



ON REVOLUTION

*With nuclear power at a stalemate,
revolutions have become the principal
political factor of our time. To understand
them may mean to understand the future.*

by HANNAH
ARENDT

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On Revolution

BY HANNAH ARENDT



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Contents

<i>Introduction:</i>	WAR AND REVOLUTION	1
<i>Chapter One:</i>	THE MEANING OF REVOLUTION	13
<i>Two:</i>	THE SOCIAL QUESTION	53
<i>Three:</i>	THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS	111
<i>Four:</i>	FOUNDATION I: CONSTITUTIO LIBERTATIS	139
<i>Five:</i>	FOUNDATION II: NOVUS ORDO SAECLORUM	179
<i>Six:</i>	THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION AND ITS LOST TREASURE	217
<i>Notes to Introduction</i>		287
<i>Notes to Chapter One</i>		288
	<i>Two</i>	292
	<i>Three</i>	296
	<i>Four</i>	301
	<i>Five</i>	312
	<i>Six</i>	318
<i>Bibliography</i>		328
<i>Index</i>		337

Chapter Six

THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION AND ITS LOST TREASURE

Notre héritage n'est précédé d'aucun testament.

—RENÉ CHAR

I

IF THERE was a single event that shattered the bonds between the New World and the countries of the old Continent, it was the French Revolution, which, in the view of its contemporaries, might never have come to pass without the glorious example on the other side of the Atlantic. It was not the fact of revolution but its disastrous course and the collapse of the French republic which eventually led to the severance of the strong spiritual and political ties between America and Europe that had prevailed all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, Condorcet's *Influence de la Révolution d'Amérique sur l'Europe*, published three years before the storming of the Bastille, was to mark, temporarily at least, the end and not the beginning of an Atlantic civilization. One is tempted to hope that the rift which occurred at the end of the eighteenth century is about to heal in the middle of the twentieth century, when it has become rather obvious that Western civilization has its last chance of survival in an Atlantic

community; and among the signs to justify this hope is perhaps also the fact that since the Second World War historians have been more inclined to consider the Western world as a whole than they have been since the early nineteenth century.

Whatever the future may hold in store for us, the estrangement of the two continents after the eighteenth-century revolutions has remained a fact of great consequence. It was chiefly during this time that the New World lost its political significance in the eyes of the leading strata in Europe, that America ceased to be the land of the free and became almost exclusively the promised land of the poor. To be sure, the attitude of Europe's upper classes toward the alleged materialism and vulgarity of the New World was an almost automatic outgrowth of the social and cultural snobbism of the rising middle classes, and as such of no great importance. What mattered was that the European revolutionary tradition in the nineteenth century did not show more than a passing interest in the American Revolution or in the development of the American republic. In conspicuous contrast to the eighteenth century, when the political thought of the *philosophes*, long before the outbreak of an American Revolution, was attuned to events and institutions in the New World, revolutionary political thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has proceeded as though there never had occurred a revolution in the New World and as though there never had been any American notions and experiences in the realm of politics and government worth thinking about.

In recent times, when revolution has become one of the most common occurrences in the political life of nearly all countries and continents, the failure to incorporate the American Revolution into the revolutionary tradition has boomeranged upon the foreign policy of the United States, which begins to pay an exorbitant price for world-wide ignorance and for native oblivion. The point is unpleasantly driven home when even revolutions on the American continent speak and act as though they knew by heart the texts of revolutions in France, in Russia, and in China, but had never heard of such a thing as an American Revolution.

Less spectacular perhaps, but certainly no less real, are the consequences of the American counterpart to the world's ignorance, her own failure to remember that a revolution gave birth to the United States and that the republic was brought into existence by no "historical necessity" and no organic development, but by a deliberate act: the foundation of freedom. Failure to remember is largely responsible for the intense fear of revolution in this country, for it is precisely this fear that attests to the world at large how right they are to think of revolution only in terms of the French Revolution. Fear of revolution has been the hidden *leitmotif* of postwar American foreign policy in its desperate attempts at stabilization of the status quo, with the result that American power and prestige were used and misused to support obsolete and corrupt political regimes that long since had become objects of hatred and contempt among their own citizens.

Failure to remember and, with it, failure to understand have been conspicuous whenever, in rare moments, the hostile dialogue with Soviet Russia touched upon matters of principle. When we were told that by freedom we understood free enterprise, we did very little to dispel this monstrous falsehood, and all too often we have acted as though we too believed that it was wealth and abundance which were at stake in the postwar conflict between the "revolutionary" countries in the East and the West. Wealth and economic well-being, we have asserted, are the fruits of freedom, while we should have been the first to know that this kind of "happiness" was the blessing of this country prior to the Revolution, and that its cause was natural abundance under "mild government," and neither political freedom nor the unchained, unbridled "private initiative" of capitalism, which in the absence of natural wealth has led everywhere to unhappiness and mass poverty. Free enterprise, in other words, has been an unmixed blessing only in this country, and it is a minor blessing compared with the truly political freedoms, such as freedom of speech and thought, of assembly and association, even under the best conditions. Economic growth may one day turn out to be a curse rather than a good, and under no conditions can it either lead into

freedom or constitute a proof for its existence. A competition between America and Russia, therefore, with regard to production and standards of living, trips to the moon and scientific discoveries, may be very interesting in many respects; its outcome may even be understood as a demonstration of the stamina and gifts of the two nations involved, as well as of the value of their different social manners and customs. There is only one question this outcome, whatever it may be, will never be able to decide, and that is which form of government is better, a tyranny or a free republic. Hence, in terms of the American Revolution, the response to the Communist bid to equal and surpass the Western countries in production of consumer goods and economic growth should have been to rejoice over the new good prospects opening up to the people of the Soviet Union and its satellites, to be relieved that at least the conquest of poverty on a world-wide scale could constitute an issue of common concern, and then to remind our opponents that serious conflicts would not rise out of the disparity between two economic systems but only out of the conflict between freedom and tyranny, between the institutions of liberty, born out of the triumphant victory of a revolution, and the various forms of domination (from Lenin's one-party dictatorship to Stalin's totalitarianism to Khrushchev's attempts at an enlightened despotism) which came in the aftermath of a revolutionary defeat.

Finally, it is perfectly true, and a sad fact indeed, that most so-called revolutions, far from achieving the *constitutio libertatis*, have not even been able to produce constitutional guarantees of civil rights and liberties, the blessings of "limited government," and there is no question that in our dealings with other nations and their governments we shall have to keep in mind that the distance between tyranny and constitutional, limited government is as great as, perhaps greater than, the distance between limited government and freedom. But these considerations, however great their practical relevance, should be no reason for us to mistake civil rights for political freedom, or to equate these preliminaries of civilized government with the very substance of a free republic.

For political freedom, generally speaking, means the right "to be a participator in government," or it means nothing.

While the consequences of ignorance, oblivion, and failure to remember are conspicuous and of a simple, elementary nature, the same is not true for the historical processes which brought all this about. Only recently, it has been argued again, and in a rather forceful, and sometimes even plausible manner, that it belongs, in general, among the distinct features of an "American frame of mind" to be unconcerned with "philosophy" and that the Revolution, in particular, was the result not of "bookish" learning or the Age of Enlightenment, but of the "practical" experiences of the colonial period, which all by themselves gave birth to the republic. The thesis, ably and amply propounded by Daniel Boorstin, has its merits because it stresses adequately the great role the colonial experience came to play in the preparation of the Revolution and in the establishment of the republic, and yet it will hardly stand up under closer scrutiny.¹ A certain distrust of philosophic generalities in the Founding Fathers was, without doubt, part and parcel of their English heritage, but even a cursory acquaintance with their writings shows clearly that they were, if anything, more learned in the ways of "ancient and modern prudence" than their colleagues in the Old World, and more likely to consult books for guidance in action. Moreover, the books they consulted were exactly the same which at the time influenced the dominant trends of European thought, and while it is true that the actual experience of being a "participator in government" was relatively well known in America prior to the Revolution, when the European men of letters still had to search its meaning by way of building utopias or of "ransacking ancient history," it is no less true that the contents of what, in one instance, was an actuality and, in the other, a mere dream were singularly alike. There is no getting away from the politically all-important fact that at approximately the same historical moment the time-honored form of monarchical government was overthrown and republics were established on both sides of the Atlantic.

However, if it is indisputable that book-learning and thinking in concepts, indeed of a very high caliber, erected the framework of the American republic, it is no less true that this interest in political thought and theory dried up almost immediately after the task had been achieved.² As I indicated earlier, I think this loss of an allegedly purely theoretical interest in political issues has not been the "genius" of American history but, on the contrary, the chief reason the American Revolution has remained sterile in terms of world politics. By the same token, I am inclined to think that it was precisely the great amount of theoretical concern and conceptual thought lavished upon the French Revolution by Europe's thinkers and philosophers which contributed decisively to its world-wide success, despite its disastrous end. The American failure to remember can be traced back to this fateful failure of post-revolutionary thought.³ For if it is true that all thought begins with remembrance, it is also true that no remembrance remains secure unless it is condensed and distilled into a framework of conceptual notions within which it can further exercise itself. Experiences and even the stories which grow out of what men do and endure, of happenings and events, sink back into the futility inherent in the living word and the living deed unless they are talked about over and over again. What saves the affairs of mortal men from their inherent futility is nothing but this incessant talk about them, which in its turn remains futile unless certain concepts, certain guideposts for future remembrance, and even for sheer reference, arise out of it.⁴ At any rate, the result of the "American" aversion from conceptual thought has been that the interpretation of American history, ever since Tocqueville, succumbed to theories whose roots of experience lay elsewhere, until in our own century this country has shown a deplorable inclination to succumb to and to magnify almost every fad and humbug which the disintegration not of the West but of the European political and social fabric after the First World War has brought into intellectual prominence. The strange magnification and, sometimes, distortion of a host of pseudo-scientific nonsense—particularly in the social and psychological sciences—

may be due to the fact that these theories, once they had crossed the Atlantic, lost their basis of reality and with it all limitations through common sense. But the reason America has shown such ready receptivity to far-fetched ideas and grotesque notions may simply be that the human mind stands in need of concepts if it is to function at all; hence it will accept almost anything whenever its foremost task, the comprehensive understanding of reality and the coming to terms with it, is in danger of being compromised.

Obviously, what was lost through the failure of thought and remembrance was the revolutionary spirit. If we leave aside personal motives and practical goals and identify this spirit with the principles which, on both sides of the Atlantic, originally inspired the men of the revolutions, we must admit that the tradition of the French Revolution—and that is the only revolutionary tradition of any consequence—has not preserved them any better than the liberal, democratic and, in the main, outspokenly anti-revolutionary trends of political thought in America.⁵ We have mentioned these principles before and, following eighteenth-century political language, we have called them public freedom, public happiness, public spirit. What remained of them in this country, after the revolutionary spirit had been forgotten, were civil liberties, the individual welfare of the greatest number, and public opinion as the greatest force ruling an egalitarian, democratic society. This transformation corresponds with great precision to the invasion of the public realm by society; it is as though the originally political principles were translated into social values. But this transformation was not possible in those countries which were affected by the French Revolution. In its school, the revolutionists learned that the early inspiring principles had been overruled by the naked forces of want and need, and they finished their apprenticeship with the firm conviction that it was precisely the Revolution which had revealed these principles for what they actually were—a heap of rubbish. To denounce this "rubbish" as prejudices of the lower middle classes came to them all the easier as it was true indeed that society had monopolized these principles and perverted them into "values." Forever haunted

by the desperate urgency of the "social question," that is, by the specter of the vast masses of the poor whom every revolution was bound to liberate, they seized invariably, and perhaps inevitably, upon the most violent events in the French Revolution, hoping against hope that violence would conquer poverty. This, to be sure, was a counsel of despair; for had they admitted that the most obvious lesson to be learned from the French Revolution was that *la terreur* as a means to achieve *le bonheur* sent revolutions to their doom, they would also have had to admit that no revolution, no foundation of a new body politic, was possible where the masses were loaded down with misery.

The revolutionists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in sharp contrast to their predecessors in the eighteenth, were desperate men, and the cause of revolution, therefore, attracted more and more the desperadoes, namely, "an unhappy species of the population . . . who, during the calm of regular government, are sunk below the level of men; but who, in the tempestuous scenes of civil violence, may emerge into the human character, and give a superiority of strength to any party with which they may associate themselves."⁶ These words of Madison are true enough, except that we must add, if we are to apply them to the affairs of European revolutions, that this mixture of the unhappy and the worst received their chance to rise again "into the human character" from the despair of the best, who, after the disasters of the French Revolution, must have known that all the odds were against them, and who still could not abandon the cause of revolution—partly because they were driven by compassion and a deeply and constantly frustrated sense of justice, partly because they too knew that "it is action, not rest, which constitutes our pleasure." In this sense, Tocqueville's dictum, "In America men have the opinions and passions of democracy; in Europe we have still the passions and opinions of revolution,"⁷ has remained valid deep into our own century. But these passions and opinions have also failed to preserve the revolutionary spirit for the simple reason that they never represented it; on the contrary, it was precisely such passions and opinions, let loose in the French Revolu-

tion, which even then suffocated its original spirit, that is, the principles of public freedom, public happiness, and public spirit which originally inspired its actors.

Abstractly and superficially speaking, it seems easy enough to pin down the chief difficulty in arriving at a plausible definition of the revolutionary spirit without having to rely exclusively, as we did before, on a terminology which was coined prior to the revolutions. To the extent that the greatest event in every revolution is the act of foundation, the spirit of revolution contains two elements which to us seem irreconcilable and even contradictory. The act of founding the new body politic, of devising the new form of government involves the grave concern with the stability and durability of the new structure; the experience, on the other hand, which those who are engaged in this grave business are bound to have is the exhilarating awareness of the human capacity of beginning, the high spirits which have always attended the birth of something new on earth. Perhaps the very fact that these two elements, the concern with stability and the spirit of the new, have become opposites in political thought and terminology—the one being identified as conservatism and the other being claimed as the monopoly of progressive liberalism—must be recognized to be among the symptoms of our loss. Nothing, after all, compromises the understanding of political issues and their meaningful debate today more seriously than the automatic thought-reactions conditioned by the beaten paths of ideologies which all were born in the wake and aftermath of revolution. For it is by no means irrelevant that our political vocabulary either dates back to classical, Roman and Greek, antiquity, or can be traced unequivocally to the revolutions of the eighteenth century. In other words, to the extent that our political terminology is modern at all, it is revolutionary in origin. And the chief characteristic of this modern, revolutionary vocabulary seems to be that it always talks in pairs of opposites—the right and the left, reactionary and progressive, conservatism and liberalism, to mention a few at random. How ingrained this habit of thought has become with the rise of the revolutions may best be seen when

we watch the development of new meaning given to old terms, such as democracy and aristocracy; for the notion of democrats *versus* aristocrats did not exist prior to the revolutions. To be sure, these opposites have their origin, and ultimately their justification, in the revolutionary experience as a whole, but the point of the matter is that in the act of foundation they were not mutually exclusive opposites but two sides of the same event, and it was only after the revolutions had come to their end, in success or defeat, that they parted company, solidified into ideologies, and began to oppose each other.

Terminologically speaking, the effort to recapture the lost spirit of revolution must, to a certain extent, consist in the attempt at thinking together and combining meaningfully what our present vocabulary presents to us in terms of opposition and contradiction. For this purpose, it may be well to turn our attention once more to the public spirit which, as we saw, antedated the revolutions and bore its first theoretical fruition in James Harrington and Montesquieu rather than in Locke and Rousseau. While it is true that the revolutionary spirit was born in the revolutions and not before, we shall not search in vain for those great exercises in political thought, practically coeval with the modern age, through which men prepared themselves for an event whose true magnitude they hardly could foresee. And this spirit of the modern age, interestingly and significantly enough, was preoccupied, from the beginning, with the stability and durability of a purely secular, worldly realm—which means, among other things, that its political expression stood in flagrant contradiction to the scientific, philosophic, and even artistic utterances of the age, all of which were much more concerned with novelty as such than with anything else. In other words, the political spirit of modernity was born when men were no longer satisfied that empires would rise and fall in sempiternal change; it is as though men wished to establish a world which could be trusted to last forever, precisely because they knew how novel everything was that their age attempted to do.

Hence, the republican form of government recommended itself

to the pre-revolutionary political thinkers not because of its egalitarian character (the confusing and confused equation of republican with democratic government dates from the nineteenth century) but because of its promise of great durability. This also explains the surprisingly great respect the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries showed for Sparta and Venice, two republics which even to the limited historical knowledge of the time had not much more to recommend themselves than that they were thought to have been the most stable and lasting governments in recorded history. Hence, also, the curious predilection the men of the revolutions showed for "senates," a word they bestowed upon institutions which had nothing in common with the Roman or even the Venetian model but which they loved because it suggested to their minds an unequalled stability resting on authority.⁸ Even the well-known arguments of the Founding Fathers against democratic government hardly ever mention its egalitarian character; the objection to it was that ancient history and theory had proved the "turbulent" nature of democracy, its instability—democracies "have in general been as short in their lives as violent in their death"⁹—and the fickleness of its citizens, their lack of public spirit, their inclination to be swayed by public opinion and mass sentiments. Hence, "nothing but a permanent body can check the imprudence of democracy."¹⁰

Democracy, then, to the eighteenth century still a form of government, and neither an ideology nor an indication of class preference, was abhorred because public opinion was held to rule where the public spirit ought to prevail, and the sign of this perversion was the unanimity of the citizenry: for "when men exert their reason coolly and freely on a variety of distinct questions, they inevitably fall into different opinions on some of them. When they are governed by a common passion, their opinions, if they are so to be called, will be the same."¹¹ This text is remarkable in several respects. To be sure, its simplicity is somewhat deceptive in that it is due to an "enlightened," in fact rather mechanical, opposition of reason and passion which does not enlighten us very much on the great subject of the human capa-

bilities, although it has the great practical merit of bypassing the faculty of the will—the trickiest and the most dangerous of modern concepts and misconceptions.¹² But this does not concern us here; in our context it is of greater importance that these sentences hint at least at the decisive incompatibility between the rule of a unanimously held “public opinion” and freedom of opinion, for the truth of the matter is that no formation of opinion is even possible where all opinions have become the same. Since no one is capable of forming his own opinion without the benefit of a multitude of opinions held by others, the rule of public opinion endangers even the opinion of those few who may have the strength not to share it. This is one of the reasons for the curiously sterile negativism of all opinions which oppose a popularly acclaimed tyranny. It is not only, and perhaps not even primarily, because of the overwhelming power of the many that the voice of the few loses all strength and all plausibility under such circumstances; public opinion, by virtue of its unanimity, provokes a unanimous opposition and thus kills true opinions everywhere. This is the reason why the Founding Fathers tended to equate rule based on public opinion with tyranny; democracy in this sense was to them but a newfangled form of despotism. Hence, their abhorrence of democracy did not spring so much from the old fear of license or the possibility of factional strife as from their apprehension of the basic instability of a government devoid of public spirit and swayed by unanimous “passions.”

The institution originally designed to guard against rule by public opinion or democracy was the Senate. Unlike judicial control, currently understood to be “the unique contribution of America to the science of government,”¹³ the novelty and uniqueness of the American Senate has proved more difficult to identify—partly because it was not recognized that the ancient name was a misnomer (see p. 200), partly because an upper chamber was automatically equated with the House of Lords in the government of England. The political decline of the House of Lords in English government during the last century, the in-

evitable result of the growth of social equality, should be proof enough that such an institution could never have made sense in a country without a hereditary aristocracy, or in a republic which insisted on “absolute prohibition of titles of nobility.”¹⁴ And it was indeed no imitation of English government but their very original insights into the role of opinion in government which inspired the founders to add to the lower house, in which the “multiplicity of interests” was represented, an upper chamber, entirely devoted to the representation of opinion on which ultimately “all governments rest.”¹⁵ Both multiplicity of interests and diversity of opinions were accounted among the characteristics of “free government”; their public representation constituted a republic as distinguished from a democracy, where “a small number of citizens . . . assemble and administer the government in person.” But representative government, according to the men of the revolution, was much more than a technical device for government among large populations; limitation to a small and chosen body of citizens was to serve as the great purifier of both interest and opinion, to guard “against the confusion of a multitude.”

Interest and opinion are entirely different political phenomena. Politically, interests are relevant only as group interests, and for the purification of such group interests it seems to suffice that they are represented in such a way that their partial character is safeguarded under all conditions, even under the condition that the interest of one group happens to be the interest of the majority. Opinions, on the contrary, never belong to groups but exclusively to individuals, who “exert their reason coolly and freely,” and no multitude, be it the multitude of a part or of the whole of society, will ever be capable of forming an opinion. Opinions will rise wherever men communicate freely with one another and have the right to make their views public; but these views in their endless variety seem to stand also in need of purification and representation, and it was originally the particular function of the Senate to be the “medium” through which all public views must pass.¹⁶ Even though opinions are formed by individuals and must

remain, as it were, their property, no single individual—neither the wise man of the philosophers nor the divinely informed reason, common to all men, of the Enlightenment—can ever be equal to the task of sifting opinions, of passing them through the sieve of an intelligence which will separate the arbitrary and the merely idiosyncratic, and thus purify them into public views. For “the reason of man, like man himself, is timid and cautious when left alone, and acquires firmness and confidence in proportion to the number with which it is associated.”¹⁷ Since opinions are formed and tested in a process of exchange of opinion against opinion, their differences can be mediated only by passing them through the medium of a body of men, chosen for this purpose; these men, taken by themselves, are not wise, and yet their common purpose is wisdom—wisdom under the conditions of the fallibility and frailty of the human mind.

Historically speaking, opinion—its relevance for the political realm in general and its role in government in particular—was discovered in the very event and course of revolution. This, of course, is not surprising. That all authority in the last analysis rests on opinion is never more forcefully demonstrated than when, suddenly and unexpectedly, a universal refusal to obey initiates what then turns into a revolution. To be sure, this moment—perhaps the most dramatic moment in history—opens the doors wide to demagogues of all sorts and colors, but to what else does even revolutionary demagoguery testify if not to the necessity of all regimes, old and new, “to rest on opinion”? Unlike human reason, human power is not only “timid and cautious when left alone,” it is simply non-existent unless it can rely on others; the most powerful king and the least scrupulous of all tyrants are helpless if no one obeys them, that is, supports them through obedience; for, in politics, obedience and support are the same. Opinion was discovered by both the French and the American Revolutions, but only the latter—and this shows once more the high rank of its political creativity—knew how to build a lasting institution for the formation of public views into the very structure of the republic. What the alternative was, we know only

too well from the course of the French Revolution and of those that followed it. In all these instances, the chaos of unrepresented and unpurified opinions, because there existed no medium to pass them through, crystallized into a variety of conflicting mass sentiments under the pressure of emergency, waiting for a “strong man” to mold them into a unanimous “public opinion,” which spelled death to all opinions. In actual fact, the alternative was the plebiscite, the only institution which corresponds closely to the unbridled rule of public opinion; and just as public opinion is the death of opinions, the plebiscite puts an end to the citizens’ right to vote, to choose and to control their government.

In novelty and uniqueness, the institution of the Senate equals the discovery of judicial control as represented in the institution of Supreme Courts. Theoretically, it only remains to note that in these two acquisitions of revolution—a lasting institution for opinion and a lasting institution for judgment—the Founding Fathers transcended their own conceptual framework, which, of course, antedated the Revolution; they thus responded to the enlarged horizon of experiences which the event itself had opened up to them. For the three pivotal concepts on which the century’s pre-revolutionary thought had turned, and which theoretically still dominated the revolutionary debates, were power, passion, and reason: the power of government was supposed to control the passion of social interests and to be controlled, in its turn, by individual reason. In this scheme, opinion and judgment obviously belong among the faculties of reason, but the point of the matter is that these two, politically most important, rational faculties had been almost entirely neglected by the tradition of political as well as philosophic thought. Obviously it was no theoretical or philosophical interest that made the men of the Revolution aware of the importance of these faculties; they might have remembered dimly the severe blows which first Parmenides and then Plato had dealt to the reputation of opinion, which, ever since, has been understood as the opposite of truth, but they certainly did not try consciously to reassert the rank and dignity of opinion in the hierarchy of human rational abilities. The same

is true with respect to judgment, where we would have to turn to Kant's philosophy, rather than to the men of the revolutions, if we wished to learn something about its essential character and amazing range in the realm of human affairs. What enabled the Founding Fathers to transcend the narrow and tradition-bound framework of their general concepts was the urgent desire to assure stability to their new creation, and to stabilize every factor of political life into a "lasting institution."

Nothing perhaps indicates more clearly that the revolutions brought to light the new, secular and worldly yearnings of the modern age than this all-pervasive preoccupation with permanence, with a "perpetual state" which, as the colonists never tired of repeating, should be secure for their "posterity." It would be quite erroneous to mistake these claims for the later bourgeois desire to provide for the future of one's children and grandchildren. What lay behind them was the deeply felt desire for an Eternal City on earth, plus the conviction that "a Commonwealth rightly ordered, may for any internal causes be as immortal or long-lived as the World."¹⁸ And this conviction was so un-Christian, so basically alien to the religious spirit of the whole period which separates the end of antiquity from the modern age, that we must go back to Cicero to find anything similar in emphasis and outlook. For the Paulinian notion that "the wages of sin is death" echoed only for the individual what Cicero had stated as a law ruling communities—*Civitatibus autem mors ipsa poena est, quae videtur a poena singulos vindicare; debet enim constituta sic esse civitas ut aeterna sit.*¹⁹ ("Since a political body must be so constituted that it might be eternal, death is for communities the punishment [of their wrongdoing], the same death which seems to nullify punishment for individuals.") Politically, the outstanding characteristic of the Christian era had been that this ancient view of world and man—of mortal men moving in an everlasting or potentially everlasting world—was reversed: men in possession of an everlasting life moved in an ever-changing world whose ultimate fate was death; and the out-

standing characteristic of the modern age was that it turned once more to antiquity to find a precedent for its own new preoccupation with the future of the man-made world on earth. Obviously the secularity of the world and the worldliness of men in any given age can best be measured by the extent to which preoccupation with the future of the world takes precedence in men's minds over preoccupation with their own ultimate destiny in a hereafter. Hence, it was a sign of the new age's secularity when even very religious people desired not only a government which would leave them free to work out their individual salvation but wished "to establish a government . . . more agreeable to the dignity of human nature, . . . and to transmit such a government down to their posterity with the means of securing and preserving it forever."²⁰ This, at any rate, was the deepest motive which John Adams ascribed to the Puritans, and the extent to which he might have been right is the extent to which even the Puritans were no longer mere pilgrims on earth but "Pilgrim Fathers"—founders of colonies with their stakes and claims not in the hereafter but in this world of mortal men.

What was true for modern, pre-revolutionary political thought and for the founders of the colonies became even truer for the revolutions and the Founding Fathers. It was the modern "preoccupation with the perpetual state," so evident in Harrington's writings,²¹ which caused Adams to call "divine" the new political science which dealt with "institutions that last for many generations," and it was in Robespierre's "Death is the beginning of immortality" that the specifically modern emphasis on politics, evidenced in the revolutions, found its briefest and most grandiose definition. On a less exalted but certainly not less significant level, we find preoccupation with permanence and stability running like a red thread through the constitutional debates, with Hamilton and Jefferson standing at two opposite poles which still belong together—Hamilton holding that constitutions "must necessarily be permanent and [that] they cannot calculate for the possible change of things,"²² and Jefferson, though no less concerned with the "solid basis for a free, durable and well-administered re-

public," firmly convinced that "nothing is unchangeable but the inherent and unalienable rights of man" because they are not the work of man but of his Creator.²³ Thus, the whole discussion of the distribution and balance of power, the central issue of the constitutional debates, was still partly conducted in terms of the age-old notion of a mixed form of government which, combining the monarchic, the aristocratic, and the democratic elements in the same body politic, would be capable of arresting the cycle of sempiternal change, the rise and fall of empires, and establish an immortal city.

Popular and learned opinion are agreed that the two absolutely new institutional devices of the American republic, the Senate and the Supreme Court, represent the most "conservative" factors in the body politic, and no doubt they are right. The question is only whether that which made for stability and answered so well the early modern preoccupation with permanence was enough to preserve the spirit which had become manifest during the Revolution itself. Obviously this was not the case.

II

The failure of post-revolutionary thought to remember the revolutionary spirit and to understand it conceptually was preceded by the failure of the revolution to provide it with a lasting institution. The revolution, unless it ended in the disaster of terror, had come to an end with the establishment of a republic which, according to the men of the revolutions, was "the only form of government which is not eternally at open or secret war with the rights of mankind."²⁴ But in this republic, as it presently turned out, there was no space reserved, no room left for the exercise of precisely those qualities which had been instrumental in building it. And this was clearly no mere oversight, as though those who knew so well how to provide for power of the commonwealth and the liberties of its citizens, for judgment and opinion, for interests and rights, had simply forgotten what

actually they cherished above everything else, the potentialities of action and the proud privilege of being beginners of something altogether new. Certainly, they did not want to deny this privilege to their successors, but they also could not very well wish to deny their own work, although Jefferson, more concerned with this perplexity than anybody else, almost went to this extremity. The perplexity was very simple and, stated in logical terms, it seemed unsolvable: if foundation was the aim and the end of revolution, then the revolutionary spirit was not merely the spirit of beginning something new but of starting something permanent and enduring; a lasting institution, embodying this spirit and encouraging it to new achievements, would be self-defeating. From which it unfortunately seems to follow that nothing threatens the very achievements of revolution more dangerously and more acutely than the spirit which has brought them about. Should freedom, in its most exalted sense as freedom to act, be the price to be paid for foundation? This perplexity, namely, that the principle of public freedom and public happiness without which no revolution would ever have come to pass should remain the privilege of the generation of the founders, has not only produced Robespierre's bewildered and desperate theories about the distinction between revolutionary and constitutional government which we mentioned earlier, but has haunted all revolutionary thinking ever since.

On the American scene, no one has perceived this seemingly inevitable flaw in the structure of the republic with greater clarity and more passionate preoccupation than Jefferson. His occasional, and sometimes violent, antagonism against the Constitution and particularly against those who "look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem them like the ark of the covenant, too sacred to be touched,"²⁵ was motivated by a feeling of outrage about the injustice that only his generation should have it in their power "to begin the world over again"; for him, as for Paine, it was plain "vanity and presumption [to govern] beyond the grave," it was, moreover, the "most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies."²⁶ When he said, "We have not yet so

far perfected our constitutions as to venture to make them unchangeable," he added at once, clearly in fear of such possible perfection, "Can they be made unchangeable? I think not"; for, in conclusion: "Nothing is unchangeable but the inherent and unalienable rights of man," among which he counted the rights to rebellion and revolution.²⁷ When the news of Shay's rebellion in Massachusetts reached him while he was in Paris, he was not in the least alarmed, although he conceded that its motives were "founded in ignorance," but greeted it with enthusiasm: "God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion." The very fact that the people had taken it upon themselves to rise and act was enough for him, regardless of the rights or wrongs of their case. For "the tree of liberty must be refreshed, from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure."²⁸

These last sentences, written two years before the outbreak of the French Revolution and in this form without parallel in Jefferson's later writings,²⁹ may give us a clue to the fallacy which was bound to becloud the whole issue of action in the thinking of the men of the revolutions. It was in the nature of their experiences to see the phenomenon of action exclusively in the image of tearing down and building up. Although they had known public freedom and public happiness, in dream or in reality, prior to the revolution, the impact of revolutionary experience had overruled all notions of a freedom which was not preceded by liberation, which did not derive its pathos from the act of liberation. By the same token, to the extent that they had a positive notion of freedom which would transcend the idea of a successful liberation from tyrants and from necessity, this notion was identified with the act of foundation, that is, the framing of a constitution. Jefferson, therefore, when he had learned his lesson from the catastrophes of the French Revolution, where the violence of liberation had frustrated all attempts at founding a secure space for freedom, shifted from his earlier identification of action with rebellion and tearing down to an identification with founding anew and building up. He thus pro-

posed to provide in the Constitution itself "for its revision at stated periods" which would roughly correspond to the periods of the coming and going of generations. His justification, that each new generation has "a right to choose for itself the form of government it believes most promotive of its own happiness," sounds too fantastic (especially if one considers the then prevailing tables of mortality, according to which there was "a new majority" every nineteen years) to be taken seriously; it is, moreover, rather unlikely that Jefferson, of all people, should have granted the coming generations the right to establish non-republican forms of government. What was uppermost in his mind was no real change of form of government, not even a constitutional provision to hand on the Constitution "with periodical repairs, from generation to generation, to the end of time"; it was rather the somewhat awkward attempt at securing for each generation the "right to depute representatives to a convention," to find ways and means for the opinions of the whole people to be "fairly, fully, and peaceably expressed, discussed, and decided by the common reason of the society."³⁰ In other words, what he wished to provide for was an exact repetition of the whole process of action which had accompanied the course of the Revolution, and while in his earlier writings he saw this action primarily in terms of liberation, in terms of the violence that had preceded and followed the Declaration of Independence, he later was much more concerned with the constitution-making and the establishment of a new government, that is, with those activities which by themselves constituted the space of freedom.

No doubt only great perplexity and real calamity can explain that Jefferson—so conscious of his common sense and so famous for his practical turn of mind—should have proposed these schemes of recurring revolutions. Even in their least extreme form, recommended as the remedy against "the endless circle of oppression, rebellion, reformation," they would either have thrown the whole body politic out of gear periodically or, more likely, have debased the act of foundation to a mere routine performance, in which case even the memory of what he most

ardently wished to save—"to the end of time, if anything human can so long endure"—would have been lost. But the reason Jefferson, throughout his long life, was carried away by such impracticabilities was that he knew, however dimly, that the Revolution, while it had given freedom to the people, had failed to provide a space where this freedom could be exercised. Only the representatives of the people, not the people themselves, had an opportunity to engage in those activities of "expressing, discussing and deciding" which in a positive sense are the activities of freedom. And since the state and federal governments, the proudest results of revolution, through sheer weight of their proper business were bound to overshadow in political importance the townships and their meeting halls—until what Emerson still considered to be "the unit of the Republic" and "the school of the people" in political matters had withered away³¹—one might even come to the conclusion that there was less opportunity for the exercise of public freedom and the enjoyment of public happiness in the republic of the United States than there had existed in the colonies of British America. Lewis Mumford recently pointed out how the political importance of the township was never grasped by the founders, and that the failure to incorporate it into either the federal or the state constitutions was "one of the tragic oversights of post-revolutionary political development." Only Jefferson among the founders had a clear premonition of this tragedy, for his greatest fear was indeed lest "the abstract political system of democracy lacked concrete organs."³²

The failure of the founders to incorporate the township and the town-hall meeting into the Constitution, or rather their failure to find ways and means to transform them under radically changed circumstances, was understandable enough. Their chief attention was directed toward the most troublesome of all their immediate problems, the question of representation, and this to such an extent that they came to define republics, as distinguished from democracies, in terms of representative government. Obviously direct democracy would not do, if only because "the room will not hold all" (as John Selden, more than a hundred

years earlier, had described the chief cause for the birth of Parliament). These were indeed the terms in which the principle of representation was still discussed at Philadelphia; representation was meant to be a mere substitute for direct political action through the people themselves, and the representatives they elected were supposed to act according to instructions received by their electors, and not to transact business in accordance with their own opinions as they might be formed in the process.³³ However, the founders, as distinguished from the elected representatives in colonial times, must have been the first to know how far removed this theory was from reality. "With regard to the sentiments of the people," James Wilson, at the time of the convention, "conceived it difficult to know precisely what they are," and Madison knew very well that "no member of the convention could say what the opinions of his constituents were at this time; much less could he say what they would think if possessed of the information and lights possessed by the members here."³⁴ Hence, they could hear with approval, though perhaps not entirely without misgivings, when Benjamin Rush proposed the new and dangerous doctrine that although "all power is derived from the people, they possess it only on the days of their elections. After this it is the property of their rulers."³⁵

These few quotations may show as in a nutshell that the whole question of representation, one of the crucial and most troublesome issues of modern politics ever since the revolutions, actually implies no less than a decision on the very dignity of the political realm itself. The traditional alternative between representation as a mere substitute for direct action of the people and representation as a popularly controlled rule of the people's representatives over the people constitutes one of those dilemmas which permit of no solution. If the elected representatives are so bound by instructions that they gather together only to discharge the will of their masters, they may still have a choice of regarding themselves as either glorified messenger boys or hired experts who, like lawyers, are specialists in representing the interests of their clients. But in both instances the assumption is, of course,

that the electorate's business is more urgent and more important than theirs; they are the paid agents of people who, for whatever reasons, are not able, or do not wish, to attend to public business. If, on the contrary, the representatives are understood to become for a limited time the appointed rulers of those who elected them—without rotation in office, there is of course no representative government strictly speaking—representation means that the voters surrender their own power, albeit voluntarily, and that the old adage, "All power resides in the people," is true only for the day of election. In the first instance, government has degenerated into mere administration, the public realm has vanished; there is no space either for seeing and being seen in action, John Adams' *spectemur agendo*, or for discussion and decision, Jefferson's pride of being "a participator in government"; political matters are those that are dictated by necessity to be decided by experts, but not open to opinions and genuine choice; hence, there is no need for Madison's "medium of a chosen body of citizens" through which opinions must pass and be purified into public views. In the second instance, somewhat closer to realities, the age-old distinction between ruler and ruled which the Revolution had set out to abolish through the establishment of a republic has asserted itself again; once more, the people are not admitted to the public realm, once more the business of government has become the privilege of the few, who alone may "exercise [their] virtuous dispositions" (as Jefferson still called men's political talents). The result is that the people must either sink into "lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty" or "preserve the spirit of resistance" to whatever government they have elected, since the only power they retain is "the reserve power of revolution."³⁶

For these evils there was no remedy, since rotation in office, so highly valued by the founders and so carefully elaborated by them, could hardly do more than prevent the governing few from constituting themselves as a separate group with vested interests of their own. Rotation could never provide everybody, or even a sizable portion of the population, with the chance to

become temporarily "a participator in government." Had this evil been restricted to the people at large, it would have been bad enough in view of the fact that the whole issue of republican versus kingly or aristocratic government turned about rights of equal admission to the public, political realm; and yet, one suspects, the founders should have found it easy enough to console themselves with the thought that the Revolution had opened the political realm at least to those whose inclination for "virtuous disposition" was strong, whose passion for distinction was ardent enough to embark upon the extraordinary hazards of a political career. Jefferson, however, refused to be consoled. He feared an "elective despotism" as bad as, or worse than, the tyranny they had risen against: "If once [our people] become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress and Assemblies, Judges and Governors, shall all become wolves."³⁷ And while it is true that historical developments in the United States have hardly borne out this fear, it is also true that this is almost exclusively due to the founders' "political science" in establishing a government in which the divisions of powers have constituted through checks and balances their own control. What eventually saved the United States from the dangers which Jefferson feared was the machinery of government; but this machinery could not save the people from lethargy and inattention to public business, since the Constitution itself provided a public space only for the representatives of the people, and not for the people themselves.

It may seem strange that only Jefferson among the men of the American Revolution ever asked himself the obvious question of how to preserve the revolutionary spirit once the revolution had come to an end, but the explanation for this lack of awareness does not lie in that they themselves were no revolutionaries. On the contrary, the trouble was that they took this spirit for granted, because it was a spirit which had been formed and nourished throughout the colonial period. Since, moreover, the people remained in undisturbed possession of those institutions which had been the breeding grounds of the revolution, they could hardly become aware of the fateful failure of the Constitution to incor-

porate and duly constitute, found anew, the original sources of their power and public happiness. It was precisely because of the enormous weight of the Constitution and of the experiences in founding a new body politic, that the failure to incorporate the townships and the town-hall meetings, the original springs of all political activity in the country, amounted to a death sentence for them. Paradoxical as it may sound, it was in fact under the impact of the Revolution that the revolutionary spirit in this country began to wither away, and it was the Constitution itself, this greatest achievement of the American people, which eventually cheated them of their proudest possession.

In order to arrive at a more precise understanding of these matters, and also to gauge correctly the extraordinary wisdom of Jefferson's forgotten proposals, we must turn our attention once more to the course of the French Revolution, where the exact opposite took place. What for the American people had been a pre-revolutionary experience and hence seemed not to stand in need of formal recognition and foundation, was in France the unexpected and largely spontaneous outcome of the Revolution itself. The famous forty-eight sections of the Parisian Commune had their origin in the lack of duly constituted popular bodies to elect representatives and to send delegates to the National Assembly. These sections, however, constituted themselves immediately as self-governing bodies, and they elected from their midst no delegates to the National Assembly, but formed the revolutionary municipal council, the Commune of Paris, which was to play such a decisive role in the course of the Revolution. Moreover, side by side with these municipal bodies, and without being influenced by them, we find a great number of spontaneously formed clubs and societies—the *sociétés populaires*—whose origin cannot be traced at all to the task of representation, of sending duly accredited delegates to the National Assembly, but whose sole aims were, in the words of Robespierre, “to instruct, to enlighten their fellow citizens on the true principles of the constitution, and to spread a light without which the constitution will not be able to survive”; for the survival of the

constitution depended upon “the public spirit,” which, in its turn, existed only in “assemblies where the citizens [could] occupy themselves in common with these [public] matters, with the dearest interests of their fatherland.” To Robespierre, speaking in September 1791 before the National Assembly, to prevent the delegates from curtailing the political power of clubs and societies, this public spirit was identical with the revolutionary spirit. For the assumption of the Assembly then was that the Revolution had come to its end, that the societies which the Revolution had brought forward were no longer needed, that “it was time to break the instrument which had served so well.” Not that Robespierre denied this assumption, although he added he did not quite understand what the Assembly wanted to affirm with it: for if they assumed, as he himself did, that the end of revolution was “the conquest and the conservation of freedom,” then, he insisted, the clubs and societies were the only places in the country where this freedom could actually show itself and be exercised by the citizens. Hence, they were the true “pillars of the constitution,” not merely because from their midst had come “a very great number of men who once will replace us,” but also because they constituted the very “foundations of freedom”; whoever interfered with their meeting was guilty of “attacking freedom,” and among the crimes against the Revolution, “the greatest was the persecution of the societies.”⁸⁸ However, no sooner had Robespierre risen to power and become the political head of the new revolutionary government—which happened in the summer of 1793, a matter of weeks, not even of months, after he had uttered some of the comments which I have just quoted—than he reversed his position completely. Now it was he who fought relentlessly against what he chose to name “the so-called popular societies” and invoked against them “the great popular Society of the whole French people,” one and indivisible. The latter, alas, in contrast to the small popular societies of artisans or neighbors, could never be assembled in one place, since no “room would hold all”; it could exist only in the form of representation, in a Chamber of Deputies who assumedly held in their

hands the centralized, indivisible power of the French nation.³⁹ The only exception he now was ready to make was in favor of the Jacobins, and this not merely because their club belonged to his own party but, even more importantly, because it never had been a "popular" club or society; it had developed in 1789 out of the original meeting of the States-General, and it had been a club for deputies ever since.

That this conflict between government and the people, between those who were in power and those who had helped them into it, between the representatives and the represented, turned into the old conflict between rulers and ruled and was essentially a struggle for power is true and obvious enough to stand in no need of further demonstration. Robespierre himself, before he became head of government, used to denounce "the conspiracy of the deputies of the people against the people" and the "independence of its representatives" from those they represented, which he equated with oppression.⁴⁰ Such accusations, to be sure, came rather naturally to Rousseau's disciples, who did not believe in representation to begin with—"a people that is represented is not free, because the will cannot be represented";⁴¹ but since Rousseau's teachings demanded the *union sacrée*, the elimination of all differences and distinctions, including the difference between people and government, the argument, theoretically, could as well be used the other way round. And when Robespierre had reversed himself and had turned against the societies, he could have appealed again to Rousseau and could have said with Couthon that so long as the societies existed "there could be no unified opinion."⁴² Actually Robespierre needed no great theories but only a realistic evaluation of the course of the Revolution to come to the conclusion that the Assembly hardly had any share in its more important events and transactions, and that the revolutionary government had been under the pressure of the Parisian sections and societies to an extent which no government and no form of government could withstand. One glance at the numerous petitions and addresses of these years (which now have been published for the first time)⁴³ is indeed

enough to realize the predicament of the men of the revolutionary government. They were told to remember that "only the poor had helped them," and that the poor now wished "to begin to earn the fruits" of their labors; that it was "always the fault of the legislator" if the poor man's "flesh showed the color of want and misery" and his soul "walked without energy and without virtue"; that it was time to demonstrate to the people how the constitution "would make them actually happy, for it is not enough to tell them that their happiness approaches." In short, the people, organized outside the National Assembly in its own political societies, informed its representatives that "the republic must assure each individual the means of subsistence," that the primary task of the lawgivers was to legislate misery out of existence.

There is, however, another side to this matter, and Robespierre had not been wrong when he had greeted in the societies the first manifestations of freedom and public spirit. Side by side with these violent demands for a "happiness" which is indeed a prerequisite of freedom but which, unfortunately, no political action can deliver, we find an altogether different spirit and altogether different definitions of the societies' tasks. In the by-laws of one of the Parisian sections we hear, for instance, how the people organized themselves into a society—with president and vice-president, four secretaries, eight censors, a treasurer, and an archivist; with regular meetings, three in every ten days; with rotation in office, once a month for the president; how they defined its main task: "The society will deal with everything that concerns freedom, equality, unity, indivisibility of the republic; [its members] will mutually enlighten themselves and they will especially inform themselves on the respect due to the laws and decrees which are promulgated"; how they intended to keep order in their discussion: if a speaker digresses or gets tiresome, the audience will stand up. From another section we hear of a speech "on the development of the republican principles which ought to animate the popular societies," delivered by one of the citizens and printed by order of the members. There were societies which adopted among their by-laws an explicit prohibition "ever to in-

trude upon or to try to influence the General Assembly," and these, obviously, regarded it as their main, if not their sole task to discuss all matters pertaining to public affairs, to talk about them and to exchange opinions without necessarily arriving at propositions, petitions, addresses, and the like. It seems to be no accident that it is precisely from one of these societies which had forsworn direct pressure upon the Assembly that we hear the most eloquent and the most moving praise of the institution as such: "Citizens, the word 'popular society' has become a sublime word. . . . If the right to gather together in a society could be abolished or even altered, freedom would be but a vain name, equality would be but a chimera, and the republic would have lost its most solid stronghold. . . . The immortal Constitution which we have just accepted . . . grants all Frenchmen the right to assemble in popular societies."⁴⁴

Saint-Just—writing at about the same time that Robespierre still defended the rights of the societies against the Assembly—had in mind these new promising organs of the republic, rather than the pressure groups of the Sans-Culottes, when he stated: "The districts of Paris constituted a democracy which would have changed everything if, instead of becoming the prey of factions, they would have conducted themselves according to their own proper spirit. The district of the Cordeliers, which had become the most independent one, was also the most persecuted one"—since it was in opposition to and contradicted the projects of those who happened to be in power.⁴⁵ But Saint-Just, no less than Robespierre, once he had come into power, reversed himself and turned against the societies. In accordance with the policy of the Jacobin government which successfully transformed the sections into organs of government and into instruments of terror, he asked in a letter to the popular society of Strasbourg to give him "their opinion on the patriotism and the republican virtues of each of the members in the administration" of their province. Left without answer, he proceeded to arrest the whole administrative corps, whereupon he received a vigorous letter of protest from the not yet defunct popular society. In his answer he

gave the stereotyped explanation that he had dealt with a "conspiracy"; obviously he had no use any longer for popular societies unless they spied for the government.⁴⁶ And the immediate consequence of this turning about was, naturally enough, that he now insisted: "The freedom of the people is in its private life; don't disturb it. Let the government be a force only in order to protect this state of simplicity against force itself."⁴⁷ These words indeed spell out the death sentence for all organs of the people, and they express in rare unequivocality the end of all hopes for the Revolution.

No doubt the Parisian Commune, its sections, and the popular societies which had spread all over France during the Revolution, constituted the mighty pressure groups of the poor, the "diamond point" of urgent necessity "that nothing could withstand" (Lord Acton); but they also contained the germs, the first feeble beginnings, of a new type of political organization, of a system which would permit the people to become Jefferson's "participators in government." Because of these two aspects, and even though the former by far outweighed the latter, the conflict between the communal movement and the revolutionary government is open to a twofold interpretation. It is, on one hand, the conflict between the street and the body politic, between those who "acted for the elevation of no one but for the abasement of all,"⁴⁸ and those whom the waves of the revolution had elevated so high in hope and aspiration that they could exclaim with Saint-Just, "The world has been empty since the Romans, their memory is now our only prophecy of freedom," or could state with Robespierre, "Death is the beginning of immortality." It is, on the other hand, the conflict between the people and a mercilessly centralized power apparatus which, under the pretense of representing the sovereignty of the nation, actually deprived the people of their power and hence had to persecute all those spontaneous feeble power organs which the revolution had brought into existence.

In our context, it is primarily the latter aspect of the conflict which must interest us, and it is therefore of no small importance

to note that the societies, in distinction from the clubs, and especially from the Jacobin club, were on principle non-partisan, and that they "openly aimed at the establishment of a new federalism." 49 Robespierre and the Jacobin government, because they hated the very notion of a separation and division of powers, had to emasculate the societies as well as the sections of the Commune; under the condition of centralization of power, the societies, each a small power structure of its own, and the self-government of the Communes were clearly a danger for the centralized state power.

Schematically speaking, the conflict between the Jacobin government and the revolutionary societies was fought over three different issues: the first issue was the fight of the republic for its survival against the pressure of Sans-Culottism, that is, the fight for public freedom against the overwhelming odds of private misery. The second issue was the fight of the Jacobin faction for absolute power against the public spirit of the societies; theoretically, this was the fight for a unified public opinion, a "general will," against the public spirit, the diversity inherent in freedom of thought and speech; practically, it was the power struggle of party and party interest against *la chose publique*, the common weal. The third issue was the fight of the government's monopoly of power against the federal principle with its separation and division of power, that is, the fight of the nation-state against the first beginnings of a true republic. The clash on all three issues revealed a profound rift between the men who had made the Revolution and had risen to the public realm through it, and the people's own notions of what a revolution should and could do. To be sure, foremost among the revolutionary notions of the people themselves was happiness, that *bonheur* of which Saint-Just rightly said that it was a new word in Europe; and it must be admitted that, in this respect, the people defeated very rapidly the older, pre-revolutionary motives of their leaders, which they neither understood nor shared. We have seen before how "of all ideas and sentiments which prepared the Revolution, the notion and the taste of public liberty, strictly speaking, have been the

first ones to disappear" (Tocqueville), because they could not withstand the onslaught of wretchedness which the Revolution brought into the open and, psychologically speaking, died away under the impact of compassion with human misery. However, while the Revolution taught the men in prominence a lesson in happiness, it apparently taught the people a first lesson in "the notion and taste of public liberty." An enormous appetite for debate, for instruction, for mutual enlightenment and exchange of opinion, even if all these were to remain without immediate consequence on those in power, developed in the sections and societies; and when, by fiat from above, the people in the sections were made only to listen to party speeches and to obey, they simply ceased to show up. Finally and unexpectedly enough, the federal principle—practically unknown in Europe and, if known, nearly unanimously rejected—came to the fore only in the spontaneous organizational efforts of the people themselves, who discovered it without even knowing its proper name. For if it is true that the Parisian sections had originally been formed from above for purposes of election for the Assembly, it is also true that these electors' assemblies changed, of their own accord, into municipal bodies which from their own midst constituted the great municipal council of the Parisian Commune. It was this communal council system, and not the electors' assemblies, which spread in the form of revolutionary societies all over France.

Only a few words need to be said about the sad end of these first organs of a republic which never came into being. They were crushed by the central and centralized government, not because they actually menaced it but because they were indeed, by virtue of their existence, competitors for public power. No one in France was likely to forget Mirabeau's words that "ten men acting together can make a hundred thousand tremble apart." The methods employed for their liquidation were so simple and ingenious that hardly anything altogether new was discovered in the many revolutions which were to follow the French Revolution's great example. Interestingly enough, of all

points of conflict between the societies and the government, the decisive one eventually proved to be the nonpartisan character of the societies. The parties, or rather the factions, which played such a disastrous role in the French Revolution and then became the roots of the whole continental party system, had their origin in the Assembly, and the ambitions and fanaticism that developed between them—even more than the pre-revolutionary motives of the men of the revolution—were things which the people at large neither understood nor shared. However, since there existed no area of agreement between the parliamentary factions, it became a matter of life and death for each of them to dominate all others, and the only way to do this was to organize the masses outside of parliament and to terrorize the Assembly with this pressure from without its own ranks. Hence, the way to dominate the Assembly was to infiltrate and eventually to take over the popular societies, to declare that only one parliamentary faction, the Jacobins, was truly revolutionary, that only societies affiliated with them were trustworthy, and that all other popular societies were “bastard societies.” We can see here how, at the very beginning of the party system, the one-party dictatorship developed out of a multi-party system. For Robespierre’s rule of terror was indeed nothing else but the attempt to organize the whole French people into a single gigantic party machinery—“the great popular Society is the French people”—through which the Jacobin club would spread a net of party cells all over France; and their tasks were no longer discussion and exchange of opinions, mutual instruction and information on public business, but to spy upon one another and to denounce members and non-members alike.⁵⁰

These things have become very familiar through the course of the Russian Revolution, where the Bolshevik party emasculated and perverted the revolutionary *soviet* system with exactly the same methods. However, this sad familiarity should not prevent us from recognizing that we are confronted even in the midst of the French Revolution with the conflict between the modern party system and the new revolutionary organs of self-govern-

ment. These two systems, so utterly unlike and even contradictory to each other, were born at the same moment. The spectacular success of the party system and the no less spectacular failure of the council system were both due to the rise of the nation-state, which elevated the one and crushed the other, whereby the leftist and revolutionary parties have shown themselves to be no less hostile to the council system than the conservative or reactionary right. We have become so used to thinking of domestic politics in terms of party politics that we are inclined to forget that the conflict between the two systems has actually always been a conflict between parliament, the source and seat of power of the party system, and the people, who have surrendered their power to their representatives; for no matter how successfully a party may ally itself, once it has decided to seize power and establish a one-party dictatorship with the masses in the street and turn against the parliamentary system, it can never deny that its own origin lies in the factional strife of parliament, and that it therefore remains a body whose approach to the people is from without and from above.

When Robespierre established the tyrannical force of the Jacobin faction against the non-violent power of the popular societies, he also asserted and re-established the power of the French Assembly with all its inner discord and factional strife. The seat of power, whether he knew it or not, was again in the Assembly and not, despite all revolutionary oratory, in the people. Hence, he broke the most pronounced political ambition of the people as it had appeared in the societies, the ambition to equality, the claim to be able to sign all addresses and petitions directed to delegates or to the Assembly as a whole with the proud words “Your Equal.” And while the Jacobin Terror may have been conscious and overconscious of social fraternity, it certainly abolished this equality—with the result that when it was their turn to lose in the incessant factional strife in the National Assembly, the people remained indifferent and the sections of Paris did not come to their aid. Brotherhood, it turned out, was no substitute for equality.

III

"As Cato concluded every speech with the words, *Carthago delenda est*, so do I every opinion, with the injunction, 'divide the counties into wards.'" ⁵¹ Thus Jefferson once summed up an exposition of his most cherished political idea, which, alas, turned out to be as incomprehensible to posterity as it had been to his contemporaries. The reference to Cato was no idle slip of a tongue used to Latin quotations; it was meant to emphasize that Jefferson thought the absence of such a subdivision of the country constituted a vital threat to the very existence of the republic. Just as Rome, according to Cato, could not be safe so long as Carthage existed, so the republic, according to Jefferson, would not be secure in its very foundations without the ward system. "Could I once see this I should consider it as the dawn of the salvation of the republic, and say with old Simeon, 'Nunc dimittis Domine.'" ⁵²

Had Jefferson's plan of "elementary republics" been carried out, it would have exceeded by far the feeble germs of a new form of government which we are able to detect in the sections of the Parisian Commune and the popular societies during the French Revolution. However, if Jefferson's political imagination surpassed them in insight and in scope, his thoughts were still traveling in the same direction. Both Jefferson's plan and the French *sociétés révolutionnaires* anticipated with an almost weird precision those councils, *soviets* and *Räte*, which were to make their appearance in every genuine revolution throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each time they appeared, they sprang up as the spontaneous organs of the people, not only outside of all revolutionary parties but entirely unexpected by them and their leaders. Like Jefferson's proposals, they were utterly neglected by statesmen, historians, political theorists, and, most importantly, by the revolutionary tradition itself. Even those historians whose sympathies were clearly on the side of

revolution and who could not help writing the emergence of popular councils into the record of their story regarded them as nothing more than essentially temporary organs in the revolutionary struggle for liberation; that is to say, they failed to understand to what an extent the council system confronted them with an entirely new form of government, with a new public space for freedom which was constituted and organized during the course of the revolution itself.

This statement must be qualified. There are two relevant exceptions to it, namely a few remarks by Marx at the occasion of the revival of the Parisian Commune during the short-lived revolution of 1871, and some reflections by Lenin based not on the text by Marx, but on the actual course of the Revolution of 1905 in Russia. But before we turn our attention to these matters, we had better try to understand what Jefferson had in mind when he said with utmost self-assurance, "The wit of man cannot devise a more solid basis for a free, durable, and well-administered republic." ⁵³

It is perhaps noteworthy that we find no mention of the ward system in any of Jefferson's formal works, and it may be even more important that the few letters in which he wrote of it with such emphatic insistence all date from the last period of his life. It is true, at one time he hoped that Virginia, because it was "the first of the nations of the earth which assembled its wise men peaceably together to form a fundamental constitution," would also be the first "to adopt the subdivision of our counties into wards," ⁵⁴ but the point of the matter is that the whole idea seems to have occurred to him only at a time when he himself was retired from public life and when he had withdrawn from the affairs of state. He who had been so explicit in his criticism of the Constitution because it had not incorporated a Bill of Rights, never touched on its failure to incorporate the townships which so obviously were the original models of his "elementary republics" where "the voice of the whole people would be fairly, fully, and peaceably expressed, discussed, and decided by the common reason" of all citizens. ⁵⁵ In terms of his

own role in the affairs of his country and the outcome of the Revolution, the idea of the ward system clearly was an afterthought; and, in terms of his own biographical development, the repeated insistence on the "peaceable" character of these wards demonstrates that this system was to him the only possible non-violent alternative to his earlier notions about the desirability of recurring revolutions. At any event, we find the only detailed descriptions of what he had in mind in letters written in the year 1816, and these letters repeat rather than supplement one another.

Jefferson himself knew well enough that what he proposed as the "salvation of the republic" actually was the salvation of the revolutionary spirit through the republic. His expositions of the ward system always began with a reminder of how "the vigor given to our revolution in its commencement" was due to the "little republics," how they had "thrown the whole nation into energetic action," and how, at a later occasion, he had felt "the foundations of the government shaken under [his] feet by the New England townships," "the energy of this organization" being so great that "there was not an individual in their States whose body was not thrown with all its momentum into action." Hence, he expected the wards to permit the citizens to continue to do what they had been able to do during the years of revolution, namely, to act on their own and thus to participate in public business as it was being transacted from day to day. By virtue of the Constitution, the public business of the nation as a whole had been transferred to Washington and was being transacted by the federal government, of which Jefferson still thought as "the foreign branch" of the republic, whose domestic affairs were taken care of by the state governments.⁵⁶ But state government and even the administrative machinery of the county were by far too large and unwieldy to permit immediate participation; in all these institutions, it was the delegates of the people rather than the people themselves who constituted the public realm, whereas those who delegated them and who, theoretically, were the source and the seat of power remained forever outside its

doors. This order of things should have sufficed if Jefferson had actually believed (as he sometimes professed) that the happiness of the people lay exclusively in their private welfare; for because of the way the government of the union was constituted—with its division and separation of powers, with controls, checks and balances, built into its very center—it was highly unlikely, though of course not impossible, that a tyranny could arise out of it. What could happen, and what indeed has happened over and over again since, was that "the representative organs should become corrupt and perverted,"⁵⁷ but such corruption was not likely to be due (and hardly ever has been due) to a conspiracy of the representative organs against the people whom they represented. Corruption in this kind of government is much more likely to spring from the midst of society, that is, from the people themselves.

Corruption and perversion are more pernicious, and at the same time more likely to occur, in an egalitarian republic than in any other form of government. Schematically speaking, they come to pass when private interests invade the public domain, that is, they spring from below and not from above. It is precisely because the republic excluded on principle the old dichotomy of ruler and ruled that corruption of the body politic did not leave the people untouched, as in other forms of government, where only the rulers or the ruling classes needed to be affected, and where therefore an "innocent" people might indeed first suffer and then, one day, effect a dreadful but necessary insurrection. Corruption of the people themselves—as distinguished from corruption of their representatives or a ruling class—is possible only under a government that has granted them a share in public power and has taught them how to manipulate it. Where the rift between ruler and ruled has been closed, it is always possible that the dividing line between public and private may become blurred and, eventually, obliterated. Prior to the modern age and the rise of society, this danger, inherent in republican government, used to arise from the public realm, from the tendency of public power to expand and to trespass upon private interests.

The age-old remedy against this danger was respect for private property, that is, the framing of a system of laws through which the rights of privacy were publicly guaranteed and the dividing line between public and private legally protected. The Bill of Rights in the American Constitution forms the last, and the most exhaustive, legal bulwark for the private realm against public power, and Jefferson's preoccupation with the dangers of public power and this remedy against them is sufficiently well known. However, under conditions, not of prosperity as such, but of a rapid and constant economic growth, that is, of a constantly increasing expansion of the private realm—and these were of course the conditions of the modern age—the dangers of corruption and perversion were much more likely to arise from private interests than from public power. And it speaks for the high caliber of Jefferson's statesmanship that he was able to perceive this danger despite his preoccupation with the older and better-known threats of corruption in bodies politic.

The only remedies against the misuse of public power by private individuals lie in the public realm itself, in the light which exhibits each deed enacted within its boundaries, in the very visibility to which it exposes all those who enter it. Jefferson, though the secret vote was still unknown at the time, had at least a foreboding of how dangerous it might be to allow the people a share in public power without providing them at the same time with more public space than the ballot box and with more opportunity to make their voices heard in public than election day. What he perceived to be the mortal danger to the republic was that the Constitution had given all power to the citizens, without giving them the opportunity of *being* republicans and of *acting* as citizens. In other words, the danger was that all power had been given to the people in their private capacity, and that there was no space established for them in their capacity of being citizens. When, at the end of his life, he summed up what to him clearly was the gist of private and public morality, "Love your neighbor as yourself, and your country more than yourself,"⁵⁸ he knew that this maxim remained an empty ex-

hortation unless the "country" could be made as present to the "love" of its citizens as the "neighbor" was to the love of his fellow men. For just as there could not be much substance to neighborly love if one's neighbor should make a brief apparition once every two years, so there could not be much substance to the admonition to love one's country more than oneself unless the country was a living presence in the midst of its citizens.

Hence, according to Jefferson, it was the very principle of republican government to demand "the subdivision of the counties into wards," namely, the creation of "small republics" through which "every man in the State" could become "an acting member of the Common government, transacting in person a great portion of its rights and duties, subordinate indeed, yet important, and entirely within his competence."⁵⁹ It was "these little republics [that] would be the main strength of the great one";⁶⁰ for inasmuch as the republican government of the Union was based on the assumption that the seat of power was in the people, the very condition for its proper functioning lay in a scheme "to divide [government] among the many, distributing to every one exactly the functions he [was] competent to." Without this, the very principle of republican government could never be actualized, and the government of the United States would be republican in name only.

Thinking in terms of the safety of the republic, the question was how to prevent "the degeneracy of our government," and Jefferson called every government degenerate in which all powers were concentrated "in the hands of the one, the few, the well-born or the many." Hence, the ward system was not meant to strengthen the power of the many but the power of "every one" within the limits of his competence; and only by breaking up "the many" into assemblies where every one could count and be counted upon "shall we be as republican as a large society can be." In terms of the safety of the citizens of the republic, the question was how to make everybody feel "that he is a participator in the government of affairs, not merely at an election one day in the year, but every day; when there shall

not be a man in the State who will not be a member of some one of its councils, great or small, he will let the heart be torn out of his body sooner than his power wrested from him by a Caesar or a Bonaparte." Finally, as to the question of how to integrate these smallest organs, designed for everyone, into the governmental structure of the Union, designed for all, his answer was: "The elementary republics of the wards, the county republics, the State republics, and the republic of the Union would form a gradation of authorities, standing each on the basis of law, holding every one its delegated share of powers, and constituting truly a system of fundamental balances and checks for the government." On one point, however, Jefferson remained curiously silent, and that is the question of what the specific functions of the elementary republics should be. He mentioned occasionally as "one of the advantages of the ward divisions I have proposed" that they would offer a better way to collect the voice of the people than the mechanics of representative government; but in the main, he was convinced that if one would "begin them only for a single purpose" they would "soon show for what others they [were] the best instruments."⁶¹

This vagueness of purpose, far from being due to a lack of clarity, indicates perhaps more tellingly than any other single aspect of Jefferson's proposal that the afterthought in which he clarified and gave substance to his most cherished recollections from the Revolution in fact concerned a new form of government rather than a mere reform of it or a mere supplement to the existing institutions. If the ultimate end of revolution was freedom and the constitution of a public space where freedom could appear, the *constitutio libertatis*, then the elementary republics of the wards, the only tangible place where everyone could be free, actually were the end of the great republic whose chief purpose in domestic affairs should have been to provide the people with such places of freedom and to protect them. The basic assumption of the ward system, whether Jefferson knew it or not, was that no one could be called happy without his share in public happiness, that no one could be called free without his experience in public free-

dom, and that no one could be called either happy or free without participating, and having a share, in public power.

IV

It is a strange and sad story that remains to be told and remembered. It is not the story of revolution on whose thread the historian might string the history of the nineteenth century in Europe,⁶² whose origins could be traced back into the Middle Ages, whose progress had been irresistible "for centuries in spite of every obstacle," according to Tocqueville, and which Marx, generalizing the experiences of several generations, called "the locomotive of all history."⁶³ I do not doubt that revolution was the hidden *leitmotif* of the century preceding ours, although I doubt both Tocqueville's and Marx's generalizations, especially their conviction that revolution had been the result of an irresistible force rather than the outcome of specific deeds and events. What seems to be beyond doubt and belief is that no historian will ever be able to tell the tale of our century without stringing it "on the thread of revolutions"; but this tale, since its end still lies hidden in the mists of the future, is not yet fit to be told.

The same, to an extent, is true for the particular aspect of revolution with which we now must concern ourselves. This aspect is the regular emergence, during the course of revolution, of a new form of government that resembled in an amazing fashion Jefferson's ward system and seemed to repeat, under no matter what circumstances, the revolutionary societies and municipal councils which had spread all over France after 1789. Among the reasons that recommend this aspect to our attention must first be mentioned that we deal here with the phenomenon that impressed most the two greatest revolutionists of the whole period, Marx and Lenin, when they were witnessing its spontaneous rise, the former during the Parisian Commune of 1871 and the latter in 1905, during the first Russian revolution. What struck them was not only the fact that they themselves were entirely unprepared

for these events, but also that they knew they were confronted with a repetition unaccounted for by any conscious imitation or even mere remembrance of the past. To be sure, they had hardly any knowledge of Jefferson's ward system, but they knew well enough the revolutionary role the sections of the first Parisian Commune had played in the French Revolution, except that they had never thought of them as possible germs for a new form of government but had regarded them as mere instruments to be dispensed with once the revolution came to an end. Now, however, they were confronted with popular organs—the communes, the councils, the *Räte*, the *soviets*—which clearly intended to survive the revolution. This contradicted all their theories and, even more importantly, was in flagrant conflict with those assumptions about the nature of power and violence which they shared, albeit unconsciously, with the rulers of the doomed or defunct regimes. Firmly anchored in the tradition of the nation-state, they conceived of revolution as a means to seize power, and they identified power with the monopoly of the means of violence. What actually happened, however, was a swift disintegration of the old power, the sudden loss of control over the means of violence, and, at the same time, the amazing formation of a new power structure which owed its existence to nothing but the organizational impulses of the people themselves. In other words, when the moment of revolution had come, it turned out that there was no power left to seize, so that the revolutionists found themselves before the rather uncomfortable alternative of either putting their own pre-revolutionary "power," that is, the organization of the party apparatus, into the vacated power center of the defunct government, or simply joining the new revolutionary power centers which had sprung up without their help.

For a brief moment, while he was the mere witness of something he never had expected, Marx understood that the *Kommunalverfassung* of the Parisian Commune in 1871, because it was supposed to become "the political form of even the smallest village," might well be "the political form, finally discovered, for the economic liberation of labor." But he soon became aware

to what an extent this political form contradicted all notions of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" by means of a socialist or communist party whose monopoly of power and violence was modeled upon the highly centralized governments of nation-states, and he concluded that the communal councils were, after all, only temporary organs of the revolution.⁶⁴ It is almost the same sequence of attitudes which, one generation later, we find in Lenin, who twice in his life, in 1905 and in 1917, came under the direct impact of the events themselves, that is to say, was temporarily liberated from the pernicious influence of a revolutionary ideology. Thus he could extol with great sincerity in 1905 "the revolutionary creativity of the people," who spontaneously had begun to establish an entirely new power structure in the midst of revolution,⁶⁵ just as, twelve years later, he could let loose and win the October Revolution with the slogan: "All power to the *soviets*." But during the years that separated the two revolutions he had done nothing to reorient his thought and to incorporate the new organs into any of the many party programs, with the result that the same spontaneous development in 1917 found him and his party no less unprepared than they had been in 1905. When, finally, during the Kronstadt rebellion, the *soviets* revolted against the party dictatorship and the incompatibility of the new councils with the party system became manifest, he decided almost at once to crush the councils, since they threatened the power monopoly of the Bolshevik party. The name "Soviet Union" for post-revolutionary Russia has been a lie ever since, but this lie has also contained, ever since, the grudging admission of the overwhelming popularity, not of the Bolshevik party, but of the *soviet* system which the party reduced to impotence.⁶⁶ Put before the alternative of either adjusting their thoughts and deeds to the new and the unexpected or going to the extreme of tyranny and suppression, they hardly hesitated in their decision for the latter; with the exceptions of a few moments without consequence, their behavior from beginning to end was dictated by considerations of party strife, which played no role in the councils but which indeed had been of paramount importance in the pre-

revolutionary parliaments. When the Communists decided, in 1919, "to espouse only the cause of a *soviet* republic in which the *soviets* possess a Communist majority,"⁶⁷ they actually behaved like ordinary party politicians. So great is the fear of men, even of the most radical and least conventional among them, of things never seen, of thoughts never thought, of institutions never tried before.

The failure of the revolutionary tradition to give any serious thought to the only new form of government born out of revolution can partly be explained by Marx's obsession with the social question and his unwillingness to pay serious attention to questions of state and government. But this explanation is weak and, to an extent, even question-begging, because it takes for granted the overtowering influence of Marx on the revolutionary movement and tradition, an influence which itself still stands in need of explanation. It was, after all, not only the Marxists among the revolutionists who proved to be utterly unprepared for the actualities of revolutionary events. And this unpreparedness is all the more noteworthy as it surely cannot be blamed upon lack of thought or interest in revolution. It is well known that the French Revolution had given rise to an entirely new figure on the political scene, the professional revolutionist, and his life was spent not in revolutionary agitation, for which there existed but few opportunities, but in study and thought, in theory and debate, whose sole object was revolution. In fact, no history of the European leisure classes would be complete without a history of the professional revolutionists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who, together with the modern artists and writers, have become the true heirs of the *hommes de lettres* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The artists and writers joined the revolutionists because "the very word bourgeois came to have a hated significance no less aesthetic than political";⁶⁸ together they established Bohemia, that island of blessed leisure in the midst of the busy and overbusy century of the Industrial Revolution. Even among the members of this new leisure class, the professional revolutionist enjoyed special privileges since his way of life de-

manded no specific work whatsoever. If there was a thing he had no reason to complain of, it was lack of time to think, whereby it makes little difference if such an essentially theoretical way of life was spent in the famous libraries of London and Paris, or in the coffee houses of Vienna and Zurich, or in the relatively comfortable and undisturbed jails of the various *anciens régimes*.

The role the professional revolutionists played in all modern revolutions is great and significant enough, but it did not consist in the preparation of revolutions. They watched and analyzed the progressing disintegration in state and society; they hardly did, or were in a position to do, much to advance and direct it. Even the wave of strikes that spread over Russia in 1905 and led into the first revolution was entirely spontaneous, unsupported by any political or trade-union organizations, which, on the contrary, sprang up only in the course of the revolution.⁶⁹ The outbreak of most revolutions has surprised the revolutionist groups and parties no less than all others, and there exists hardly a revolution whose outbreak could be blamed upon their activities. It usually was the other way round: revolution broke out and liberated, as it were, the professional revolutionists from wherever they happened to be—from jail, or from the coffee house, or from the library. Not even Lenin's party of professional revolutionists would ever have been able to "make" a revolution; the best they could do was to be around, or to hurry home, at the right moment, that is, at the moment of collapse. Tocqueville's observation in 1848, that the monarchy fell "before rather than beneath the blows of the victors, who were as astonished at their triumph as were the vanquished at their defeat," has been verified over and over again.

The part of the professional revolutionists usually consists not in making a revolution but in rising to power after it has broken out, and their great advantage in this power struggle lies less in their theories and mental or organizational preparation than in the simple fact that their names are the only ones which are publicly known.⁷⁰ It certainly is not conspiracy that causes revolution, and secret societies—though they may succeed in commit-

ting a few spectacular crimes, usually with the help of the secret police⁷¹—are as a rule much too secret to be able to make their voices heard in public. The loss of authority in the powers-that-be, which indeed precedes all revolutions, is actually a secret to no one, since its manifestations are open and tangible, though not necessarily spectacular; but its symptoms, general dissatisfaction, widespread malaise, and contempt for those in power, are difficult to pin down since their meaning is never unequivocal.⁷² Nevertheless, contempt, hardly among the motives of the typical professional revolutionist, is certainly one of the most potent springs of revolution; there has hardly been a revolution for which Lamartine's remark about 1848, "the revolution of contempt," would be altogether inappropriate.

However, while the part played by the professional revolutionist in the outbreak of revolution has usually been insignificant to the point of non-existence, his influence upon the actual course a revolution will take has proved to be very great. And since he spent his apprenticeship in the school of past revolutions, he will invariably exert this influence not in favor of the new and the unexpected, but in favor of some action which remains in accordance with the past. Since it is his very task to assure the continuity of revolution, he will be inclined to argue in terms of historical precedents, and the conscious and pernicious imitation of past events, which we mentioned earlier, lies, partially at least, in the very nature of his profession. Long before the professional revolutionists had found in Marxism their official guide to the interpretation and annotation of all history, past, present and future, Tocqueville, in 1848, could already note: "The imitation [i.e. of 1789 by the revolutionary Assembly] was so manifest that it concealed the terrible originality of the facts; I continually had the impression they were engaged in play-acting the French Revolution far more than continuing it."⁷³ And again, during the Parisian Commune of 1871, on which Marx and Marxists had no influence whatsoever, at least one of the new magazines, *Le Père Duchêne*, adopted the old revolutionary calendar's names for the months of the year. It is strange indeed that in this at-

mosphere, where every incident of past revolutions was mulled over as though it were part of sacred history, the only entirely new and entirely spontaneous institution in revolutionary history should have been neglected to the point of oblivion.

Armed with the wisdom of hindsight, one is tempted to qualify this statement. There are certain paragraphs in the writings of the Utopian Socialists, especially in Proudhon and Bakunin, into which it has been relatively easy to read an awareness of the council system. Yet the truth is that these essentially anarchist political thinkers were singularly unequipped to deal with a phenomenon which demonstrated so clearly how a revolution did not end with the abolition of state and government but, on the contrary, aimed at the foundation of a new state and the establishment of a new form of government. More recently, historians have pointed to the rather obvious similarities between the councils and the medieval townships, the Swiss cantons, the English seventeenth-century "agitators"—or rather "adjustors," as they were originally called—and the General Council of Cromwell's army, but the point of the matter is that none of them, with the possible exception of the medieval town,⁷⁴ had ever the slightest influence on the minds of the people who in the course of a revolution spontaneously organized themselves in councils.

Hence, no tradition, either revolutionary or pre-revolutionary, can be called to account for the regular emergence and re-emergence of the council system ever since the French Revolution. If we leave aside the February Revolution of 1848 in Paris, where a *commission pour les travailleurs*, set up by the government itself, was almost exclusively concerned with questions of social legislation, the main dates of appearance of these organs of action and germs of a new state are the following: the year 1870, when the French capital under siege by the Prussian army "spontaneously reorganized itself into a miniature federal body," which then formed the nucleus for the Parisian Commune government in the spring of 1871;⁷⁵ the year 1905, when the wave of spontaneous strikes in Russia suddenly developed a political leadership of its own, outside all revolutionary parties and groups, and

the workers in the factories organized themselves into councils, *soviets*, for the purpose of representative self-government; the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia, when "despite different political tendencies among the Russian workers, the organization itself, that is the *soviet*, was not even subject to discussion";⁷⁶ the years 1918 and 1919 in Germany, when, after the defeat of the army, soldiers and workers in open rebellion constituted themselves into *Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte*, demanding, in Berlin, that this *Rätesystem* become the foundation stone of the new German constitution, and establishing, together with the Bohemians of the coffee houses, in Munich in the spring of 1919, the short-lived Bavarian *Räterepublik*;⁷⁷ the last date, finally, is the autumn of 1956, when the Hungarian Revolution from its very beginning produced the council system anew in Budapest, from which it spread all over the country "with incredible rapidity."⁷⁸

The mere enumeration of these dates suggests a continuity that in fact never existed. It is precisely the absence of continuity, tradition, and organized influence that makes the sameness of the phenomenon so very striking. Outstanding among the councils' common characteristics is, of course, the spontaneity of their coming into being, because it clearly and flagrantly contradicts the theoretical "twentieth-century model of revolution—planned, prepared, and executed almost to cold scientific exactness by the professional revolutionaries."⁷⁹ It is true that wherever the revolution was not defeated and not followed by some sort of restoration, the one-party dictatorship, that is, the model of the professional revolutionary, eventually prevailed, but it prevailed only after a violent struggle with the organs and institutions of the revolution itself. The councils, moreover, were always organs of order as much as organs of action, and it was indeed their aspiration to lay down the new order that brought them into conflict with the groups of professional revolutionaries, who wished to degrade them to mere executive organs of revolutionary activity. It is true enough that the members of the councils were not content to discuss and "enlighten themselves" about measures

that were taken by parties or assemblies; they consciously and explicitly desired the direct participation of every citizen in the public affairs of the country,⁸⁰ and as long as they lasted, there is no doubt that "every individual found his own sphere of action and could behold, as it were, with his own eyes his own contribution to the events of the day."⁸¹ Witnesses of their functioning were often agreed on the extent to which the revolution had given birth to a "direct regeneration of democracy," whereby the implication was that all such regenerations, alas, were foredoomed since, obviously, a direct handling of public business through the people was impossible under modern conditions. They looked upon the councils as though they were a romantic dream, some sort of fantastic utopia come true for a fleeting moment to show, as it were, the hopelessly romantic yearnings of the people, who apparently did not yet know the true facts of life. These realists took their own bearings from the party system, assuming as a matter of course that there existed no other alternative for representative government and forgetting conveniently that the downfall of the old regime had been due, among other things, precisely to this system.

For the remarkable thing about the councils was of course not only that they crossed all party lines, that members of the various parties sat in them together, but that such party membership played no role whatsoever. They were in fact the only political organs for people who belonged to no party. Hence, they invariably came into conflict with all assemblies, with the old parliaments as well as with the new "constituent assemblies," for the simple reason that the latter, even in their most extreme wings, were still the children of the party system. At this stage of events, that is, in the midst of revolution, it was the party programs more than anything else that separated the councils from the parties; for these programs, no matter how revolutionary, were all "ready-made formulas" which demanded not action but execution—"to be carried out energetically in practice," as Rosa Luxemburg pointed out with such amazing clear-sightedness about the issues at stake.⁸² Today we know how quickly the theoretical

when the multi-party democracies in Europe have declined to the point where in every French or Italian election "the very foundations of the state and the nature of the regime" are at stake.⁸⁶ It is therefore enlightening to see that in principle the same conflict existed even in 1871, during the Parisian Commune, when Odysse Barrot formulated with rare precision the chief difference in terms of French history between the new form of government, aimed at by the Commune, and the old regime which soon was to be restored in a different, non-monarchical disguise: "En tant que révolution sociale, 1871 procède directement de 1793, qu'il continue et qu'il doit achever. . . . En tant que révolution politique, au contraire, 1871 est réaction contre 1793 et un retour à 1789. . . . Il a effacé du programme les mots 'une et indivisible' et rejeté l'idée autoritaire qui est une idée toute monarchique . . . pour se rallier à l'idée fédérative, qui est par excellence l'idée libérale et républicaine"⁸⁷ (my italics).

These words are surprising because they were written at a time when there existed hardly any evidence—at any rate not for people unacquainted with the course of the American Revolution—about the intimate connection between the spirit of revolution and the principle of federation. In order to prove what Odysse Barrot felt to be true, we must turn to the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia and to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, both of which lasted just long enough to show in bare outlines what a government would look like and how a republic was likely to function if they were founded upon the principles of the council system. In both instances councils or *soviets* had sprung up everywhere, completely independent of one another, workers', soldiers', and peasants' councils in the case of Russia, the most disparate kinds of councils in the case of Hungary: neighborhood councils that emerged in all residential districts, so-called revolutionary councils that grew out of fighting together in the streets, councils of writers and artists, born in the coffee houses of Budapest, students' and youths' councils at the universities, workers' councils in the factories, councils in the army, among the civil servants, and so on. The formation of a council in each of these disparate groups

turned a more or less accidental proximity into a political institution. The most striking aspect of these spontaneous developments is that in both instances it took these independent and highly disparate organs no more than a few weeks, in the case of Russia, or a few days, in the case of Hungary, to begin a process of coordination and integration through the formation of higher councils of a regional or provincial character, from which finally the delegates to an assembly representing the whole country could be chosen.⁸⁸ As in the case of the early covenants, "cosociations," and confederations in the colonial history of North America, we see here how the federal principle, the principle of league and alliance among separate units, arises out of the elementary conditions of action itself, uninfluenced by any theoretical speculations about the possibilities of republican government in large territories and not even threatened into coherence by a common enemy. The common object was the foundation of a new body politic, a new type of republican government which would rest on "elementary republics" in such a way that its own central power did not deprive the constituent bodies of their original power to constitute. The councils, in other words, jealous of their capacity to act and to form opinion, were bound to discover the divisibility of power as well as its most important consequence, the necessary separation of powers in government.

It has frequently been noted that the United States and Great Britain are among the few countries where the party system has worked sufficiently well to assure stability and authority. It so happens that the two-party system coincides with a constitution that rests on the division of power among the various branches of government, and the chief reason for its stability is, of course, the recognition of the opposition as an institution of government. Such recognition, however, is possible only under the assumption that the nation is not *une et indivisible*, and that a separation of powers, far from causing impotence, generates and stabilizes power. It is ultimately the same principle which enabled Great Britain to organize her far-flung possessions and colonies into a Commonwealth, that made it possible for the British colonies in

North America to unite into a federal system of government. What distinguishes the two-party systems of these countries, despite all their differences, so decisively from the multi-party systems of the European nation-states is by no means a technicality, but a radically different concept of power which permeates the whole body politic.⁸⁹ If we were to classify contemporary regimes according to the power principle upon which they rest, the distinction between the one-party dictatorships and the multi-party systems would be revealed as much less decisive than the distinction that separates them both from the two-party systems. After the nation, during the nineteenth century "had stepped into the shoes of the absolute prince," it became, in the course of the twentieth century, the turn of the party to step into the shoes of the nation. It is, therefore, almost a matter of course that the outstanding characteristics of the modern party—its autocratic and oligarchic structure, its lack of internal democracy and freedom, its tendency to "become totalitarian," its claim to infallibility—are conspicuous by their absence in the United States and, to a lesser degree, in Great Britain.⁹⁰

However, while it may be true that, as a device of government, only the two-party system has proved its viability and, at the same time, its capacity to guarantee constitutional liberties, it is no less true that the best it has achieved is a certain control of the rulers by those who are ruled, but that it has by no means enabled the citizen to become a "participator" in public affairs. The most the citizen can hope for is to be "represented," whereby it is obvious that the only thing which can be represented and delegated is interest, or the welfare of the constituents, but neither their actions nor their opinions. In this system the opinions of the people are indeed unascertainable for the simple reason that they are non-existent. Opinions are formed in a process of open discussion and public debate, and where no opportunity for the forming of opinions exists, there may be moods—moods of the masses and moods of individuals, the latter no less fickle and unreliable than the former—but no opinion. Hence, the best the representative can do is to act as his constituents would act if they themselves

had any opportunity to do so. The same is not true for questions of interest and welfare, which can be ascertained objectively, and where the need for action and decision arises out of the various conflicts among interest groups. Through pressure groups, lobbies, and other devices, the voters can indeed influence the actions of their representatives with respect to interest, that is, they can force their representatives to execute their wishes at the expense of the wishes and interests of other groups of voters. In all these instances the voter acts out of concern with his private life and well-being, and the residue of power he still holds in his hands resembles rather the reckless coercion with which a blackmailer forces his victim into obedience than the power that arises out of joint action and joint deliberation. Be that as it may, neither the people in general nor the political scientists in particular have left much doubt that the parties, because of their monopoly of nomination, cannot be regarded as popular organs, but that they are, on the contrary, the very efficient instruments through which the power of the people is curtailed and controlled. That representative government has in fact become oligarchic government is true enough, though not in the classical sense of rule by the few in the interest of the few; what we today call democracy is a form of government where the few rule, at least supposedly, in the interest of the many. This government is democratic in that popular welfare and private happiness are its chief goals; but it can be called oligarchic in the sense that public happiness and public freedom have again become the privilege of the few.

The defenders of this system, which actually is the system of the welfare state, if they are liberal and of democratic convictions, must deny the very existence of public happiness and public freedom; they must insist that politics is a burden and that its end is itself not political. They will agree with Saint-Just: "La liberté du peuple est dans sa vie privée; ne la troublez point. Que le gouvernement . . . ne soit une force que pour protéger cet état de simplicité contre la force même." If, on the other hand, taught by the profound turmoil of this century, they have lost their liberal illusion about some innate goodness of the people, they

are likely to conclude that "no people has ever been known to govern itself," that "the will of the people is profoundly anarchic: it wants to do as it pleases," that its attitude toward all government is "hostility" because "government and constraint are inseparable," and constraint by definition "is external to the constrained."⁹¹

Such statements, difficult to prove, are even more difficult to refute, but the assumptions upon which they rest are not difficult to point out. Theoretically, the most relevant and the most pernicious among them is the equation of "people" and masses, which sounds only too plausible to everyone who lives in a mass society and is constantly exposed to its numerous irritations. This is true for all of us, but the author from whom I quoted lives, in addition, in one of those countries where parties have long since degenerated into mass movements which operate outside of parliament and have invaded the private and social domains of family life, education, cultural and economic concerns.⁹² And in these cases the plausibility of the equation will amount to self-evidence. It is true that the movements' principle of organization corresponds to the existence of the modern masses, but their enormous attraction lies in the people's suspicion and hostility against the existing party system and the prevailing representation in parliament. Where this distrust does not exist, as for instance in the United States, the conditions of mass society do not lead to the formation of mass movements, whereas even countries where mass society is still very far from being developed, as for instance France, fall prey to mass movements, if only enough hostility to the party and parliamentary system is extant. Terminologically speaking, one could say that the more glaring the failures of the party system are, the easier it will be for a movement not only to appeal to and to organize the people, but to transform them into masses. Practically, the current "realism," despair of the people's political capacities, not unlike the realism of Saint-Just, is based solidly upon the conscious or unconscious determination to ignore the reality of the councils and to take for granted that there is

not, and never has been, any alternative to the present system.

The historical truth of the matter is that the party and council systems are almost coeval; both were unknown prior to the revolutions and both are the consequences of the modern and revolutionary tenet that all inhabitants of a given territory are entitled to be admitted to the public, political realm. The councils, as distinguished from parties, have always emerged during the revolution itself, they sprang from the people as spontaneous organs of action and of order. The last point is worth emphasizing; nothing indeed contradicts more sharply the old adage of the anarchistic and lawless "natural" inclinations of a people left without the constraint of its government than the emergence of the councils that, wherever they appeared, and most pronouncedly during the Hungarian Revolution, were concerned with the reorganization of the political and economic life of the country and the establishment of a new order.⁹³ Parties—as distinguished from factions typical of all parliaments and assemblies, be these hereditary or representative—have thus far never emerged during a revolution; they either preceded it, as in the twentieth century, or they developed with the extension of popular suffrage. Hence the party, whether an extension of parliamentary faction or a creation outside parliament, has been an institution to provide parliamentary government with the required support of the people, whereby it was always understood that the people, through voting, did the supporting, while action remained the prerogative of government. If parties become militant and step actively into the domain of political action, they violate their own principle as well as their function in parliamentary government, that is, they become subversive, and this regardless of their doctrines and ideologies. The disintegration of parliamentary government—in Italy and Germany after the First World War, for instance, or in France after World War II—has demonstrated repeatedly how even parties supporting the status quo actually helped to undermine the regime the moment they overstepped their institutional limitations. Action and participation in public affairs, a natural

aspiration of the councils, obviously are not signs of health and vitality but of decay and perversion in an institution whose primary function has always been representation.

For it is indeed true that the essential characteristic of the otherwise widely differing party systems is "that they 'nominate' candidates for elective offices of representative government," and it may even be correct to say that "the act of nominating itself is enough to bring a political party into being."⁹⁴ Hence, from the very beginning, the party as an institution presupposed either that the citizen's participation in public affairs was guaranteed by other public organs, or that such participation was not necessary and that the newly admitted strata of the population should be content with representation, or, finally, that all political questions in the welfare state are ultimately problems of administration, to be handled and decided by experts, in which case even the representatives of the people hardly possess an authentic area of action but are administrative officers, whose business, though in the public interest, is not essentially different from the business of private management. If the last of these presuppositions should turn out to be correct—and who could deny the extent to which in our mass societies the political realm has withered away and is being replaced by that "administration of things" which Engels predicted for a classless society?—then, to be sure, the councils would have to be considered as atavistic institutions without any relevance in the realm of human affairs. But the same, or something very similar, would then soon enough turn out to be true for the party system; for administration and management, because their business is dictated by the necessities which underlie all economic processes, are essentially not only non-political but even nonpartisan. In a society under the sway of abundance, conflicting group interests need no longer be settled at one another's expense, and the principle of opposition is valid only as long as there exist authentic choices which transcend the objective and demonstrably valid opinions of experts. When government has really become administration, the party system can only result in incompetence and wastefulness. The only non-obsolete function the party system

might conceivably perform in such a regime would be to guard it against corruption of public servants, and even this function would be much better and more reliably performed by the police.⁹⁵

The conflict between the two systems, the parties and the councils, came to the fore in all twentieth-century revolutions. The issue at stake was representation versus action and participation. The councils were organs of action, the revolutionary parties were organs of representation, and although the revolutionary parties halfheartedly recognized the councils as instruments of "revolutionary struggle," they tried even in the midst of revolution to rule them from within; they knew well enough that no party, no matter how revolutionary it was, would be able to survive the transformation of the government into a true Soviet Republic. For the parties, the need for action itself was transitory, and they had no doubt that after the victory of the revolution further action would simply prove unnecessary or subversive. Bad faith and the drive for power were not the decisive factors that made the professional revolutionists turn against the revolutionary organs of the people; it was rather the elementary convictions which the revolutionary parties shared with all other parties. They agreed that the end of government was the welfare of the people, and that the substance of politics was not action but administration. In this respect, it is only fair to say that all parties from right to left have much more in common with one another than the revolutionary groups ever had in common with the councils. Moreover, what eventually decided the issue in favor of the party and the one-party dictatorship was by no means only superior power or determination to crush the councils through ruthless use of the means of violence.

If it is true that the revolutionary parties never understood to what an extent the council system was identical with the emergence of a new form of government, it is no less true that the councils were incapable of understanding to what an enormous extent the government machinery in modern societies must indeed perform the functions of administration. The fatal mistake of the councils has always been that they themselves did not distinguish

clearly between participation in public affairs and administration or management of things in the public interest. In the form of workers' councils, they have again and again tried to take over the management of the factories, and all these attempts have ended in dismal failure. "The wish of the working class," we are told, "has been fulfilled. The factories will be managed by the councils of the workers."⁹⁶ This so-called wish of the working class sounds much rather like an attempt of the revolutionary party to counteract the councils' political aspirations, to drive their members away from the political realm and back into the factories. And this suspicion is borne out by two facts: the councils have always been primarily political, with social and economic claims playing a very minor role, and it was precisely this lack of interest in social and economic questions which, in the view of the revolutionary party, was a sure sign of their "lower-middle-class, abstract, liberalistic" mentality.⁹⁷ In fact, it was a sign of their political maturity, whereas the workers' wish to run the factories themselves was a sign of the understandable, but politically irrelevant desire of individuals to rise into positions which up to then had been open only to the middle classes.

No doubt, managerial talent should not be lacking in people of working-class origins; the trouble was merely that the workers' councils certainly were the worst possible organs for its detection. For the men whom they trusted and chose from their own midst were selected according to political criteria, for their trustworthiness, their personal integrity, their capacity of judgment, often for their physical courage. The same men, entirely capable of acting in a political capacity, were bound to fail if entrusted with the management of a factory or other administrative duties. For the qualities of the statesman or the political man, and the qualities of the manager or administrator are not only not the same, they very seldom are to be found in the same individual; the one is supposed to know how to deal with men in a field of human relations, whose principle is freedom, and the other must know how to manage things and people in a sphere of life whose principle is necessity. The councils in the factories brought an element of

action into the management of things, and this indeed could not but create chaos. It was precisely these foredoomed attempts that have earned the council system its bad name. But while it is true that they were incapable of organizing, or rather of rebuilding the economic system of the country, it is also true that the chief reason for their failure was not any lawlessness of the people, but their political qualities. Whereas, on the other hand, the reason why the party apparatuses, despite many shortcomings—corruption, incompetence and incredible wastefulness—eventually succeeded where the councils had failed lay precisely in their original oligarchic and even autocratic structure, which made them so utterly unreliable for all political purposes.

Freedom, wherever it existed as a tangible reality, has always been spatially limited. This is especially clear for the greatest and most elementary of all negative liberties, the freedom of movement; the borders of national territory or the walls of the city-state comprehended and protected a space in which men could move freely. Treaties and international guarantees provide an extension of this territorially bound freedom for citizens outside their own country, but even under these modern conditions the elementary coincidence of freedom and a limited space remains manifest. What is true for freedom of movement is, to a large extent, valid for freedom in general. Freedom in a positive sense is possible only among equals, and equality itself is by no means a universally valid principle but, again, applicable only with limitations and even within spatial limits. If we equate these spaces of freedom—which, following the gist, though not the terminology, of John Adams, we could also call spaces of appearances—with the political realm itself, we shall be inclined to think of them as islands in a sea or as oases in a desert. This image, I believe, is suggested to us not merely by the consistency of a metaphor but by the record of history as well.

The phenomenon I am concerned with here is usually called the "élite," and my quarrel with this term is not that I doubt that the political way of life has never been and will never be the way

of life of the many, even though political business, by definition, concerns more than the many, namely strictly speaking, the sum total of all citizens. Political passions—courage, the pursuit of public happiness, the taste of public freedom, an ambition that strives for excellence regardless not only of social status and administrative office but even of achievement and congratulation—are perhaps not as rare as we are inclined to think, living in a society which has perverted all virtues into social values; but they certainly are out of the ordinary under all circumstances. My quarrel with the “*élite*” is that the term implies an oligarchic form of government, the domination of the many by the rule of a few. From this, one can only conclude—as indeed our whole tradition of political thought has concluded—that the essence of politics is rulership and that the dominant political passion is the passion to rule or to govern. This, I propose, is profoundly untrue. The fact that political “*élites*” have always determined the political destinies of the many and have, in most instances, exerted a domination over them, indicates, on the one hand, the bitter need of the few to protect themselves against the many, or rather to protect the island of freedom they have come to inhabit against the surrounding sea of necessity; and it indicates, on the other hand, the responsibility that falls automatically upon those who care for the fate of those who do not. But neither this need nor this responsibility touches upon the essence, the very substance of their lives, which is freedom; both are incidental and secondary with respect to what actually goes on within the limited space of the island itself. Put into terms of present-day institutions, it would be in parliament and in congress, where he moves among his peers, that the political life of a member of representative government is actualized, no matter how much of his time may be spent in campaigning, in trying to get the vote and in listening to the voter. The point of the matter is not merely the obvious phoniness of this dialogue in modern party government, where the voter can only consent or refuse to ratify a choice which (with the exception of the American primaries) is made without him, and it does not even concern conspicuous abuses such as the

introduction into politics of Madison Avenue methods, through which the relationship between representative and elector is transformed into that of seller and buyer. Even if there is communication between representative and voter, between the nation and parliament—and the existence of such communication marks the outstanding difference between the governments of the British and the Americans, on one side, and those of Western Europe, on the other—this communication is never between equals but between those who aspire to govern and those who consent to be governed. It is indeed in the very nature of the party system to replace “the formula ‘government of the people by the people’ by this formula: ‘government of the people by an *élite* sprung from the people.’”⁹⁸

It has been said that “the deepest significance of political parties” must be seen in their providing “the necessary framework enabling the masses to recruit from among themselves their own *élites*,”⁹⁹ and it is true enough that it was primarily the parties which opened political careers to members of the lower classes. No doubt the party as the outstanding institution of democratic government corresponds to one of the major trends of the modern age, the constantly and universally increasing equalization of society; but this by no means implies that it corresponds to the deepest significance of revolution in the modern age as well. The “*élite* sprung from the people” has replaced the pre-modern *élites* of birth and wealth; it has nowhere enabled the people *qua* people to make their entrance into political life and to become participators in public affairs. The relationship between a ruling *élite* and the people, between the few, who among themselves constitute a public space, and the many, who spend their lives outside it and in obscurity, has remained unchanged. From the viewpoint of revolution and the survival of the revolutionary spirit, the trouble does not lie in the factual rise of a new *élite*; it is not the revolutionary spirit but the democratic mentality of an egalitarian society that tends to deny the obvious inability and conspicuous lack of interest of large parts of the population in political matters as such. The trouble lies in the lack of public

spaces to which the people at large would have entrance and from which an élite could be selected, or rather, where it could select itself. The trouble, in other words, is that politics has become a profession and a career, and that the "élite" therefore is being chosen according to standards and criteria which are themselves profoundly unpolitical. It is in the nature of all party systems that the authentically political talents can assert themselves only in rare cases, and it is even rarer that the specifically political qualifications survive the petty maneuvers of party politics with its demands for plain salesmanship. Of course the men who sat in the councils were also an élite, they were even the only political élite, of the people and sprung from the people, the modern world has ever seen, but they were not nominated from above and not supported from below. With respect to the elementary councils that sprung up wherever people lived or worked together, one is tempted to say that they had selected themselves; those who organized themselves were those who cared and those who took the initiative; they were the political élite of the people brought into the open by the revolution. From these "elementary republics," the councilmen then chose their deputies for the next higher council, and these deputies, again, were selected by their peers, they were not subject to any pressure either from above or from below. Their title rested on nothing but the confidence of their equals, and this equality was not natural but political, it was nothing they had been born with; it was the equality of those who had committed themselves to, and now were engaged in, a joint enterprise. Once elected and sent into the next higher council, the deputy found himself again among his peers, for the deputies on any given level in this system were those who had received a special trust. No doubt this form of government, if fully developed, would have assumed again the shape of a pyramid, which, of course, is the shape of an essentially authoritarian government. But while, in all authoritarian government we know of, authority is filtered down from above, in this case authority would have been generated neither at the top nor at the bottom, but on each of the pyramid's layers; and this obviously could

constitute the solution to one of the most serious problems of all modern politics, which is not how to reconcile freedom and equality but how to reconcile equality and authority.

(To avoid misunderstanding: The principles for the selection of the best as suggested in the council system, the principle of self-selection in the grass-roots political organs, and the principle of personal trust in their development into a federal form of government are not universally valid; they are applicable only within the political realm. The cultural, literary, and artistic, the scientific and professional and even the social élites of a country are subject to very different criteria among which the criterion of equality is conspicuously absent. But so is the principle of authority. The rank of a poet, for instance, is decided neither by a vote of confidence of his fellow poets nor by fiat coming from the recognized master, but, on the contrary, by those who only love poetry and are incapable of ever writing a line. The rank of a scientist, on the other hand, is indeed determined by his fellow scientists, but not on the basis of highly personal qualities and qualifications; the criteria in this instance are objective and beyond argument or persuasion. Social élites, finally, at least in an egalitarian society where neither birth nor wealth count, come into being through processes of discrimination.)

It would be tempting to spin out further the potentialities of the councils, but it certainly is wiser to say with Jefferson, "Begin them only for a single purpose; they will soon show for what others they are the best instruments"—the best instruments, for example, for breaking up the modern mass society, with its dangerous tendency toward the formation of pseudo-political mass movements, or rather, the best, the most natural way for interspersing it at the grass roots with an "élite" that is chosen by no one but constitutes itself. The joys of public happiness and the responsibilities for public business would then become the share of those few from all walks of life who have a taste for public freedom and cannot be "happy" without it. Politically, they are the best, and it is the task of good government and the sign of a well-ordered republic to assure them of their rightful place in the

public realm. To be sure, such an "aristocratic" form of government would spell the end of general suffrage as we understand it today; for only those who as voluntary members of an "elementary republic" have demonstrated that they care for more than their private happiness and are concerned about the state of the world would have the right to be heard in the conduct of the business of the republic. However, this exclusion from politics should not be derogatory, since a political élite is by no means identical with a social or cultural or professional élite. The exclusion, moreover, would not depend upon an outside body; if those who belong are self-chosen, those who do not belong are self-excluded. And such self-exclusion, far from being arbitrary discrimination, would in fact give substance and reality to one of the most important negative liberties we have enjoyed since the end of the ancient world, namely, freedom from politics, which was unknown to Rome or Athens and which is politically perhaps the most relevant part of our Christian heritage.

This, and probably much more, was lost when the spirit of revolution—a new spirit and the spirit of beginning something new—failed to find its appropriate institution. There is nothing that could compensate for this failure or prevent it from becoming final, except memory and recollection. And since the storehouse of memory is kept and watched over by the poets, whose business it is to find and make the words we live by, it may be wise to turn in conclusion to two of them (one modern, the other ancient) in order to find an approximate articulation of the actual content of our lost treasure. The modern poet is René Char, perhaps the most articulate of the many French writers and artists who joined the Resistance during the Second World War. His book of aphorisms was written during the last year of the war in a frankly apprehensive anticipation of liberation; for he knew that as far as they were concerned, there would be not only the welcome liberation from German occupation but liberation from the "burden" of public business as well. Back they would have to go to the *épaisseur triste* of their private lives and pursuits, to the "sterile depression" of the pre-war years, when it was as though a

curse hung over everything they did: "If I survive, I know that I shall have to break with the aroma of these essential years, silently reject (not repress) my treasure." The treasure, he thought, was that he had "found himself," that he no longer suspected himself of "insincerity," that he needed no mask and no make-believe to appear, that wherever he went he appeared as he was to others and to himself, that he could afford "to go naked."¹⁰⁰ These reflections are significant enough as they testify to the involuntary self-disclosure, to the joys of appearing in word and deed without equivocation and without self-reflection that are inherent in action. And yet they are perhaps too "modern," too self-centered to hit in pure precision the center of that "inheritance which was left to us by no testament."

Sophocles in *Oedipus at Colonus*, the play of his old age, wrote the famous and frightening lines:

Μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νι-
κᾶ λόγον. τὸ δ' ἐπεὶ φανῆ,
βῆναι κείσ' ὀπόθεν περ ἤ-
κει πολὺ δεύτερον ὡς τάχιστα.

"Not to be born prevails over all meaning uttered in words; by far the second-best for life, once it has appeared, is to go as swiftly as possible whence it came." There he also let us know, through the mouth of Theseus, the legendary founder of Athens and hence her spokesman, what it was that enabled ordinary men, young and old, to bear life's burden: it was the polis, the space of men's free deeds and living words, which could endow life with splendor—τὸν βίον λαμπρὸν ποιέισθαι.

56. W. F. Craven, op. cit., p. 1.

57. *Oceana*, edition Liljegren, Lund and Heidelberg, 1924, p.

168. Zera Fink, op. cit., p. 63, notices that "Harrington's preoccupation with the perpetual state" often comes close to Platonic notions, and especially to the *Laws*, "the influence of which on Harrington is indeterminable."

58. See *The Federalist*, no. 1.

Chapter Six. The Revolutionary Tradition and Its Lost Treasure

1. The most convincing evidence for the anti-theoretical bias in the men of the American Revolution can be found in the not very frequent but nevertheless very telling outbursts against philosophy and the philosophers of the past. In addition to Jefferson, who thought he could denounce "the nonsense of Plato," there was John Adams, who complained of all the philosophers since Plato because "not one of them takes human nature as it is for his foundation." (See Zoltán Haraszti, *John Adams and the Prophets of Progress*, Cambridge, Mass., 1952, p. 258). This bias, as a matter of fact, is neither anti-theoretical as such nor specific to an American "frame of mind." The hostility between philosophy and politics, barely covered up by a philosophy of politics, has been the curse of Western statecraft as well as of the Western tradition of philosophy ever since the men of action and the men of thought parted company—that is, ever since Socrates' death. The ancient conflict is relevant only in the strictly secular realm and therefore played a minor role during the long centuries when religion and religious concerns dominated the political sphere; but it was only natural that it should have assumed renewed importance during the birth or the rebirth of an authentically political realm, that is, in the course of modern revolutions.

For Daniel J. Boorstin's thesis, see *The Genius of American Politics*, Chicago, 1953, and especially his more recent *The Americans: The Colonial Experience*, New York, 1958.

2. William S. Carpenter, *The Development of American Political Thought*, Princeton, 1930, noted rightly: "There is no distinctively American political theory. . . . The aid of political theory was most frequently sought in the beginning of our institutional development" (p. 164).

3. The simplest and perhaps also the most plausible way to

trace the failure to remember would be an analysis of American post-revolutionary historiography. It is true, "what occurred after the Revolution was . . . a shift of the focus [from the Puritans] onto the Pilgrims, with a transfer of all the virtues traditionally associated with the Puritan fathers to the more acceptable Pilgrims" (Wesley Frank Craven, *The Legend of the Founding Fathers*, New York, 1956, p. 82). However, this shift of focus was not permanent, and American historiography, unless it was altogether dominated by European and, especially, Marxist categories, and denied that a revolution had ever occurred in America, turned more and more to the pre-revolutionary stress on Puritanism as the decisive influence in American politics and morals. Quite apart from the merits of the case, this stubborn endurance may well be due, at least in part, to the fact that the Puritans, in contrast to the Pilgrims as well as to the men of the Revolution, were deeply concerned with their own history; they believed that even if they should lose, their spirit would not be lost so long as they knew how to remember. Thus Cotton Mather wrote: "I shall count my Country lost in the loss of the Primitive Principles, and the Primitive Practices, upon which it was at first Established: But certainly one good way to save that Loss would be to do something . . . that the Story of the Circumstances attending the Foundation and Formation of this Country, and of its Preservation hitherto, may be impartially handed unto Posterity" (*Magnalia*, Book II, 8-9).

4. How such guideposts for future reference and remembrance arise out of this incessant talk, not, to be sure, in the form of concepts but as single brief sentences and condensed aphorisms, may best be seen in the novels of William Faulkner. Faulkner's literary procedure, rather than the content of his work, is highly "political," and, in spite of many imitations, he has remained, as far as I can see, the only author to use it.

5. Wherever American political thought was committed to revolutionary ideas and ideals, it either followed in the wake of European revolutionary trends, springing from experience and interpretation of the French Revolution; or it succumbed to the anarchistic tendencies so conspicuous in the early lawlessness of the pioneers. (We may remind the reader once more of John Adams' story which we mentioned in note 32 to Chapter Three.) This lawlessness, as pointed out before, was actually anti-revolutionary, directed against the men of the Revolution. In our context, both so-called revolutionary trends can be neglected.

6. In *The Federalist*, no. 43.

7. In *Democracy in America*, vol. II, p. 256.
8. Ever since the Renaissance, Venice had had the honor of validating the old theory of a mixed form of government, capable of arresting the cycle of change. How great the need for a belief in a potentially immortal City must have been may, perhaps, best be gauged by the irony that Venice became a model of permanence in the very days of her decay.
9. See *The Federalist*, no. 10.
10. Hamilton in Jonathan Elliot, *Debates of State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, 1861, vol. I, p. 422.
11. *The Federalist*, no. 50.
12. Of course, this is not to deny that the will occurred in the speeches and writings of the Founding Fathers. But compared with reason, passion, and power, the faculty of the will plays a very minor role in their thought and their terminology. Hamilton, who seems to have used the word more often than the others, significantly spoke of a "permanent will"—actually a contradiction in terms—and meant by it no more than an institution "capable of resisting popular current." (See *Works*, vol. II, p. 415.) Obviously what he was after was permanence, and the word "will" is loosely used, since nothing is less permanent, and less likely to establish permanence, than the will. Reading such sentences in conjunction with the contemporary French sources, one will notice that in similar circumstances the French would have called not upon a "permanent will" but upon the "unanimous will" of the nation. And the rise of such unanimity was precisely what the Americans sought to avoid.
13. W. S. Carpenter, op. cit., p. 84, ascribes this insight to Madison.
14. The only precedent for the American Senate that comes to mind is the King's Council, whose function, however, was advice and not opinion. An institution for advice, on the other hand, is conspicuously lacking in American government as laid down by the Constitution. Evidence that advice is needed in government, in addition to opinion, may be found in Roosevelt's and Kennedy's "brain trusts."
15. For "multiplicity of interests," see *The Federalist*, no. 51; for the importance of "opinion," *ibid.*, no. 49.
16. This paragraph is mainly based on *The Federalist*, no. 10.
17. *Ibid.*, no. 49.
18. Harrington, *Oceana*, ed. Liljegren, Heidelberg, 1924, pp. 185-86.
19. In *De Re Publica*, III 23.

20. John Adams in *Dissertation on Canon and Feudal law*.
21. I am indebted to Zera Fink's important study *The Classical Republicans*, Evanston, 1945, for the role the preoccupation with the permanence of the body politic played in the political thought of the seventeenth century. The importance of Fink's study lies in that he shows how this preoccupation by far transcended the care for mere stability, which can be explained by the religious strife and the civil wars of the century.
22. In Elliot, op. cit., vol. II, p. 364.
23. See *The Complete Jefferson*, ed. Padover, Modern Library edition, pp. 295 ff.
24. Thus Jefferson in a letter to William Hunter, March 11, 1790.
25. In a letter to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816.
26. The two quotations from Paine are from *Common Sense* and the *Rights of Man*, respectively.
27. In the famous letter to Major John Cartwright, June 5, 1824.
28. The much-quoted words occur in a letter from Paris to Colonel William Stephens Smith, November 13, 1787.
29. In later years, especially after he had adopted the ward system as "the article nearest to my heart," Jefferson was much more likely to speak of "the dreadful necessity" of insurrection. (See especially his letter to Samuel Kercheval, September 5, 1816.) To blame this shift of emphasis—for it is not much more—on the changed mood of a much older man seems unjustified in view of the fact that Jefferson thought of his ward system as the only possible alternative to what otherwise would be a necessity, however dreadful.
30. In this and the following paragraph, I am again quoting from Jefferson's letter to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816.
31. See Emerson's *Journal*, 1853.
32. See Lewis Mumford's *The City in History*, New York, 1961, pp. 328 ff.
33. William S. Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 43-47, notes the divergence between the English and colonial theories of the time with respect to representation. In England, with Algernon Sidney and Burke, "the idea was growing that after the representatives have been returned and had taken their seats in the House of Commons they ought not any longer to have a dependence upon those they represented." In America, on the contrary, "the right of the people to instruct their representatives [was] a distinguishing characteristic of the colonial theory of representation." In support, Carpenter quotes from a contemporary Pennsylvanian source: "The right of

instruction lies with the constituents and them only, that the representatives are bound to regard them as the dictates of their masters and are not left at liberty to comply with them or reject them as they may think proper."

34. Quoted from Carpenter, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94. Present-day representatives, of course, have not found it any easier to read the minds and sentiments of those whom they represent. "The politician himself never knows what his constituents want him to do. He cannot take the continuous polls necessary to discover what they want government to do." He even has great doubts that such wants exist at all. For "in effect, he expects electoral success from promising to satisfy desires which he himself created." See C. W. Cassinelli, *The Politics of Freedom: An Analysis of the Modern Democratic State*, Seattle, 1961, pp. 41 and 45-46.

35. Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

36. This, of course, is Jefferson's opinion of the matter which he expounded chiefly in letters. See especially the previously mentioned letter to W. S. Smith, November 13, 1787. About the "exercise of virtuous dispositions" and of "moral feelings," he writes very interestingly in an early letter to Robert Skipwith on August 3, 1771. It is for him primarily an exercise in imagination, hence the great taskmasters of such exercises are the poets rather than the historians, since "the fictitious murder of Duncan by Macbeth in Shakespeare" excites in us "as great a horror of villainy, as the real one of Henry IV." It is through the poets that "the field of imagination is laid open to our use," a field that, if confined to real life, would contain too few memorable events and acts—history's "lessons would be too infrequent"; at any event, "a lively and lasting sense of filial duty is more effectually impressed on the mind of a son or daughter by reading *King Lear*, than by all the dry volumes of ethics and divinity that ever were written."

37. In a letter to Colonel Edward Carrington, January 16, 1787.

38. I am quoting from Robespierre's report to the Assembly on the rights of societies and clubs, September 29, 1791 (in *Oeuvres*, ed. Lefebvre, Soboul, etc., Paris, 1950, vol. VII, no. 361); for the year 1793, I am quoting from Albert Soboul, "Robespierre und die Volksgesellschaften," in *Maximilien Robespierre, Beiträge zu seinem 200. Geburtstag*, ed. Walter Markov, Berlin, 1958.

39. See Soboul, *op. cit.*

40. Quoted from the 11th number of *Le Défenseur de la Constitution*, 1792. See *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. G. Laurent, 1939, vol. IV, p. 328.

41. The formulation is Leclerc's as quoted in Albert Soboul, "An den Ursprüngen der Volksdemokratie: Politische Aspekte der Sansculottendemokratie im Jahre II," in *Beiträge zum neuen Geschichtsbild: Festschrift für Alfred Meusel*, Berlin, 1956.

42. Quoted from Soboul, "Robespierre und die Volksgesellschaften," *op. cit.*

43. *Die Sanskulotten von Paris: Dokumente zur Geschichte der Volksbewegung 1793-1794*, ed. Walter Markov and Albert Soboul, Berlin (East), 1957. The edition is bilingual. In the following, I quote chiefly from nos. 19, 28, 29, 31.

44. *Ibid.*, nos. 59 and 62.

45. In *Esprit de la Révolution et de la Constitution de France*, 1791; see *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Ch. Vellay, Paris, 1908, vol. I, p. 262.

46. During his war commission in Alsace in the fall of 1793, he seems to have addressed a single letter to a popular society, to that of Strasbourg. It reads: "Frères et amis, Nous vous invitons de nous donner votre opinion sur le patriotisme et les vertus républicaines de chacun des membres qui composent l'administration du département du Bas-Rhin. Salut et Fraternité." See *Oeuvres*, vol. II, p. 121.

47. In *Fragments sur les Institutions Républicaines, Oeuvres*, vol. II, p. 507.

48. This remark—"Après la Bastille vaincue . . . on vit que le peuple n'agissait pour l'élévation de personne, mais pour l'abaissement de tous"—surprisingly, is Saint-Just's. See his early work cited in note 45; vol. I, p. 258.

49. This was the judgment of Collot d'Herbois, quoted from Soboul, *op. cit.*

50. "The Jacobins and the societies affiliated with them are those which spread terror among tyrants and aristocrats." *Ibid.*

51. In the letter to John Cartwright, June 5, 1824.

52. This quotation is from a slightly earlier period when Jefferson proposed to divide the counties "into hundreds." (See letter to John Tyler, May 26, 1810.) Clearly, the wards he had in mind were to consist of about a hundred men.

53. Letter to Cartwright, quoted previously.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Letter to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816.

56. The citations are drawn from the letters just quoted.

57. Letter to Samuel Kercheval, September 5, 1816.

58. Letter to Thomas Jefferson Smith, February 21, 1825.

59. Letter to Cartwright, quoted previously.
60. Letter to John Tyler, quoted previously.
61. The citations are drawn from the letter to Joseph C. Cabell of February 2, 1816, and from the two letters to Samuel Kercheval already quoted.
62. George Soule, *The Coming American Revolution*, New York, 1934, p. 53.
63. For Tocqueville, see author's Introduction to *Democracy in America*; for Marx, *Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich, 1840–1850* (1850), Berlin, 1951, p. 124.
64. In 1871 Marx called the Commune *die endlich entdeckte politische Form, unter der die ökonomische Befreiung der Arbeit sich vollziehen könnte*, and called this its "true secret." (See *Der Bürgerkrieg in Frankreich* (1871), Berlin, 1952, pp. 71 and 76.) Only two years later, however, he wrote: "Die Arbeiter müssen . . . auf die entschiedenste Zentralisation der Gewalt in die Hände der Staatsmacht hinwirken. Sie dürfen sich durch das demokratische Gerede von Freiheit der Gemeinden, von Selbstregierung usw. nicht irre machen lassen" (in *Enthüllungen über den Kommunistenprozess zu Köln* [Sozialdemokratische Bibliothek Bd. IV], Hattingen Zürich, 1885, p. 81). Hence, Oskar Anweiler, to whose important study of the council system, *Die Rätebewegung in Russland 1905–1921*, Leiden, 1958, I am much indebted, is quite right when he maintains: "Die revolutionären Gemeinderäte sind für Marx nichts weiter als zeitweilige politische Kampforgane, die die Revolution vorwärtstreiben sollen, er sieht in ihnen nicht die Keimzellen für eine grundlegende Umgestaltung der Gesellschaft, die vielmehr von oben, durch die proletarische zentralistische Staatsgewalt, erfolgen soll" (p. 19).
65. I am following Anweiler, op. cit., p. 101.
66. The enormous popularity of the councils in all twentieth-century revolutions is sufficiently well known. During the German revolution of 1918 and 1919, even the Conservative party had to come to terms with the *Räte* in its election campaigns.
67. In the words of Leviné, a prominent professional revolutionist, during the revolution in Bavaria: "Die Kommunisten treten nur für eine Räterepublik ein, in der die Räte eine kommunistische Mehrheit haben." See Helmut Neubauer, "München und Moskau 1918–1919: Zur Geschichte der Rätebewegung in Bayern," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Beiheft 4, 1958.
68. See the excellent study of *The Paris Commune of 1871*, London, 1937, by Frank Jellinek, p. 27.
69. See Anweiler, op. cit., p. 45.

70. Maurice Duverger—whose book on *Political Parties. Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (French edition, 1951), New York, 1961, supersedes and by far excels all former studies on the subject—mentions an interesting example. At the elections to the National Assembly in 1871, the suffrage in France had become free, but since there existed no parties the new voters tended to vote for the only candidates they knew at all, with the result that the new republic became the "Republic of Dukes."
71. The record of the secret police in fostering rather than preventing revolutionary activities is especially striking in France during the Second Empire and in Czarist Russia after 1880. It seems, for example, that there was not a single anti-government action under Louis Napoleon which had not been inspired by the police; and the more important terroristic attacks in Russia prior to war and revolution seem all to have been police jobs.
72. Thus, the conspicuous unrest in the Second Empire, for instance, was easily contradicted by the overwhelmingly favorable outcome of Napoleon III's plebiscites, these predecessors of our public-opinion polls. The last of these, in 1869, was again a great victory for the Emperor; what nobody noticed at the time and what turned out to be decisive a year later was that nearly 15 per cent of the armed forces had voted against the Emperor.
73. Quoted from Jellinek, op. cit., p. 194.
74. One of the official pronouncements of the Parisian Commune stressed this relation as follows: "C'est cette idée communale poursuivie depuis le douzième siècle, affirmée par la morale, le droit et la science qui vient de triompher le 18 mars 1871." See Heinrich Koechlin, *Die Pariser Commune von 1871 im Bewusstsein ihrer Anhänger*, Basel, 1950, p. 66.
75. Jellinek, op. cit., p. 71.
76. Anweiler, op. cit., p. 127, quotes this sentence by Trotsky.
77. For the latter, see Helmut Neubauer, op. cit.
78. See Oskar Anweiler, "Die Räte in der ungarischen Revolution," in *Osteuropa*, vol. VIII, 1958.
79. Sigmund Neumann, "The Structure and Strategy of Revolution: 1848 and 1948," in *The Journal of Politics*, August 1949.
80. Anweiler, op. cit., p. 6, enumerates the following general characteristics: "1. Die Gebundenheit an eine bestimmte abhängige oder unterdrückte soziale Schicht, 2. die radikale Demokratie als Form, 3. die revolutionäre Art der Entstehung," and then comes to the conclusion: "Die diesen Räten zugrundeliegende Tendenz, die man als 'Rätegedanken' bezeichnen kann, ist das Streben nach einer

möglichst unmittelbaren, weitgehenden und unbeschränkten Teilnahme des Einzelnen am öffentlichen Leben. . . ."

81. In the words of the Austrian socialist Max Adler, in the pamphlet *Demokratie und Räte-system*, Wien, 1919. The booklet, written in the midst of the revolution, is of some interest because Adler, although he saw quite clearly why the councils were so immensely popular, nevertheless immediately went on to repeat the old Marxist formula according to which the councils could not be anything more than merely "eine revolutionäre Uebergangsform," at best, "eine neue Kampf-form des sozialistischen Klassenkampfes."

82. Rosa Luxemburg's pamphlet on *The Russian Revolution*, translated by Bertram D. Wolfe, 1940, from which I quote, was written more than four decades ago. Its criticism of the "Lenin-Trotsky theory of dictatorship" has lost nothing of its pertinence and actuality. To be sure, she could not foresee the horrors of Stalin's totalitarian regime, but her prophetic words of warning against the suppression of political freedom and with it of public life read today like a realistic description of the Soviet Union under Khrushchev: "Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an élite of the working class is invited from time to time to . . . applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously—at bottom, then, a clique affair . . ."

83. See Jellinek, op. cit., pp. 129 ff.

84. See Anweiler, op. cit., p. 110.

85. It is quite characteristic that in its justification of the dissolution of the workers' councils in December 1956, the Hungarian government complained: "The members of the workers' council at Budapest wanted to concern themselves exclusively with political matters." See Oskar Anweiler's article quoted previously.

86. Thus Duverger, op. cit., p. 419.

87. Quoted from Heinrich Koechlin, op. cit., p. 224.

88. For details of this process in Russia, see Anweiler's book, op. cit., pp. 155-58, and also the same author's article on Hungary.

89. Duverger, op. cit., p. 393, remarks rightly: "Great Britain and the Dominions, under a two-party system, are profoundly dis-

similar from Continental countries under a multi-party system, and . . . much closer to the United States in spite of its presidential regime. In fact, the distinction between single-party, two-party, and multi-party systems tends to become the fundamental mode of classifying contemporary regimes." Where, however, the two-party system is a mere technicality without being accompanied by recognition of the opposition as an instrument of government, as for instance in present-day Germany, it probably will turn out to be of no greater stability than the multi-party system.

90. Duverger, who notices this difference between the Anglo-Saxon countries and the continental nation states, is, I think, quite wrong in crediting an "obsolete" liberalism with the advantages of the two-party system.

91. I am again using Duverger—op. cit., pp. 423 ff.—who, in these paragraphs, however, is not very original but only expresses a widespread mood in postwar France and Europe.

92. The greatest and somehow inexplicable shortcoming of Duverger's book is his refusal to distinguish between party and movement. Surely he must be aware that he would not even be able to tell the story of the Communist party without noticing the moment when the party of professional revolutionists turned into a mass movement. The enormous differences between the Fascist and Nazi movements and the parties of the democratic regimes were even more obvious.

93. This was the evaluation of the United Nations' *Report on the Problem of Hungary*, 1956. For other examples, pointing in the same direction, see Anweiler's article, cited earlier.

94. See the interesting study of the party system by C. W. Cassinelli, op. cit., p. 21. The book is sound as far as American politics are concerned. It is too technical and somewhat superficial in its discussion of European party systems.

95. Cassinelli, op. cit., p. 77, illustrates with an amusing example how small the group of voters is who have a genuine and disinterested concern for public affairs. Let us assume, he says, that there has been a major scandal in government, and that as a result of it the opposition party is being voted into power. "If, for example, 70 per cent of the electorate votes both times and the party receives 55 per cent of the ballots before the scandal and 45 per cent afterward, primary concern for honesty in government can be attributed to no more than 7 per cent of the electorate, and this calculation ignores all other possible motives for changes of preference." This,

admittedly, is a mere assumption, but it certainly comes pretty close to reality. The point of the matter is not that the electorate obviously is not equipped to find out corruption in government, but that it cannot be trusted to vote corruption out of office.

96. With these words, it appears, the Hungarian trade unions joined the workers' councils in 1956. We know, of course, the same phenomenon from the Russian Revolution and also from the Spanish Civil War.

97. These were the reproaches leveled against the Hungarian Revolution by the Yugoslav Communist party. See Anweiler's article. These objections are not new; they were raised in much the same terms over and over again in the Russian Revolution.

98. Duverger, op. cit., p. 425.

99. Ibid., p. 426.

100. René Char, *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, Paris, 1946. For the English translation, see *Hypnos Waking: Poems and Prose*, New York, 1956.

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