appearance in this period, and many of them in the fifteen years between 1867 and 1881; and although it was only after 1914, in response to military requirements, that intensive aircraft development began, the possibility of adapting the petrol-driven internal combustion engine to the aeroplane was successfully demonstrated by the brothers Wright in 1903. Here, as elsewhere, there was necessarily a time-lag before the problems of large-scale production were solved, and some of the things we have come to regard as normal – radio and television among them – obviously belong to a later phase.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it can fairly be said that, on the purely practical level of daily life, a person living today who was suddenly

1. In the same way, of course, atomic physics, the industrial use of atomic particles, and the exploitation of atomic energy, both for warlike and for peaceful purposes, are twentieth-century developments; but even here the theoretical foundations were laid by the discoveries of Becquerel, Madame Curie, and J. J. Thomson at the close of the nineteenth century.



put back into the world of 1900 would find himself on familiar ground, whereas if he returned to 1870, even in industrialized Britain, the differences would probably be more striking than the similarities. In short, it was around 1900 that industrialization began to exert its influence on the living conditions of the masses in the west to such an extent that it is hardly possible today to realize the degree to which even the well-to-do in the previous generation had been compelled to make shift.

The basic reason for this difference is that few of the practical inventions listed above were the consequence of a steady piecemeal development or improvement of existing processes; the overwhelming majority resulted from new materials, new sources of power, and above all else from the application of scientific knowledge to industry. Down to 1850, for example, steel 'was almost a semi-precious material' with a world production of eighty thousand tons, of which Great Britain made half. The discoveries of Bessemer, of Siemens, and of Gilchrist and Thomas, completely transformed the situation, and by 1900 production had reached 28 million tons. At the same time the quality, or rather the toughness, of the metal was vastly improved by the addition of nickel – a result only possible as a consequence of a process of extracting nickel discovered by Ludwig Mond in 1890. Thus, for all practical purposes, nickel may be accounted a new addition to the range of industrial metals, though it had, of course, been in small demand before. The same applies even more directly to aluminium, which had hitherto been too expensive to be put to common use. With the introduction of the electrolytic process, developed in 1886, its production became a commercial proposition and a new constructional material which was soon to be of first-rate importance – for example, in the nascent aircraft industry – became readily available for the first time.

These advances, and others of a similar character, which were themselves the foundation for further progress, were

the result of more fundamental changes still: namely, the introduction of electricity as a new source of light, heat, and power, and the transformation of the chemical industry. Electrolysis, so important in the extraction of copper and aluminium and in the bulk production of caustic soda, only became a practical proposition when electric power became generally available; and the same was true of other electrochemical developments. The electrical and chemical industries of the late nineteenth century were therefore not only the first industries to originate specifically in scientific discovery, but in addition they had an unprecedented impact, both in the speed with which their effects were felt and in the range of other industries they affected. A third new industry with the same revolutionary qualities was petroleum. Here was a source of power equivalent to coal and electricity, and later the raw material of the vast and extending range of petrochemicals. From this point of view the foundation of Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company in 1870 may be regarded in many ways as the symbol of the opening of a new age. By 1897, according to the celebrated American character, Mr Dooley, Standard Oil had a branch in every hamlet in America from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts, and by this date – although the internal combustion engine was still in its infancy – the United States was already exporting oil to the annual value of \$60 million.<sup>1</sup> The impact of electricity was even more spectacular, its stages being marked by Siemen's invention of the dynamo in 1867, Edison's invention of the incandescent bulb in 1879, the opening of the world's first electric power plant in New York in 1882, the establishment of A.E.G. in Germany in 1883, and the construction of the first hydroelectric plant in Colorado in 1890. Even as late as 1850 no one would have foretold the exploitation of electricity as a

1. At this time, however, United States production still lagged behind that of Russia, which, with an annual production of some six million tons, accounted for half of the total world output.

large-scale source of power; but when it passed into common usage, the face of the world was changed. 'Communism', Lenin was shortly to say, 'equals Soviet power plus electrification.'<sup>1</sup>

Another field in which the progress achieved during this period was to be of inestimable future importance was medicine, hygiene, and nutrition. In these branches of knowledge it is perhaps true that the closing decades of the nineteenth century were a less closely defined epoch; but if in some cases the basic experimentation had been made earlier, it was largely after 1870 that its general application took place. Because of prejudice and resistance where the human body was concerned, chloroform only slowly came into use after the middle of the nineteenth century, although it had been discovered as far back as 1831; and in the same way, though carbolic acid was discovered in 1834, the use of antiseptics only became general after Lister began to employ them in Glasgow in 1865. But the main reason why medicine in the mid-nineteenth century was still largely pre-scientific was the fact that the modernization of pharmacy had to await the completion of more fundamental advances in chemistry, and the position in other closely related branches of knowledge was similar. The great age of bacteriology after 1870, associated with the names of Pasteur and Koch, owed its impetus to the development of the new aniline dyes, which made possible the identification of a vast range of bacteria by differential staining methods. Microbiology, biochemistry, and bacteriology all now emerged as new sciences, and among their more significant results were the production of the first of the antibiotics, Salvarsan, in 1909, the discovery of vitamins and of hormones in 1902, and the identification of the mosquito as the carrier of malaria by Sir Ronald Ross in 1897. Aspirin was first marketed in 1899. At the same time anaesthesia, in conjunction with the general use of

1. C. Hill, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution* (London, 1947), p. 199.

antiseptic and aseptic techniques, was revolutionizing medical practice.

The new chemical and physiological knowledge also brought about a revolution in agriculture which was vitally necessary as a counterpart to the upward sweep of the human demographic curve that followed the advance in medicine. The bulk production of basic slag as an artificial fertilizer became possible as a by-product of the new steel-making processes. New methods of food preservation, based on the principles of sterilization and pasteurization used in medical practice, made possible the bulk conservation of foodstuffs and the provision of cheap and stable supplies to the growing world population. As a result of Pasteur's researches the pasteurization of milk for general consumption became usual from about 1890.

It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of these improvements at a time when industrial developments were changing the structure of society and the whole pattern of everyday life. The food-canning industry, helped by new processes of tin-plating, now got into its stride, and the sale of canned vegetables rose from four hundred thousand cases in 1870 to fifty-five million in 1914. Other factors which facilitated the provision of cheap foods for the growing industrial populations were the completion of the main railroad systems, the development of steamships of large tonnage, and the perfection of the techniques of refrigeration. In Europe the piercing of the Alps by the Mont Cenis and St Gotthard tunnels in 1871 and 1882 reduced the journey from Italy and the Mediterranean to France and Germany from days to hours and permitted the bulk import into the industrialized north of southern and subtropical fruits and vegetables. In Canada the completion in 1885 of the Canadian Pacific Railway opened up the great prairies. Refrigerator wagons were in use by 1876, rushing chilled meat from Kansas City to New York, and refrigerated ships carried it to Europe. Consignments of Argentine beef became available in



Europe in good condition from 1877; the first shipload of frozen New Zealand mutton arrived on the English market in 1882. From 1874 the United States provided more than half the total British wheat consumption. Meanwhile, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had cut down the distance between Europe and the Orient, and the traffic it carried multiplied threefold between 1876 and 1890. Colonial and overseas products, such as tea from India and coffee from Brazil, appeared in bulk on the European markets, and Argentina became a main exporter of meat. The combined result was to set in train something not far short of a revolution in the methods of feeding an industrialized and urbanized population.

## 2

The scientific, technological, and industrial changes I have briefly recapitulated are the starting-point for the study of contemporary history. They acted both as a solvent of the old order and as a catalyst of the new. They created urban and industrial society as we know it today; they were also the instruments by which industrial society, which at the close of the nineteenth century was still for all practical purposes confined to western Europe and the United States, subsequently expanded into the industrially undeveloped parts of the world. Technology, it has been observed,<sup>1</sup> is the branch of human experience people can learn most easily and with predictable results.

The new industrial techniques, unlike the old, necessitated the creation of large-scale undertakings and the concentration of the population in vast urban agglomerations. In the steel industry, for example, the introduction of the blast furnace meant that the small individual enterprise employing ten or a dozen workmen quickly became an anachronism. Furthermore, the process of industrial consolidation was accentuated by the crisis of over-produc-

1. Snow, op. cit., p. 42.

tion which was the sequel of the new techniques and the immediate cause of the 'great depression' between 1873 and 1895. The small-scale family businesses, which were typical of the first phase of industrialism, were in many cases too narrowly based to withstand the depression; nor had they always the means to finance the installation of new, more complicated and more expensive machinery. Hence the crisis, by favouring rationalization and unified management, was a spur to the large-scale concern and to the formation of trusts and cartels; and the process of concentration, once begun, was irreversible.

It went ahead most rapidly in the new industries, such as chemicals, but soon spread in all directions. In England at this time Brunner and Mond were laying the foundations of the vast ICI combine. In Germany the great Krupps steel undertaking, which had employed only one hundred and twenty-two men in 1846, had sixteen thousand on its pay-roll in 1873 and by 1913 was employing a total of almost seventy thousand. Its counterpart in France was Schneider-Creusot, employing ten thousand in 1869; its counterpart in Great Britain was Vickers-Armstrong. In the United States Andrew Carnegie was producing more steel than the whole of England put together when he sold out in 1901 to J. P. Morgan's colossal organization, the United States Steel Corporation. But these were the giants, and in many respects the average performance, as illustrated by the German statistics, is more informative.<sup>1</sup> Here, in the period between 1880 and 1914, the number of small industrial plants, employing five workmen or less, declined by half, while the larger factories, employing fifty or more, doubled; in other words, the number of industrial units declined, but those that remained were substantially larger and employed no less than four times the total of industrial workers recorded for 1880. Furthermore, outworkers,

1. For the following cf. J. H. Clapham, *The Economic Development of France and Germany, 1815-1914* (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 287-8, 290-1, 294, 297.



domestic weavers and the like, who had still been a considerable element in the German textile industries in the early days of the Second Empire – in 1875 nearly two-thirds of the cotton weavers in Germany were domestic outworkers – were virtually eliminated by 1907, as industrial concentration gathered pace. In short, the workers were being gathered into factories and the factories concentrated in industrial towns and urban areas.

The process of herding mill-hands and factory workers into fewer but larger combines was common to all the industrialized countries. It completely changed their physiognomy. The towns devoured the villages and large cities grew faster than small ones. Areas like the Ruhr valley in Germany and the 'Black Country' of the English midlands became sprawling belts of contiguous urban development, divided theoretically by artificial municipal boundaries but otherwise without visible break. A further factor hastening and accentuating the influx into the cities was the agricultural crisis caused by the large-scale import of cheap foodstuffs from overseas. The result was the proliferation of social conditions unknown at any time in the past, the rise of what has usually been called a 'mass society'. As a consequence of the progress of hygiene and medicine the death rate, which had been virtually static between 1840 and 1870, declined abruptly in the following thirty years in the more advanced countries of western Europe – in England, for example, by almost one-third from twenty-two to a little over fifteen per thousand – and the population soared. Compared with an increase of thirty millions between 1850 and 1870, the population of Europe – taking no account of emigration, which drew off forty per cent of the natural increase – rose by no less than one hundred million between 1870 and 1900.

It is a striking confirmation of the shift that was taking place that the whole of this immense increase in population was absorbed by the towns. In Germany, where the census of 1871 recorded only eight cities of over one

hundred thousand inhabitants, there were thirty-three by the end of the century and forty-eight by 1910. In European Russia the number of towns in this category had risen by 1900 from six to seventeen. By this time also one-tenth of the inhabitants of England and Wales had been drawn into the vortex of London, and in the United States – although three million square miles of land were available for settlement – nearly half the population was concentrated on one per cent of the available territory and one-eighth lived in the ten largest cities. Whereas before the revolution of 1848 Paris and London were the only towns with a population exceeding one million, the great metropolis now became the hub of industrial society. Berlin, Vienna, St Petersburg, and Moscow in Europe, New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia in the United States, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro in South America, and Tokyo, Calcutta, and Osaka in Asia, all topped the million mark, and it is significant that the emergence of great metropolitan centres was world-wide and that in this respect at least Europe no longer stood out as exceptional.<sup>1</sup>

This, without doubt, was the second most conspicuous aspect of the revolution that was taking place. If its first consequence was to change for all time the social structure of industrial society, its second was to achieve with fantastic speed the integration of the world. This was noted, as early as 1903, by the German historian, Erich Marcks. 'The world', wrote Marcks, 'is harder, more warlike, more exclusive; it is also, more than ever before, one great unit in which everything interacts and affects everything else, but in which also everything collides and clashes.'<sup>2</sup>

1. These developments are surveyed in my contribution to the *Propyläen Weltgeschichte*, vol. VIII (Berlin, 1960), p. 709.

2. E. Marcks, *Die imperialistische Idee in der Gegenwart* (Dresden, 1903). This lecture was reprinted under the title 'Die imperialistische Idee zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts' in the second volume of Marcks's essays, *Männer und Zeiten* (Leipzig, 1911); cf. *ibid.*, p. 271.

This does not imply, of course, that Europe had lost, or was losing, its pre-eminence; on the contrary, the rapidity and extent of their industrialization increased the lead of the European powers and enhanced their strength and self-confidence, and with the sole, if weighty, exception of the United States, the gap between them and the rest of the world widened; even the so-called 'white' dominions, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, lagged far behind in 1900, and the industrialization of Japan, however remarkable in its own context, remained small by European standards until after 1914. But it is also true that the voracious appetite of the new industrialism, unable of its very nature to draw sufficient sustenance from local resources, rapidly swallowed up the whole wide world. It was no longer a question of exchanging European manufactures – predominantly textiles – for traditional oriental and tropical products, or even of providing outlets for the expanding iron and steel industries by building railways, bridges, and the like. Industry now went out into the world in search of the basic materials without which, in its new forms, it could not exist.

It was a fundamental change, with far-reaching consequences, and it affected every quarter of the globe. The year 1883, for example, saw the discovery and exploitation of the vast Canadian nickel deposits, necessary for the new steel-making processes. By 1900 Chile, which had produced no nitrates thirty years earlier, accounted for three-quarters of the total world production, or 1,400,000 metric tons. In Australia the Mount Morgan copper and gold mine was opened in 1882 and Broken Hill, the largest lead-zinc deposit in the world, the following year. At the same time the demands of the plating and canning industries for tin, and the rapid growth in the use of rubber in the electrical industry and for road-transport, increased the trade of Malaya by very nearly a hundredfold between 1874 and 1914 and made it the richest of all colonial territories. This catalogue could be extended considerably,

and it would be necessary in addition to include the stimulus to development in overseas and tropical territories arising from the requirements, already referred to, of growing industrial populations for cheap and plentiful food supplies. The result, in any case, was a transformation of world conditions without parallel in the past. The outer zone of primary producers was expanded from North America, Rumania, and Russia to tropical and subtropical lands and farther afield to Australasia, Argentina, and South Africa; 'areas and lines of commerce that had previously been self-contained dissolved into a single economy on a world scale.'<sup>1</sup> Improvements in shipbuilding, the decline of shipping charges, and the possibility of moving commodities in bulk, brought into existence for the first time in history a world market governed by world prices. By the close of the nineteenth century more of the world was more closely interlocked, economically and financially, than at any time before. In terms of world history – in terms even of European expansion as manifested down to the middle years of the nineteenth century – it was a situation that was entirely new, the product not of slow and continuous development, but of forces released suddenly and with revolutionary effect within the life span of one short generation.

## 3

It would have been surprising if these new forces had not sought a political outlet. In fact, as is well known, they did. Until a short time ago few historians would have denied that the 'new imperialism', which was so distinctive a feature of the closing decades of the nineteenth century, was a logical expression or consequence of the economic and social developments in the industrialized countries of Europe and in the United States which I have attempted to describe. Latterly, however, there has been a growing

1. *New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. XI (1962), p. 6.



tendency to challenge the validity of this interpretation.<sup>1</sup> 'New, sustained or compelling influences', it has been argued, were lacking in the eighteen-eighties; in particular, the evidence does not indicate that the direction of imperial expansion was influenced to any marked extent by new economic pressures. Some recent writers, indeed, have gone so far as to urge, paradoxically, that the last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed not a gathering but a slackening of imperial pressures, and that the 'informal' imperialism of the free trade period, though less concerned with political control, had been no less thrusting and aggressive. About these arguments it is sufficient to say three things. The first is that they have done little more, in the last analysis, than replace old conceptual difficulties by new.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, because of their preoccupation with refuting the economic arguments of Hobson and Lenin, they have approached the question from too narrow an angle. And thirdly, by dealing with the problems almost exclusively from a British point of view, they have avoided the main issues. The central fact about the 'new imperialism' is that it was a world-wide movement, in which all the industrialized nations, including the United States and Japan, were involved. If it is approached from the angle of Great Britain, as historians have largely been inclined to do, it is easy to underestimate its force and novelty; for the reactions of Britain, as the greatest existing imperial power, were primarily defensive, its

1. cf. R. Koebner, 'The Concept of Economic Imperialism', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. II (1949), pp. 1-29; J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *ibid.*, vol. vi. (1953), pp. 1-15; D. K. Fieldhouse, 'Imperialism: An Historiographical Revision', *ibid.*, vol. XIV (1961), pp. 187-209; R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians* (London, 1961). Other recent interpretations are to be found in R. Pares, 'The Economic Factors in the History of the Empire', *Economic History Review*, vol. VII (1937), pp. 119-44, and A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies* (London, 1959).

2. cf. O. MacDonagh, 'The Anti-Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. XIV (1962), p. 489.

statesmen were reluctant to acquire new territories, and when they did so their purpose was usually either to safeguard existing possessions or to prevent the control of strategic routes passing into the hands of other powers. But this defensive, and in some ways negative, attitude is accounted for by the special circumstances of Great Britain, and was not typical. It was from other powers that the impetus behind the 'new imperialism' came - from powers that calculated that Britain's far-flung empire was the source of its might and that their own new-found industrial strength both entitled them to and necessitated their acquiring a 'place in the sun'.

It is not difficult to demonstrate that the specific arguments of Hobson and Lenin, according to whom imperialism was a struggle for profitable markets of investment, are not borne out by what is known of the flow of capital. That, however, is no reason to suppose that economic motives did not play their part; for the new imperialism was not simply a product of rational calculation, and business interests could be carried away by an optimism which subsequent events disproved.<sup>1</sup> Nor is it difficult to show at any particular point - for example, Gladstone's occupation of Egypt in 1882, or Bismarck's intervention in Africa in 1884 - that the immediate causes of action were strategic or political; but these strategical considerations are only half the story, and it would be hard in the

1. For this reason it is difficult to follow the argument of A. J. Hanna, *European Rule in Africa* (London, 1961), p. 4, who seems to imply that the fact that the chartered company which Rhodes founded in 1889 was 'unable to pay any dividends whatever' until 1923 disproves the generally accepted belief that 'desire for economic gain' was an operative factor in Rhodes's enterprises. In any case failure to pay dividends does not necessarily mean that an undertaking is unprofitable to its promoters. As H. Brunschwig has said, *Mythes et réalités de l'impérialisme colonial français, 1871-1914* (Paris, 1960), p. 106, 'il apparut que des particuliers pouvaient s'enrichir aux colonies, même si, du point de vue général . . . elles n'étaient pas rentables pour l'état.'



case of Bismarck to deny that it would have been difficult for him to envisage intervention in Africa if it had not been for the new frame of mind in Germany resulting from the rapid industrial development of the Reich after 1871.<sup>1</sup> When we are told that the new imperialism was 'a specifically political phenomenon in origin',<sup>2</sup> the short answer is that in such a context the distinction between politics and economics is unreal. What have to be explained are the factors which distinguished late nineteenth-century imperialism from the imperialism of preceding ages, and this cannot be done without taking account of the basic social and economic changes of the period after 1870. 'I do not exactly know the cause of this sudden revolution,' Lord Salisbury said in 1891, 'but there it is.'<sup>3</sup> His instinctive perception that an abrupt change of mood and temper had occurred, was sound enough. Ever since Disraeli's Crystal Palace speech of 1872, ever since his realization in 1871 that 'a new world' had emerged with 'new influences at work' and 'new and unknown objects and dangers with which to cope', statesmen were conscious of new pressures; and it was these pressures, stemming from the heart of industrial society, that were the explanation of the changed reactions to a power relationship that was substantially older. As the German historian Oncken put it, it was 'as though a completely different dynamic governed the relations of the powers'.<sup>4</sup>

It was only to be expected that the impact of scientific and technological change should take some time to build up. Historians have made much recently of the fact that the doctrine of imperialism was only clearly formulated at 'the very end of the century whose last decades it purported

1. cf. W. Frauendienst, 'Deutsche Weltpolitik', *Die Welt als Geschichte*, vol. XIX (1959), pp. 1-39.

2. Fieldhouse, op. cit., p. 208.

3. Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 17.

4. H. Oncken, *Das deutsche Reich und die Vorgeschichte des Weltkrieges*, vol. II (Leipzig, 1933), p. 425.

to interpret',<sup>1</sup> but it would be surprising if it had been otherwise. Theory followed the facts; it was a gloss on developments which men like Chamberlain believed to have been building up over the last twenty or thirty years. In the first place, the industrial revolution had created an enormous differential between the developed and the undeveloped (or, as we would now say, the underdeveloped) parts of the world, and improved communications, technical innovations and new forms of business organization had increased immeasurably the possibilities of exploiting underdeveloped territories. At the same time science and technology had disturbed the existing balance between the more developed states, and the shift which now occurred in their relative strengths – in particular the rising industrial power of imperial Germany and the United States and the gathering speed of industrialization in Russia – was an incitement to the powers to seek compensation and leverage in the wider world. The impact of the prolonged depression between 1873 and 1896 worked in the same direction. Industry was confronted with compelling reasons for seeking new markets, finance for securing safer and more profitable outlets for capital abroad, and the erection of new tariff barriers – in Germany, for example, in 1879, in France in 1892 – increased the pressure for overseas expansion. Even if only a marginal proportion of overseas investment went into colonial territories, the sums involved were by no means negligible, and it is clear that in some at least of the newly acquired tropical dependencies British finance found scope for investment and profit.<sup>2</sup> The position was even

1. Koebner, op. cit., p. 6.

2. This is conceded by Fieldhouse, op. cit., p. 199, who also rightly points out (p. 206) the substantial indirect economic benefits accruing to soldiers, administrators, concession-hunters, and government contractors 'who swarmed in all the new territories'. This aspect of the economics of imperialism has, of course, always been emphasized; cf. Thornton, op. cit., p. 99.

clearer elsewhere – for example, in the Belgian Congo.<sup>1</sup>

From another point of view, the growing dependence of industrialized European societies on overseas supplies for foodstuffs and raw materials was a powerful stimulus to imperialism. Its most conspicuous result was the popularization of 'neo-mercantilist' doctrines. Neo-mercantilism took hold with remarkable speed, first in France and Germany, then in Russia and the United States, and finally in England in the days of Joseph Chamberlain. Since in the new industrial age no nation could hope in the long run to be self-sufficient, it was necessary – according to neo-mercantilist arguments – for each industrial country to develop a colonial empire dependent upon itself, forming a large self-sufficient trading unit, protected if necessary by tariff barriers from outside competition, in which the home country would supply manufactured goods in return for foodstuffs and raw materials. The fallacies inherent in this doctrine have frequently been pointed out, both at the time and subsequently. They did nothing to lessen its psychological impact. 'The day of small nations', said Chamberlain, 'has long passed away; the day of Empires has come.' In many ways the 'new imperialism' reflected an obsession with the magic of size which was the counterpart of the new world of sprawling cities and towering machines.

In the arguments of the neo-mercantilists questions of prestige, economic motivations, and sheer political manoeuvres were all combined and it would be a mistake to try to pick out the one factor or the other and accord it priority. In France, Jules Ferry's speeches reveal a curious mixture of politics, prestige, and crude economic arguments, in which the restoration of France's international standing, depressed by the defeats of 1870 and 1871, loomed

1. Here an investment of fifty million gold francs over a period of thirty years, between 1878 and 1908, produced revenues totalling sixty-six million gold francs by the latter date (Brunschiwig, *op. cit.*, p. 71).

large. The same mixture of motives was characteristic of German 'world policy' after 1897, the advocates of which regarded a 'broadening' of Germany's 'economic basis' as essential as a means of ensuring it a leading place in the global constellation which now appeared to be taking the place of the old European balance of power. In the United States, it may be true that the administration was interested primarily in securing naval bases for strategic purposes; but the 'expansionists of 1898' had few doubts or hesitations on the economic score, demanding the Spanish colonies in the interests of trade and surplus capital. As for Russia, economic motives certainly played little, if any, part in the great Russian advance across central Asia between 1858 and 1876 – it would be surprising if at that stage they had done so – but after 1893 the position was different. Witte, the great Russian finance minister, was a convinced and thoroughgoing exponent of neo-mercantilist principles; his monument is the trans-Siberian railway. In the famous memorandum which he addressed to Czar Alexander III in 1892, he set out his ideas on a grand scale. The new railway, Witte said, would not only bring about the opening of Siberia, but would revolutionize world trade, supersede the Suez Canal as the leading route to China, enable Russia to flood the Chinese market with textiles and metal goods, and secure political control of northern China. Strategically, it would strengthen the Russian Pacific fleet and make Russia dominant in Far Eastern waters.<sup>1</sup>

With ideas such as these in the ascendant, it is not surprising that the scramble for colonies gathered pace at an unprecedented rate. By 1900 European civilization overshadowed the earth. In less than one generation one-fifth of the land area of the globe and one-tenth of its inhabitants had been gathered into the imperial domains of the European powers. Africa, a continent four times

1. For Witte's ideas, cf. J. M. Shukow, *Die internationalen Beziehungen im fernen Osten* (Berlin, 1955), p. 50.



the size of Europe, was parcelled out among them. In 1876 not more than one-tenth of Africa was controlled by European powers; during the following decade they laid claim to five million square miles of African territory, containing a population of over sixty millions, and by 1900 nine-tenths of the continent had been brought under European control.

The largest area, some twenty times the size of France, was subjugated by the French, who at the same time were extending and consolidating their position in Tahiti, Tonkin, Tunis, Madagascar, and the New Hebrides. In Asia the French occupation of Annam in 1883, against which Britain reacted by annexing Burma in 1886, opened the assault on the vassal-states of China, and in the last decade of the century all the omens seemed to point to the partition of the Chinese empire itself. France laid claims to the southern provinces of Kwangsi, Yunnan, Kweichow, and Szechwan, comprising a quarter of the total area and nearly a fifth of the population; in reply Britain asserted exclusive interests in the whole basin of the Yangtse, with well over half the total population of the empire, while Russia had set its sights on occupying the vast northern province of Manchuria. Already earlier, within a twenty-years period beginning in 1864, Russia had taken over in central Asia a territory as large as Asia Minor and established for itself 'the most compact colonial empire on earth'.<sup>1</sup> Compared with acquisitions on this scale, the share of imperial Germany was small; but even Germany acquired territories in Africa and the Pacific islands totalling some 1,135,000 square miles and containing a population of thirteen millions.

Last on the scene was the United States, long interested in the Pacific but engrossed, since the civil war, in the opening-up of its own continent. When in the closing years of the century the United States reverted to the

1. O. Hoetzsch, *Grundzüge der Geschichte Russlands* (Stuttgart, 1949), p. 138.

expansionist policies of the 1850s, impelled partly by strategic considerations and partly by fear that the carving out of exclusive spheres of interest in China would be detrimental to its commerce, the triumph of the new imperialism was complete. 'The great nations are rapidly absorbing for their future expansion and their present defence all the waste places of the earth,' wrote Henry Cabot Lodge in 1895; 'as one of the great nations of the world, the United States must not fall out of the line of march.'<sup>1</sup> It did not. The first American move was towards the Hawaiian islands, the annexation of which had been planned during the presidency of Pierce before the civil war. Since 1875 they had been virtually an American protectorate. In 1887 the United States acquired Pearl Harbor as a naval base, and in 1898 it formally annexed the Hawaiian republic. At the same time it declared war on Spain, seized Puerto Rico, Guam, the Mariana islands, and the Philippines, and established a protectorate in Cuba. Few historians would dissent from the view that 1898 was a year of destiny in American foreign relations; it signalized the involvement of the United States in the dialectic of imperialism, in which, after 1885, governments everywhere had been caught up. It was, it seemed, a process in which there was no going back and no standing still, only an inexorable rush forward until the whole world, including even the polar regions which Nansen explored between 1893 and 1896, was brought under the sway of the European conquerors.

There was, without doubt, something febrile and inherently unstable about the 'gaudy empires spatchcocked together' in this way at this time;<sup>2</sup> except for the Russian gains in central Asia few of the territories concerned were destined to remain in undisturbed possession for as much as three-quarters of a century. It was nevertheless a stupendous movement, without parallel in history, which

1. cf. J. W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898* (Baltimore, 1936), p. 206.

2. *New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. XI, p. 639.



completely changed the shape of things to come, and to argue, as historians have recently done, that there was 'no break in continuity after 1870' or, still more, that it was an age not of expansion but of 'contraction and decline', does less than justice to its importance. It may be a tenable argument, if we look at the course of development simply from the point of view of causes and origins, that the partition of Africa 'was not the manifestation of some revolutionary urge to empire' but rather 'the climax of a longer process', and that, on the economic side, the late nineteenth-century world was only 'working out, on a much larger scale, the logic of methods inherited from an earlier age'.<sup>1</sup> But if we turn from causes and origins to impact and consequences, the break in continuity and the revolutionary effects of the changes are unmistakable. From the heart of the new industrial societies forces went out which encompassed and transformed the whole world, without respect for persons or for established institutions. Both for the inhabitants of the industrialized nations and for those outside conditions of living changed in fundamental ways; new tensions were set up and new centres of gravity were in process of formation. By the end of the nineteenth century it was evident that the revolution that had started in Europe was a world revolution, that in no sphere, technological, social, or political, could its impetus be checked or restrained. I have dwelt on it at some length, and tried to pick out its main features, because its consequences were so decisive; it was the watershed between modern and contemporary history. In many respects the subsequent chapters will provide little more than a commentary on the effects of the changes that have been surveyed. It is from them that most of the characteristic features of the contemporary world stem.

1. *ibid.*, p. 49.

## THE DWARFING OF EUROPE

*The Significance of the Demographic Factor*

WHEN, at the close of the nineteenth century, the new industrialism reached out from Europe to the four quarters of the globe, it opened an era of change, the consequences of which few contemporaries could even dimly foresee. For most people in Europe the superiority of their values, the irresistible onrush of their civilization at the expense of the 'stagnant' civilizations of the east, were articles of faith; they had no doubt that the spread of empire would quickly result in the dissemination of European civilization throughout the rest of the world. Even Bernard Shaw could argue that, if the Chinese were incapable of establishing conditions in their own country which would promote peaceful commerce and civilized life, it was the duty of the European powers to establish such conditions for them.<sup>1</sup> It was useless to export European skills to backward countries without at the same time introducing European authorities to ensure their proper employment; since the native races were unable to maintain civilized rule themselves, the government of dependencies by the imperial powers was a necessity of the modern world.

This was not simply a question of domination. At one level imperialism might have the appearance of crude, unblushing exploitation; but the leaders of the imperialist movement saw it otherwise. 'In empire', Curzon wrote, 'we have found not merely the key to glory and wealth, but the call to duty and the means of service to mankind'; and Milner saw the British empire as 'a group of states, independent of one another in their local affairs', but

1. cf. A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies*, p. 76.

## V

FROM INDIVIDUALISM TO MASS  
DEMOCRACY*Political Organization in Technological Society*

IN a famous 'diagnosis of our time', published in 1930, the Spanish philosopher, Ortega y Gasset, proclaimed that 'the most important fact' of the contemporary epoch was the rise of the masses.<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to adopt Ortega's interpretation of the significance of this fact to share his belief in its importance. We need only look around us to see how radically the advent of a mass society has changed the context not only of our individual lives but also of the political system by which our society is organized. Here again, the closing decades of the nineteenth century, or more widely perhaps the years between 1870 and 1914, stand out as a watershed, dividing one historical period from another. As new large-scale industrial processes were introduced and new forms of industrial organization arose, necessitating the concentration of population in sprawling congested areas of smoky factories and dingy streets, the whole character of the social structure changed. In the new conurbations a vast, impersonal, malleable mass society came into existence, and the scene was set for the displacement of the prevalent bourgeois social and political systems, and the liberal philosophy they upheld, by new forms of social and political organization.

Similar conditions had, of course, already existed for some generations in a few of the areas of early industrialization – in Manchester, for example, or Glasgow, or Sheffield – but even in England they had been exceptional.

1. J. Ortega y Gasset, *La Rebelión de las Masas* (Madrid, 1930; reprinted in *Obras*, vol. vi, Madrid, 1946); Engl. trans., *The Revolt of the Masses* (1932, paperback ed. 1961).

## FROM INDIVIDUALISM TO MASS DEMOCRACY

Now the exceptional became normal, producing immediately a series of fundamental problems with which the existing machinery of government was unable to cope. Questions of sanitation and public health, for example, suddenly became urgent – how otherwise could epidemics from the slums be prevented from spreading and slaughtering thousands and tens of thousands without respect for rank or person? – and governments were compelled to take action and to construct new machinery which made effective action possible. The result was that a new philosophy of state intervention was born.<sup>1</sup> In Germany, Bismarck's social legislation of 1883–9 marked the turning-point. In England, the radical programme sponsored by Chamberlain in 1880 sounded 'the death knell of the *laissez-faire* system', Gladstone's cabinet of 1880–5 was 'the bridge between two political worlds'.<sup>2</sup> Government in its modern sense of regulation, state control, compulsion on individuals for social ends and ultimately planning, involving the development of an elaborate machinery of administration and enforcement, was a necessary outcome of the new industrial society; it had existed hardly anywhere before 1870, because it was a response to conditions which only reached full-scale development after that date.

## 1

It was inevitable that, sooner or later, the effects of these changes should make themselves felt over the whole range of political life and political organization. Once the state ceased to be regarded as a night-watchman whose activities should be restricted to a minimum in the interests of

1. The classical account of the change, so far as England was concerned, is to be found in A. V. Dicey, *Lectures on the Relation between Law and Public Opinion in England during the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1905).

2. cf. K. B. Smellie, *A Hundred Years of English Government* (London, 1937), p. 212.



individual freedom, once it was given positive and active instead of merely supervisory and repressive functions, once the scope of politics was widened until it embraced, in principle at least, the whole of human existence, it was only a matter of time before the machinery by which governments were elected, controlled and vested with power, was adapted to the new circumstances. Just as the resources at the command of governments in the half-century after 1815 were inadequate for solving the problems with which industrialization confronted them, so the political machinery existing down to the time of the Second Reform Bill in England, or the introduction of universal manhood suffrage in the North German Confederation in 1867, was not of a kind by which the forces of a mass democracy could be mobilized and turned to effective use.

In the first place, the conditions for which the existing political machinery had been devised were entirely different. Hitherto, as Sir James Graham pointed out in 1859, representation had been based on 'property and intelligence'.<sup>1</sup> In England and Wales the Great Reform Bill of 1832 had added only some 217,000 voters to the existing electorate of 435,000; and though the rising population and wealth of the country brought a further increase of about 400,000 by the time of the Second Reform Bill of 1867, even then the electorate was not much more than one in thirty in the United Kingdom as a whole. This meant not only that five out of six adult males, and by far the greater part of the working class, were voteless, but also that it was still easy – particularly before the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872 – to manipulate elections by influence, bribery, and intimidation.<sup>2</sup> In France conditions under Louis Napoleon were exceptional, but the disproportion here had previously been even greater.

1. Smellie, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

2. There is an entertaining account of the 1868 election in Lynn – 'the first parliamentary election I remember' – in G. G. Coulton, *Four-score Years* (Cambridge, 1943), pp. 22-4.

Under the electoral law in force in France from 1831 to 1848, the electorate was confined to some two hundred thousand out of a population of approximately thirty million.<sup>1</sup> And in the relatively limited number of German states – Baden, Hesse and Württemberg, for example – where representative institutions, often modelled on those of the French charter of 1814, were permitted to function, the position was essentially the same. Nineteenth-century liberal democracy, in short, was everywhere constructed on the basis of a restricted property franchise; like Athenian democracy in the ancient world, it was really an 'egalitarian oligarchy', in which 'a ruling class of citizens shared the rights and spoils of political control'.<sup>2</sup>

This situation was radically altered by the extension of the franchise. Both in the German empire and in the new French republic universal manhood suffrage was an accomplished fact from 1871. Switzerland, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Norway followed suit in 1874, 1890, 1893, 1896, and 1898 respectively. In Italy, where a very limited increase in the franchise had been granted in 1882, most of the male population received a vote by a law passed in 1912; in Great Britain the same result was achieved by the Third Reform Bill of 1884, although there the principle of universal manhood suffrage had to wait until 1918 for recognition and full suffrage was not extended to women until 1928. In the areas of European colonization overseas the extension of the franchise tended, not surprisingly, to occur a good deal sooner. This was the case in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and, of course, in the United States of America, where universal manhood suffrage was introduced almost everywhere between 1820 and 1840 with immediate effects on the political machinery. After 1869, moreover, the suffrage was gradually

1. The number varied from 166,000 in 1831 to 247,000 in 1847; before 1831 it had not reached 100,000; cf. P. Bastid, *Les institutions de la monarchie parlementaire française* (Paris, 1954), pp. 225, 227-8.

2. R. M. MacIver, *The Modern State* (London, 1932), p. 352.

extended to women, until in 1920 an amendment to the constitution enfranchised women in all states of the Union. In New Zealand, where manhood suffrage was established in 1879, women were given the vote in 1893.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of these changes, stated shortly, was to make unworkable the old system of parliamentary democracy that had developed in Europe out of the 'estates' of late medieval and early modern times, and to inaugurate a series of structural innovations which resulted in a short space of time in the displacement of the liberal, individualist representative system by a new form of democracy: the party state. A number of factors have combined to conceal the revolutionary nature of this transformation. The first is terminological. In England, in particular, the mere fact that the history of political parties, and the term 'party' itself, reach back in apparent continuity into the seventeenth century, has been sufficient to create the illusion that all that occurred was a process of adaptation which broadened the foundation but left the essence of the old structure standing. In the second place, current ideological conflicts have obscured the issue. In the United States and in western Europe, people have been so concerned to demonstrate that western democratic practice is the only reliable safeguard of the individual's rights and liberties, by comparison with the one-party system prevalent in fascist and communist countries, that it has seemed almost treasonable to inquire how far *all* the modern forms of government mark a breach with the representative democracy of a century ago. In this respect the currently popular distinction between liberal and totalitarian

1. For details, cf. James Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, vol. II (London, 1921), pp. 50, 188, 199, 295, 339. In England, women had been partially enfranchised in 1918; in Switzerland, they still do not have the vote. In the U.S.A. 'nearly all the southern states' (in Lord Bryce's words) 'passed enactments which, without directly contravening the constitutional amendment of 1870 designed to enfranchise all the coloured population, have succeeded in practically excluding from the franchise the large majority of that population'.

democracy is not altogether satisfactory, since, whatever its value in terms of political theory, it fails to take account of the fact that communism, fascism, and the modern western multiparty system are all different responses to the breakdown of nineteenth-century liberal democracy under the pressure of mass society.

To say this is in no way to disparage the multiparty system or to dismiss it as a mere parody of 'true' democracy (an abstraction which has never existed), but simply to point out that it must be classified and justified on its own terms and not by nineteenth-century political standards. To speak of the defence of democracy as if we were defending something we had possessed for generations, or even for centuries, is wide of the mark. The type of democracy prevalent today in western Europe – what we summarily call 'mass democracy' – is a new type of democracy, created for the most part in the last sixty or seventy years and different in essential points from the liberal democracy of the nineteenth century. It is new because the politically active elements today no longer consist of a relatively small body of equals, all economically secure and sharing the same social background, but are drawn from a vast amorphous society, comprising all levels of wealth and education, for the most part fully occupied with the business of earning a daily living, who can only be mobilized for political action by the highly integrated political machines we call 'parties'. In some cases – for example, in the 'people's democracies' of eastern Europe – there may be only one, elsewhere there will be two or more parties; in either case the fact remains that the party is not only the characteristic form of modern political organization, but also its hub. This is shown, in the communist one-party system, by the fact that the most important person in the state is the first secretary of the party; elsewhere the change is less clear and less complete but no less real. The essential point is that ultimate control, which during the period of liberal democracy was vested in parliament, has slipped, or



is slipping, from parliament to party – at different speeds and by different routes in different lands, but everywhere along a one-way road. Here again, a fundamental process of modern mass society has been obscured by emphasis instead on secondary phenomena, such as the threat to parliamentary sovereignty from administrative law and ministerial tribunals.

## 2

Political parties, it has been said, were born when the mass of the population began to play an active part in political life.<sup>1</sup> At first sight this statement looks like a paradox, or even a dangerous half-truth; but we must not allow ourselves to be confused by nomenclature. It is true that we find the word 'party' used to describe the factions which divided the city-states of ancient Greece, the clans and clienteles grouped round the condottieri of Renaissance Italy, the clubs where deputies forgathered during the French Revolution, the committees of local bigwigs in the constituencies which ran elections under the constitutional monarchies of the early nineteenth century, and the vast countrywide party machines with their central offices and salaried staffs which shape opinion and enlist votes in modern democratic states. But if all these institutions have one thing in common – namely, to capture power and exercise it – in all other respects the differences between them outweigh their similarities. In reality, political parties as we know them are less than a century old. Bagehot, writing in 1867, had not even a premonition of the modern party system; what he envisaged was more like a club than a modern party machine.<sup>2</sup>

It was, indeed, only in the last generation – in most

1. M. Duverger, *Les partis politiques* (4th ed., Paris, 1961), p. 466; English trans., *Political Parties* (London, 1954), p. 426.

2. cf. W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, with an Introduction by R. H. S. Crossman (London, 1963), pp. 39–40.

instances since the end of the Second World War – that political parties escaped from the limbo of extra-constitutional or conventional bodies, with no legally defined place in the system of government, and were explicitly admitted into the constitutional machinery. In England the change was registered by the Ministers of the Crown Act of 1937, which, by establishing the official position of the leader of the opposition, implicitly recognized and sanctioned the party system. In Germany the Fundamental Law of the Federal Republic – unlike the Weimar constitution, which still adopted an ambivalent attitude towards the party system – treated the parties as integral elements in the constitutional structure (Art. 21), and the Berlin constitution referred specifically to the tasks which fall to them under constitutional law (Art. 27). Similar provisions were incorporated in the constitutions of certain German *Länder* – for example, Baden (Art. 120) – in the post-war Italian constitution (Art. 49), and in the Brazilian constitution of 1946 (Art. 141).<sup>1</sup>

This legalization or constitutionalization of the party system was, of course, only a formal recognition of a situation that had long existed in fact. Nevertheless, it is only necessary to turn to the handbooks of constitutional law and political theory used in the inter-war period in England and elsewhere to see that it marked a real and substantial change.<sup>2</sup> In England, under the influence of Dicey, the interplay of parties was regarded as a useful

1. cf. G. Leibholz, *Der Strukturwandel der modernen Demokratie* (Karlsruhe, 1952), p. 16, for the Weimar constitution, *ibid.*, p. 12.

2. An interesting example is H. J. Laski's *Grammar of Politics*, first published in 1925, since this book specifically set out to construct a new theory of the state, adapted to modern conditions. It is, however, only necessary to turn to the scanty passages (4th ed., 1941, pp. 264–6, 313–14, 318–24) in which the party system comes up for discussion to perceive that the really central issues are omitted. It is hardly an accident that the word 'party' is missing from the index; and a quick search of standard constitutional histories of the period would show that Laski was no exception.

'convention', helping the government to function smoothly, but not as an essential part of it, and as late as 1953 it was possible to write that 'the British party system is unknown to the constitution'.<sup>1</sup> In Germany, the existence of parties was ignored by Laband, and Jellinek specifically rejected the notion that they had any claim to a place in public law.<sup>2</sup> In France, where the modern party system was particularly slow to develop, the concept of the organized party was conspicuously absent from the standard textbooks of Barthélemy, Esmein, and Duguit, who admitted at most the existence of loose groups of deputies, brought together by similar tendencies and affinities, who might 'wish to maintain contact in order to concert their actions in a common direction in legislative and political questions'.<sup>3</sup> Today, these convenient fictions can no longer be maintained. We know, on the contrary, that the impact of organized parties has transformed not merely the infrastructure but also the substance of the parliamentary system, and that the part played by them is certainly no smaller than that of older organs of government, such as the monarchy or the cabinet. Today the British political scene is dominated by two great party oligarchies which have taken over and divided between them most of the sovereign powers Bagehot ascribed to the House of Commons. What we still think of as a parliamentary state has, in fact, become a party state, and the parties are now one

1. I. Bulmer-Thomas, *The Party System in Great Britain* (London, 1953), p. 3. R. T. McKenzie, *British Political Parties* (London, 1955), p. 4, also commented that 'despite their size and importance British parties are almost completely unacknowledged in law' and that there was 'no formal recognition of their role'.

2. cf. Leibholz, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

3. J. Barthélemy, *Essai sur le travail parlementaire* (Paris, 1934), p. 91. In his standard textbook, *Le gouvernement de la France* (new ed., Paris, 1939), pp. 43-4, Barthélemy went out of his way to avoid using the word 'party', speaking only of 'groupes politiques . . . qui ne correspondent à aucune organisation dans le corps électoral'. Also cf. L. Duguit, *Traité de droit constitutionnel*, vol. II (Paris, 1928), p. 826.

of 'the most central and crucial of all the institutions of British government',<sup>1</sup> as, indeed, of government everywhere.

This change was the result of the appearance of a mass electorate which the old forms of political organization could not reach. It occurred, naturally enough, in different countries at a different pace, and its progress was affected in each different land by the pre-existing conditions. As already indicated, the United States, where conditions were more fluid and development less hampered by privilege and precedent, was ahead of Europe. In the United States manhood suffrage (for whites but not for Negroes) was already general by about 1825, and from approximately the same date mass immigration from Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia built up a vast amorphous electorate. Except in the south, where before the civil war political power was lodged in the hands of a small stratum of wealthy planters, it was not long before the great families of the eastern seaboard, which had taken control in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary years, lost their pre-eminent position; and from the time of the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 the outlines of the party machinery which was to dominate in the future – the machinery of bosses, managers and rings operating through graft, spoils and patronage to capture primaries, organize the 'ticket', and to manipulate committees and conventions – were already plainly visible.<sup>2</sup>

Characteristically, the change was resisted at first as 'contrary to republican institutions and dangerous to the liberties of the people', and was denounced as a 'Yankee trick' to prevent individuals from standing as candidates for Congress in their own right and deprive electors of

1. cf. D. Thomson in the *Survey of Contemporary Political Science* published by UNESCO (Paris, 1950), p. 546.

2. Its rise was described by M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, vol. II (London, 1902), pp. 41 ff.



their freedom to vote for candidates of their own choice.<sup>1</sup> It also took some twenty-five years before the system was fully elaborated, and it only became continent-wide after the civil war had carried it into the south. But with the election of Harrison in 1840 and Polk in 1844 the American form of mass democracy had arrived, a third of a century or more ahead of the rest of the world. Polk was the prototype of the 'dark horse' candidate – the man on whom the masses could unite because he was sufficiently unknown or too colourless to arouse antagonism – but Harrison, epitomizing all the ideals of the 'log cabin' pioneers of the west, was swept into office, like Jackson before him, as what Max Weber was later to call the 'charismatic leader'. As for Martin van Buren, the organizer of Jackson's victory, he was the ancestor of a long dynasty of party managers and 'wire-pullers' with a world-wide progeny, among whom Alfred Hugenberg, the German press-lord who played so prominent a part in Hitler's rise to power, is perhaps the most notorious.

The transition from sedate liberalism, with its respect for birth, property, and influence, to mass democracy, which was an accomplished fact in the United States by 1850, was a far more hesitant process on the European side of the Atlantic. Here only the impact of industrialization in the period after 1870 was strong enough to override conservative resistance and carry the change through. The new political attitudes and methods manifested themselves first of all in England, immediately after the passing of the Second Reform Bill in 1867, though it was only after the passing of the Ballot Act of 1872, the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883, and the Third Reform Bill of 1884, which raised the electorate to around five millions, that democratization of the franchise could be said to have been secured. Perhaps the first clear victory for the new industrial democracy was the election of 1906, which, as Balfour

1. *ibid.*, pp. 54, 66.

immediately perceived, inaugurated a new era.<sup>1</sup> In Germany, the decisive turning-point was the abrogation of the anti-Socialist laws in 1890.<sup>2</sup> Its immediate result was the rapid expansion of the Social Democratic party, founded in 1875, which now quickly drew ahead of all other parties, polling nearly one and a half million votes in 1890, over two millions in 1898, three millions out of an electorate of nine millions in 1903, and four and a quarter millions in 1912.

In Germany, as elsewhere in Europe, it was the socialist left wing that led the way in the development of new forms of political organization; with over a million inscribed members and a budget of over two million marks a year, the German Social Democratic party in 1914 constituted something not far short of a state within the state.<sup>3</sup> The bourgeois parties could only follow lamely after. Friedrich Naumann, appealing in 1906 for a revival of liberalism, was well aware that only a permanent, well-organized professional machine could bring it about; but his clarity of vision and purpose was exceptional, and the German middle classes were too divided socially to build the mass party for which he called.<sup>4</sup> The same was true in France. Here, indeed, the whole social structure, with its basis in a strong landowning peasantry and an extensive petty bourgeoisie, and its emphasis on regional differentiation and the antithesis between Paris and the provinces, was unsympathetic towards the rise of strong national parties. As late as 1929 the term 'party' was described as 'an agreeable fiction', so far as France was concerned; and even so distinguished an inter-war parliamentarian as André

1. Smellie, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

2. cf. T. Nipperdey, 'Die Organisation der bürgerlichen Parteien in Deutschland vor 1918', *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. CLXXXV (1958), p. 578.

3. cf. Duverger, *op. cit.*, p. 90 (Engl. trans., p. 66).

4. cf. T. Schieder, *Staat und Gesellschaft im Wandel unserer Zeit* (Munich, 1958), p. 127; Engl. trans., *The State and Society in our Times* (Edinburgh, 1962), pp. 98–9.

Tardieu repudiated the notion of party attachment: 'I belong to none of those mystifications which people call parties, or leagues,' he said.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless France also was carried along by a development that was universal. As Maurice Deslandres wrote in a widely noticed article in 1910, 'worked upon by the new democratic ferment', the mass of the nation was rising up and establishing associations, leagues, unions, federations, committees, groups of militants, whose purpose was to activate political institutions and bring them, so far as possible, under their own tutelage. 'In the great unorganized homogeneous masses,' he said, 'a process of differentiation' was taking place, and in this way the country was 'becoming conscious of itself'.<sup>2</sup>

The event which, more than anything else, acted as catalyst in this process was the Dreyfus case. Overshadowing French politics between 1896 and 1899, the Dreyfus *affaire* discredited the opportunist bourgeois patriciate, which had monopolized power since the beginning of the Third Republic, and gave the left and the petty bourgeois left-centre an opportunity to play an active political role.<sup>3</sup> Hence in France it was in the first decade of the twentieth century that the new parties were organized: the Radicals in 1901, the *alliance républicaine et démocratique* the following year (though, characteristically, it was not until 1911 that the word 'alliance' was replaced by the word 'party'), the *fédération républicaine* in 1903, and the Socialist party (S.F.I.O.), formed by the amalgamation of a number of small existing rival groups, in 1905.

Although even now the formation of efficient party organizations, capable of disciplining the electors and

1. cf. R. von Albertini, 'Parteiorganisation und Parteibegriff in Frankreich, 1789-1940', *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. CXCIII (1961), p. 594.

2. Deslandres's article, in *Revue politique et parlementaire*, vol. LXV, is cited by Albertini, p. 565.

3. cf. P. Miquel, *L'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris, 1961), pp. 9, 123.

controlling the deputies, was far from complete, the change was considerable. Its nature was indicated by two significant and representative statements, the one from 1900, the other from 1910.<sup>1</sup> 'If the electors are looking for direction,' wrote a competent observer at the earlier date, 'they will not find it in national organizations of a permanent character, putting before the country clearly defined courses of action; for such organizations do not exist. Hence each individual will vote without raising his eyes beyond the village pump. . . . And in parliament itself the situation is similar. There are no parties there; there cannot be. Each deputy has been elected separately; he arrives from his village with an essentially local programme. There is no flag for him to follow, no leader to rally and direct him.' By 1910 this was no longer the case. 'The word party, which formerly was used to designate an opinion,' it was pointed out, had now come to be used to denote 'an association founded to maintain that opinion'. It was true that, in France, 'the psychological factor of individualism was too strong for the parties to have the rigidity and precision of machines', but they were no longer simply organizations brought together intermittently on an *ad hoc* basis to fight particular elections.<sup>2</sup> As in Germany twenty years earlier, amateurish short-term electoral skirmishes were giving way to systematic long-term electoral campaigns; the old methods and the old machinery were no longer capable of coping with an electorate of many millions.<sup>3</sup>

## 3

What were the changes that were needed to meet the conditions of mass democracy, and how were they put

1. They are cited by Albertini, *op. cit.*, pp. 566 and 567.

2. cf. L. Jacques, *Les partis politiques sous la III<sup>e</sup> République* (Paris, 1912), pp. 28 ff.

3. Nipperdey, *op. cit.*, p. 579.



through? So far as England is concerned, the facts are reasonably well known and have been recounted in some detail, though most writers have tended to treat them as a process of continuous development and to slur over their revolutionary nature and revolutionary consequences. The starting-point was the Reform Bill of 1867 with its increase in the suffrage in the towns, and among the well-known milestones which followed were the organization of the radical 'caucus' in Birmingham by Schnadhorst and Chamberlain in 1873, its extension to other large cities, the formation of the National Liberal Federation in 1877, and Gladstone's Midlothian campaign of 1879. On the Conservative side these innovations were counterbalanced by the Conservative Working Men's Associations, the National Union of Conservative Associations, and the Primrose League, founded shortly after Disraeli's death in 1881.<sup>1</sup>

On the continent of Europe the process of renovation was carried through far less energetically than in England, but here also the necessity of underpinning the parties by widening their popular base could not fail to be recognized. Thus in Germany the Conservatives, who had hitherto largely dispensed with popular support because they were able to count on government backing, became from 1893 the organ of the Agrarian League, at the same time seeking a foothold among the artisans through the so-called *Bürgervereine*; while the Catholic Centre built itself up into a mass party through skilful manipulation of a variety of Catholic associations.<sup>2</sup> In France the Radicals tried to organize themselves on a nation-wide basis, by combining local committees into regional federations, with the party Congress at the head; but their success was

1. These developments were first analysed by Ostrogorski, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 161-272, and though the story has subsequently often been retold, his account is in many ways still unsurpassed. There is an appreciation of Ostrogorski and his work in M. M. Laserson, *The American Impact on Russia* (ed. 1962), pp. 473-84.

2. For further details, cf. Nipperdey, *op. cit.*, pp. 581-90.

limited,<sup>1</sup> and in France it was only with the formation of the S.F.I.O. that anything like a mass party came into existence. Even so, it was a mass party without the masses.<sup>2</sup> So far as its organization was concerned, the S.F.I.O. conformed to the new model, but its actual membership in 1914 was only ninety thousand at a time when the German Social Democrats numbered a million. The first real mass party in France, with a membership reaching a million, was the Communist party; its phenomenal success, it has rightly been said, was almost certainly due more to its 'admirable system' of organization than to the attractions of Marxist doctrine.<sup>3</sup>

Four main factors distinguished the new forms of political organization. The first was a wide popular basis, or a mass membership; the second was permanence, or continuity; the third was enforcement of party discipline; and the fourth (and most difficult to attain) was organization from the bottom upwards instead of from the top downwards - in other words, control of policy by party members and their delegates instead of by a small influential clique in or about the government - the Carlton Club in London is the best-known example - or at the head of the party machine. All four points marked a radical break with the past. Earlier organizations had been largely intermittent; they had existed - like the Anti-Corn Law League in England, for example - to propagate a particular objective and had lapsed when it was achieved, or they had been called together to fight a particular election and had disbanded the day after the poll. In normal circumstances the smallness of the electorate meant that they were controlled by a few local bigwigs, usually the heads of county families, marked out by birth or wealth, who set themselves up with no further authorization as an *ad hoc* committee.

1. Albertini, *op. cit.*, pp. 572-5; cf. also for a more general context D. Thomson, *Democracy in France* (London, 1946), pp. 105-7.

2. Albertini, *op. cit.*, pp. 592-3.

3. Duverger, *op. cit.*, p. 22 (Engl. trans., p. 5).

None of these extra-constitutional organizations, as Ostrogorski has observed, entertained designs of making itself a permanent body, 'a regular power in the state'; none, in particular, set out to control the members of parliament or deputies whom it elected. The doctrine enunciated by Burke and Blackstone, according to which the deputy was the representative of the nation, not the mandatory of a party, and was consequently responsible only to his own conscience, was unquestioned in France and Germany as well as in England. With the extension and redistribution of the franchise all this was changed, and the main instrument of change was the device known as the 'caucus' – a word, significantly, of American origin, the adoption of which reflected the assimilation of American political ideas and practices. The caucus was the main political innovation of a new period; it provided, in Lord Randolph Churchill's words, 'undeniably the only form of political organization which can bring together, guide and direct great masses of electors'.<sup>1</sup>

As envisaged by its organizers, Schnadhorst and Chamberlain, and put into practice in Birmingham, the caucus was a party machine of a permanent character, built up out of cells in each ward or vestry, delegates from which formed the executive and general committee for the whole city, while the organizations of the different cities were linked together by the National Liberal Federation. Thus a machine was forged which, since it existed and functioned continuously and not merely at election times, was able to exert pressure on and even control members of parliament, and which because of its power could influence and sometimes even dictate policy. When in 1886 the caucus drove the independent radical, Joseph Cowen, out of public life, his comment was that what it wanted was a machine, not a man.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that in substance he was right. Hartington also complained that Chamber-

1. Ostrogorski, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 275.

2. The Cowen case is discussed at length, *ibid.*, pp. 231-42.

lain had organized an outside power to the belittlement of parliament, and Harcourt told Morley that all that was now expected of ministers was to swear loyalty to a creed formulated by the Federation.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the wind from the Tory quarter any less sharp than the gale from the radical heights. What Chamberlain did to the Liberals, Lord Randolph Churchill did to the Conservatives, installing in place of the old lax methods and aristocratic cliques 'a new kind of plebiscitary caesarism, exercised not by an individual but by a huge syndicate'.<sup>2</sup>

In principle, the emergence of the caucus marked a radical breach with the past. In practice, it was otherwise. The slowness and reluctance with which the bourgeois parties adapted themselves to the condition of mass democracy is remarkable. Having advanced so far, they tended, if anything, to draw back. The basic reason, without doubt, was the unwillingness of the middle classes, with their individualist traditions, to subject themselves to strict party discipline, and the lack of a clearly defined class interest to weld them together.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the party leadership was adept at fighting back. In England both the Liberal and the Conservative Associations were brought with surprising speed under the thumb of the party leaders,<sup>4</sup> and in France, Germany, and Italy the outcome was much the same.

In France, the Radicals failed utterly in their efforts to impose party discipline;<sup>5</sup> in Germany, as in England, the

1. Smellie, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

2. Ostrogorski, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 282.

3. cf. Nipperdey, *op. cit.*, p. 594, and Duverger, *op. cit.*, p. 39 (*Engl. ed.*, p. 21).

4. cf. Ostrogorski, vol. 1, pp. 302-4, 322-3. Instead of becoming the suns of the party system, says Ostrogorski, the representative organizations became to all intents and purposes the satellites of the leaders. This evolution has subsequently been analysed more fully by McKenzie; cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 584 ff., where the conclusions of his study are summarized.

5. Albertini, *op. cit.*, p. 578.



parliamentary leaders dominated the party congresses, arranged their proceedings in advance, and turned them into docile instruments of a governing clique.<sup>1</sup> Hence, although the tendency for the development of mass parties was everywhere strong, it was not until the appearance on the scene of the Socialist parties that the last obstacles were overcome. In the end, it was only fear of revolution and the growth of Communism that convinced the middle classes of the inadequacy of their traditional loose forms of organization and of the need to create mass parties; and the result was the emergence in 1932 of the National Socialist party – originally a right-wing splinter group, but now the petty bourgeois party *par excellence* – with 800,000 members and over thirteen and a half million votes.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, on the opposite wing the German Social Democratic party from 1891, the British Labour party from 1899, and the French Socialist party from 1905 had systematically adapted and applied the principles and methods which the caucus organization of the 1870s and 1880s foreshadowed.

By comparison with the bourgeois parties, the strength of the Socialist parties lay in their firm social infrastructure. The same factors which led to the rise of mass democracy – namely, large-scale industry and urbanization – had brought about profound changes in capitalist society, and the rise of the Socialist parties marked the adaptation of politics to this fact. In the first place, the emergence of the factory or mill with thousands of workers on its payroll altered the structure of capitalism itself; it led, as contemporaries were well aware, to the displacement of industrial capitalism – of which the characteristic form was the independent family business – by finance capitalism, of which the American multimillionaire, John Pierpont Morgan, may be instanced as a typical figure. In the second place, it meant that the workers as a class tended

1. Nipperdey, *op. cit.*, p. 585.

2. *cf.* Duverger, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–1 (*Engl. trans.*, p. 67).

increasingly to be reduced to the position of anonymous 'hands', unknown to employers they never saw, and that the division between those who owned and those who operated the machinery of production, hitherto glossed over by the prevalence of small factories in which the master and his employees worked side by side, became a basic element in society. Unlike the bourgeois parties, which professed to be 'national' parties representing all classes, the Socialist parties had from the start no hesitation in accepting this basic division; they were class parties representing a homogeneous class interest. The advantage, from the point of view of party organization, was immense. Above all else, the appeal to working-class interests brought for the first time a mass membership, either through direct adhesions or (as in England) through the support of the trade unions.

The phenomenal growth of the German Social Democratic party has already been instanced.<sup>1</sup> In Great Britain, by enrolling the unions, the Labour party already had 860,000 members by 1902. But it was not only a question of gross numerical strength. More important was the existence of an active, disciplined membership, organized from the centre and paying regular subscriptions. Here the Socialists were far ahead of the middle-class parties, which had difficulty in organizing their supporters as active party members, were largely dependent on such local initiative as might develop in individual constituencies, and relied for their finances less on regular subscriptions than on subventions from wealthy donors.<sup>2</sup> The

1. Above, p. 135.

2. The German National Liberals, for example, were able to organize at most fifteen per cent of their adherents; Nipperdey, *op. cit.*, p. 596. For the finances, *cf.* Albertini, *op. cit.*, p. 576. In 1907 Radical deputies and senators in France paid fr. 200, Socialists fr. 3,000. The subscription of the local Radical Committees – originally they paid none – was fixed at fr. 30; but in 1929 only 527 out of 838 had paid up. When the introduction of membership cards was discussed in 1912 it was protested that 50 centimes was too high a fee,

difference was plainly visible in France, where the Radicals, as late as 1927, had no clear idea of the size of their membership, whereas the Socialists supervised the membership through the central organization and collected party subscriptions through a central treasury, which distributed quotas to the local branches, instead of vice versa.<sup>1</sup> It was seen also in the growth of internal party organization – that is to say, of a salaried headquarters staff – in which the Socialists were also the pace-makers.<sup>2</sup>

The consequence of this close and effective organization was greater control. Instead of a loose association of committees, organized on a local or regional basis, which lacked cohesion and had little power to control the parliamentary leaders at the centre, the Socialist parties were unitary organizations, constituted on the principle of 'democratic centralism' and built up out of 'sections' which remained subdivisions of the whole.<sup>3</sup> There is no doubt that this type of organization made for greater cohesion and a greater measure of discipline. Whereas in the bourgeois parties it was the rule for the party to be dominated by the parliamentary group, all the Socialist parties adopted measures to ensure that the deputies were subordinated to the party and, in particular, to prevent them from asserting control either in the party Congress

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and though formally accepted in 1913, they were not introduced, in practice, until 1923. For some data on Liberal and Conservative money-raising in England, cf. Smellie, *op. cit.*, p. 198: 'we make out a list of peers and M.P.s who may be asked to subscribe . . .'. There were 114 of them and they were asked for '£500 apiece'. Also cf. McKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 594-7.

1. Albertini, *op. cit.*, pp. 575, 589.

2. Data for Germany in Schieder, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-9 (Engl. trans. pp. 124-5); in France the Radicals only appointed a Secretary-General in 1929 (Albertini, *op. cit.*, p. 579).

3. For the contrast between the section (or branch) – 'une invention socialiste' – and the committee (or caucus) – 'une type archaïque de structure' – cf. Duverger, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-2, 37-9, 41-3 (Engl. trans., pp. 4-5, 20-1, 23-5).

or on the executive.<sup>1</sup> In France every candidate had to sign an engagement to observe the decisions of the national party congress, and the British Labour party insisted from the beginning that candidates must 'abide by decisions of the group . . . or resign'.<sup>2</sup> Thus the principle of the mandate, which the caucuses had tried with only limited success to enforce in the bourgeois parties, came into its own: it was, if we compare it with the classical theory of representation set out by Blackstone and Burke, one of the clearest signs how radically the impact of mass democracy had changed the political system.

## 4

The revolution in political practice outlined above is still for the most part an incomplete revolution. The United States, with its federal constitution and presidential system, has gone its own way, and the American political parties 'have had to eschew discipline, suppress doctrine and fragment power'.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere the institutions which, considered theoretically, may be regarded as typical of mass democracy, are nowhere found in an undiluted form. Theoretically, for example, the Socialist parties are controlled by a democratically elected party congress, so constituted as to prevent the domination of the parliamentary leaders; but it is notorious that, in practice, the development of rigid party oligarchies has reduced the

1. The position is discussed by Duverger, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-32 (Engl. trans., pp. 182-202); for France, Italy, Belgium, and Austria, cf. *ibid.*, p. 222 (pp. 192-3); for Australia and Great Britain, p. 226 (pp. 196-7).

2. Albertini, *op. cit.*, p. 500; McKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 387. In 1911, however, the British Labour conference decided that candidates should no longer be required to sign the pledge (*ibid.*, p. 474).

3. cf. C. Rossiter, *Parties and Politics in America* (ed. 1958), p. 61 – a brilliant analysis of the salient differences of the American party system, which cannot be discussed in detail here.



control of the rank and file to nominal proportions.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, as in many others, the structural differences between the working-class and middle-class parties are in practice far smaller than at first glance might appear to be the case, and this is particularly evident where, as the German Social Democrats did in the Godesberg programme of 1959,<sup>2</sup> the former for tactical reasons have repudiated their class basis and set out, like their bourgeois counterparts, to establish themselves as 'national' parties. In practice, it is extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, to determine exactly where the control of policy in any party – even a Communist party – lies at any particular moment.

These facts, and others like them, have made it easy to maintain the comfortable doctrine of constitutional continuity, to argue that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, the changes which have occurred during the past century have not affected the fundamental structure of government. Nevertheless, whatever point in the process we may currently have reached, it is clear that we are in the midst of developments leading away from the supremacy of parliament and towards some form of plebiscitary democracy, expressed in and through the party system.<sup>3</sup> Parliament today, it has been said, is little more than 'a meeting place in which rigorously controlled party delegates assemble together to register decisions already taken elsewhere, in committees or party conferences'.<sup>4</sup>

What has happened is that the place of parliament in

1. These aspects, as is well known, were examined at length by Robert Michels, *Political Parties. A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (ed. 1962, first published in German in 1911), and do not require further discussion here.

2. cf. A. Grosser, *The Federal Republic of Germany* (New York and London, 1964), pp. 58–60, and A. J. Heidenheimer, *The Governments of Germany* (London, 1965), p. 66.

3. cf. E. Fraenkel, *Die repräsentative und plebisitäre Komponente im demokratischen Verfassungsstaat* (Tübingen, 1958), p. 58 (for England, pp. 16–18).

4. Leibholz, op. cit., p. 17.

the constitution has shifted substantially, both in relation to the head of the government and in relation to the electorate. The change was initiated by Gladstone in 1879 when, in his famous Midlothian campaign, he appealed over the head of parliament to the electorate, thus 'removing the political centre of gravity from parliament to the platform'.<sup>1</sup> It was registered by Salisbury when he wrote in 1895, that 'power has passed from the hands of statesmen', and had already been foreseen by Goschen when he observed of the Reform Bill of 1867 that, through it, 'the whole centre of gravity of the constitution had been displaced'.<sup>2</sup> Since that time the process has gone forward, aided by the growing complexity of government and the highly technical nature of the decisions that have to be made. The result has been to place greatly increased power in the hands of the prime minister and his professional advisers. It is well known, for example, that the decision to proceed with the A-bomb was taken by Mr Attlee on his own initiative, without prior discussion in the cabinet, and was not revealed to parliament until the first bomb had been tested in 1952.<sup>3</sup>

Among the factors accelerating this process of concentration, one was the strain and stress of war which in England enhanced the personal power both of Lloyd George and of Churchill and led the latter, for the more vigorous prosecution of the war effort, to by-pass parliament and cabinet on a number of major questions of policy and administration. Another was the reform of the civil service by Lloyd George in 1919 and its centralization under the Secretary of the Treasury, who was made directly responsible to Downing Street. Its effect was to bring about 'an immense accretion of power to the prime minister', who now became 'the apex not only of a highly centralized

1. Smellie, op. cit., p. 193.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 182, 192.

3. cf. J. P. Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet* (London, 1962), pp. 431–2.

political machine, but also of an equally centralized and vastly more powerful administrative machine'.<sup>1</sup> In the German Federal Republic under Adenauer this process was carried to the point at which the State Secretaries in the chancellor's office became the pivot of government, and during Adenauer's absences the actual direction of affairs devolved not on the vice-chancellor, but on the head of Adenauer's chancellery, the notorious ex-Nazi, Hans Globke. Not only was the collective responsibility of ministers undermined, but they were deprived of the control over their own departments provided for in the Basic Law.<sup>2</sup>

It is clearly impossible to predict how far the process of concentration will go, or what form of government may eventually emerge as a result of these and similar changes. But that does not diminish their impact nor make it less important to register their effects. If we try to summarize the changes as they appear today, without reference to their historical background, the following are probably the points which will stand out.<sup>3</sup> First, the position of the deputy, the representative or member of parliament, has altered in fundamental ways. Although lip-service is still paid to the theory which makes him the representative of the whole nation, bound only by his conscience, it is obvious that the actual position is very different. In reality, as M. Duverger has said,<sup>4</sup> 'members of parliament are subject to a discipline which transforms them into voting-machines operated by the party managers'. They cannot vote against their party; they cannot even abstain; they have no right to independent judgement on questions of substance, and they know that if they

1. For a summary of these developments, cf. Crossman, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-51, 54-5.

2. cf. Grosser, *op. cit.*, p. 35; Heidenheimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-101-2; P. H. Merkl, *Germany, Yesterday and Tomorrow* (New York, 1965), pp. 254-5.

3. For the following, cf. Leibholz, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-27.

4. *op. cit.*, p. 463 (Engl. trans., p. 423).

fail to follow the party line they can have no expectation of re-election. The one indispensable quality demanded of them, in short, is party loyalty, and the theory of classical representative democracy, that the electors should choose a candidate for his ability and personality, has ceased to count. From the point of view of the elector, the result by nineteenth-century standards is tantamount in many instances to disfranchisement; he can only vote for the nominees of the party or parties, none of which may represent his views, or not at all, and the complaints raised against the system when it first emerged in the United States are from this point of view fully justified.<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, from the point of view of parliament itself, and of the parliamentary system, that the consequences are most striking. The result of the changes of the last fifty years has been a steady and in some instances calamitous decline in its standing. With the disappearance of the solid core of independent and independent-minded members, parliament's role as a check and control on the executive has in the ordinary course of events become a fiction. It is also no longer, as in Bagehot's day, the place where ministries are made and unmade. 'Whether the government will go out or remain,' wrote Bagehot,<sup>2</sup> 'is determined by the debate, and by the division in parliament.' Today, since their results - even in a crisis of confidence like that in England in the summer of 1963 - are a foregone conclusion, parliamentary debates have lost their earlier constitutive character, and it is not surprising that they rarely arouse popular interest. If, formerly, major political issues hung in the balance and the fate of the government might be resolved by their outcome, at the present time, when the issues have been decided in advance in the inner party conclaves, speeches in parliament are no longer intended to sway the judgement of members, but are aimed at the elector outside parliament, with the object of impressing him and confirming his faith in the

1. cf. above, p. 133.

2. *op. cit.* (ed. Crossman), p. 73.



party. They are, in short, part of the barrage of propaganda directed at the electorate by newspapers, loud-speakers, television, and all other available methods of mass persuasion, but of all these various media they are the most antiquated and least effective.

The result has been to shift the emphasis away from parliament to the parties, on the one hand, and to the government, on the other. Armed with a mandate from the electorate, the government has little need to pay attention to parliament; the traditional view that the cabinet system enables parliament to control the government is very nearly the opposite of the truth.<sup>1</sup> Thus parliamentary elections tend to approximate more and more to plebiscitary acts; the electors, in other words, vote not for or against a particular candidate, but for or against a party programme and the leaders chosen by the party to execute the mandate. Where, as in Germany, the elector votes not for an individual but for a party list, this is even more obviously the case; the election of 1957 in the Federal Republic, for example, was in effect neither more nor less than a plebiscite for or against Dr. Adenauer. Thus elections tend to become popularity polls, and only the very naïve will be surprised if, as a result, the party machines – undeterred by the most unpromising material – seek to build up their chosen leaders into ‘television personalities’ and the like. Parties exist to secure power: it would be foolish to expect them to be squeamish about the means.

## 5

These facts, and the tendencies they reflect, have often been used to draw up an indictment of party government. That, it need hardly be said, is no part of my intention. All I have sought to do is to indicate by examples the

1. As was pointed out e.g. by W. I. Jennings, *The Law and the Constitution* (London, 1933), p. 143.

nature of the changes which have occurred as a result of the impact of mass democracy. The very fact that they are widespread changes, not confined to any particular country, indicates that they are part of a general historical process; and it is significant that the new type of party organization immediately took root in the emergent states of Africa.<sup>1</sup>

It is also evident that they are irrevocable changes, which reflect a basic alteration in the underlying social structure, and like all such changes they carry with them inherent dangers, or at least inherent problems. One is the possibility of government falling into the hands of a technically proficient but fundamentally cynical and self-centred party *élite*, a powerful apparatus controlled by a bureaucracy united by the same interests.<sup>2</sup> Another is the manipulation of the party machine by lobbies and pressure groups. In western Germany, in particular, there is concern at the extent to which the C.D.U. is exposed to the pressure of organizations representing business and other sectional interests.<sup>3</sup> But if party government, like all other political systems, is open to abuse, the remedy is not to decry the system but to improve its operation, above all by strengthening democratic control and counteracting the tendency, inherent in all political parties everywhere, to develop a rigid, top-heavy oligarchic apparatus. Those who rebel against the modern mass party and hanker for a return to earlier forms of representative democracy are indulging in a dangerous form of nostalgia; they ignore

1. cf. below, pp. 189–93.

2. H. Abosch, *The Menace of the Miracle* (London, 1962), pp. 226–7, points out that of the delegates to the Social Democratic Congress in Hamburg in 1950 only 8.2 per cent were working class, of the leaders of the party only 4 per cent. ‘What immediately strikes one is the fact that a very high proportion of the delegates either owe their position to the Party or are directly employed by it. . . . Nominally, the Executive Committee is elected by the Party Congress; in practice the Congress is elected by the Executive Committee.’

3. *ibid.*, p. 87.

the fact that the only practical alternative to the two-party or multiparty state, under present conditions, is the single-party state.<sup>1</sup>

The changes which in the last sixty years have brought the parties from the periphery to the centre of political life are not accidents which can be undone; they are part of the revolution which has given contemporary history a distinct character of its own and altered all its basic postulates. As Ostrogorsky was so quick to perceive, the advent of mass democracy disrupted the existing framework of political society. Today we are living in a new age of politics. If, throughout the contemporary world – in the western democracies, under the communist system, and now in the ex-colonial territories of Asia and Africa as well – highly organized parties are everywhere found occupying a central place in the political structure, it is because, under the conditions of mass society which have arisen since the end of the nineteenth century, the party is the only available means of articulating vast masses of people for political purposes.

1. cf. Leibholz, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

VI

THE REVOLT AGAINST THE WEST

*The Reaction of Asia and Africa to European Hegemony*

'THE problem of the twentieth century,' said the famous American Negro leader, William E. Burghardt Du Bois, in 1900, 'is the problem of the colour line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea'.<sup>1</sup> It was a remarkable prophecy. The history of the present century has been marked at one and the same time by the impact of the west on Asia and Africa and by the revolt of Asia and Africa against the west. The impact was the result, above all else, of western science and industry, which, having transformed western society, began in an increasing tempo to have the same disruptive and creative effects on societies in other continents; the revolt was a reaction against the imperialism which reached its peak in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. When the twentieth century opened, European power in Asia and Africa stood at its zenith; no nation, it seemed, could withstand the superiority of European arms and commerce. Sixty years later only the vestiges of European domination remained. Between 1945 and 1960 no less than forty countries with a population of eight hundred millions – more than a quarter of the world's inhabitants – revolted against colonialism and won their independence. Never before in the whole of human history had so revolutionary a reversal occurred with such rapidity. The change in the position of the peoples of Asia and Africa and in their relations with Europe was the surest sign of the advent of a new era, and when the history of the first half of the twentieth century – which, for most historians, is still dominated by

1. cf. Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism* (London, 1962), p. 25.