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# PECULIARITIES OF THE ENGLISH ROUTE

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# Peculiarities of the English Route

## Barrington Moore, Perry Anderson and English Social Development

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# PECULIARITIES OF THE ENGLISH ROUTE

## BARRINGTON MOORE, PERRY ANDERSON AND ENGLISH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.*

I

In November 1844 Engels completed his Condition of the Working Class in England. Written, as he put it, 'from personal observation and authentic sources', it marked an important point in the development of Marxism. Of the works produced before the Communist Manifesto of 1848, it was one of the few considered worth re-publishing by Marx and Engels themselves. It served to repair the Young Hegelian Communists' ignorance of 'the real condition of life of the proletariat' and it helped to ground Communism, not as hitherto in premises derived from the critique of Hegel, Feuerbach and English political economy, but in the experience of a working class in what Engels called 'its classical form'.[1] But this first exercise in a Marxist history also stimulated Engels to plan a more ambitious project.[2]

> As soon as I am through with that /he wrote to Marx/ I shall tackle the history of the social development of the English, which will cost me much less effort, because I have the material for it all ready and arranged in order in my head, and because the whole business is perfectly clear to me.[2]

As we know, this plan was not carried out, though Engels' introduction to the English edition of the Condition (1892) provides a sketch.[3] And if one traces their occasional writing on England - which is quite extensive and very valuable - it seems that their initial clarity became clouded. From 1848 the English experience seemed more and more paradoxical, the oldest capitalist country with the biggest most 'developed' working class seemed immune to continental revolutions and from what Marx called 'the general social evolutions of European society.'[4] So they returned again and again to the English problem, of only in partial and piecemeal analyses, seeking the levers of change. They explored the political dimensions of landlordism, that critical Irish connection, the mystifications of the 'British Constitution', the character of English parliamentary leadership, parties and elections, the problem of India and the apparently bourgeois behaviour of mid-nineteenth-century trade unionists.[5]

Engels who lived to see the new unionism of the 1890s (which excited him) and the Socialist revival (which often irritated him immensely), recorded a kind of final judgement on England in 1892. The mixture of fine leading insights and a certain puzzlement seems typical of his whole post-1844 encounter with the English. Significantly, it was a verdict couched in terms of the analysis of ideology and a political culture:

> By its eternal compromises gradual, peaceful political development such as exists in England brings about a contradictory state of affairs. Because of the superior advantages it affords, this state can within certain limits be tolerated in practice, but its logical incongruities are a sore trial to the reasoning mind. Hence the need felt by all 'state-sustaining' parties for theoretical camouflage, even justification, which, naturally, are feasible only by means of sophisms, distortions

> and, finally, underhand tricks. Thus a literature is being reared in the sphere of politics which repeats all the wretched hypocrisy and mendacity of theological apologetics and transplants the theological intellectual vices to secular soil. Thus the soil of specifically Liberal hypocrisy is manured, sown and cultivated by the Conservatives themselves.

It seemed that the leading peculiarity of the English was their capacity to accept the most blatant contradictions between facts and dogmas and even between statement and statement:

> The British Constitution contains many more conflicting statements, / than the New Testament / constantly contradicts itself, and yet exists, hence must be true![6]

So Anderson's project, Moore's project, our project is really Engels' original one - THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH. It might be expressed in three main questions:

(i) What, in the light of patterns in other countries, has been peculiar about English capitalism and the English state?

(ii) How can we understand and explain these particularities?

(iii) And how can we employ this understanding for a more useful 'history' and a better, because historically-informed, political practice?

It is characteristic of the state of English social history, even in its Marxist variants and despite the promise which Hobsbawm detects that no English professional historian offers a point of departure for the project. The best work has been bounded by period: Hilton on the Middle Ages, Hill on the seventeenth century, Edward Thompson on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Hobsbawm on the later century as a whole. Even Edward Thompson was drawn into a wider speculative sweep only by Anderson's 'provocation'. So the most useful starting points to date, remain, it seems to me, Anderson's original essay which is more a political essay than a piece of 'history' and the formidable comparative social history of an American sociologist. In what follows, I will discuss Barrington Moore's Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy first, then Anderson's 'Origins of the Present Crisis'. But I will also draw on Marx's and Engels' original formulations and on the debate provoked by the Anderson/Nairn contributions.[7]

## II

The best way to describe Moore's book is in terms of three inter-related concerns. The first and the broadest is with 'modernization' or the processes of entry into 'the modern world'. Despite the ubiquitous use of these terms, Moore rarely takes time off to define them. The loose use of key concepts is characteristic of the book. It derives, in part, from Moore's method, for he is concerned to derive concepts empirically - to build them from the

comparison of instances. He is impatient with 'tiresome word games as a substitute for the effort to see what really happened'.[8] As a corrective to abstract formulations of the characteristics of 'traditional' and 'modern' societies, formulations in which Western, capitalist or 'democratic' models of excellence are often disguised, this is excellent. But the trouble with Moore's conceptual eclecticism is that he sometimes employs terms without an adequate criticism of them, or without an examination of ideological pedigree. This is especially the case, as we shall see, with the terms 'capitalism' and 'parliamentary democracy'.

By modernization, however, Moore seems to mean three processes. On the first of these he is quite explicit: the shift from an agrarian to an industrial base, 'the transformation from agrarian societies to modern industrial ones' or 'the transition to the world of commerce and industry'.[9] But modernization also involves what he calls, in the chapter on India (which is 'modern' in this sense alone) 'political species'.[10] It involves the emergence of the nation state with a uniform law and administrative practice. The Western model - parliamentary politics, an independent judiciary and 'the standard liberal freedoms' - is only one type of the modern nation state. Thirdly, modernization necessarily brings fundamental changes in the position and the mutual relations of traditional social classes. It may be defined as the movement away from a state of society in which the central, determining relation is that of lord and peasant. Moore's treatment of the case of China shows that he has more in mind than industrialisation as the criterion of modernity. For here is a society still hugely agrarian but modern or entering the modern world by virtue of a transformation of its rural social structure and the creation of a modern state.

But if modern societies are in some ways similar, modernizing routes have differed greatly. And it is the differences, in path as much as outcome, that interest Moore most. They form his second main concern. And again, his method is empirical and comparative. He is concerned to identify the course and the particular constellations of modernising forces in each of the large societies, European and Asian, which he chooses to study.[11] From these particulars, he constructs three styles, paths or routes. Thus France, England and America with markedly different histories and points of entry still share a common route: via 'bourgeois revolution', capitalism and 'democratic' political regimes. Japan, Germany (sketchily) and Italy (very shadowily indeed) form a second type. Here modernization occurs through a 'revolution from above' with no decisive break from the past or none generated by popular forces. Instead, modernization is enforced in long periods of conservative rule, allied to capitalist business and culminating in Fascism. Russia and China, of course, represent the

non-capitalist adaptation. And the motors of a communist transformation are late revolutions fuelled primarily by peasant grievances.

The three routes are as much phases as alternatives.[12] Moore is certainly concerned to show why each country took the route it did and not some other - what was necessary in France, for instance, to make a democratic rather than a totalitarian adaptation. He is also concerned to signal points along the way where broadly different paths seemed possible. He notes the reactionary potential of England in the 1790s and the failed or aborted peasant rebellions of French and German history. Yet once these moments pass, the outcome seems heavily determined. For the three routes are also grouped in time and missed opportunities are not recoverable. Thus the route via bourgeois democracy is essentially a first-phase modernization, a modernization of the pioneers. It is not repeatable later, elsewhere. In democratic routes the crucial adaptations occur early: from the seventeenth-century in England, the eighteenth in France and the mid-nineteenth in America. Where modernization occurs through conservative rule it occurs late in both Germany and Japan, principally from 1870 onwards. Communism is peculiarly late, telescoped form, the most likely twentieth-century, late-start, adaptation.

It follows that Moore's individual histories have different temporal spans. In all cases except the American he reaches back to medieval or 'feudal' origins, but he drops the English, American and French stories once, in his view, the character of the route has been established. More curiously, in a book published as late as 1966, Germany and Japan are left in the midst of their Fascist phases. Only the chapters on India and China are much concerned with contemporary dilemmas, their paths still either obscure or undetermined. One can see the logic of this in a book about transitions, but it is a pity, for our purposes, that Moore did not conclude his European sections with a discussion of the contemporary peculiarities of the English, French and Germans and the determination of these differences from the past. In all the concentration on paths or routes, while applauding the accent on process, one often wants to ask - 'to what?'

A more serious criticism, because addressed to the avowed purpose, is this: his method - a set of domestic histories over different periods of time - does not allow him adequately to stress reciprocal reactions between national developments. How did capitalist Europe affect the course of events in twentieth-century Russia? How did the perpetual rivalries of European states affect their domestic histories? How does the larger imperialist conflict bear upon Moore's major themes? He argues that late modernizers may in some sense learn from earlier cases - the so-called benefits of backwardness - but this is a very weak, idealist form of Marx's world history.[13]

His third concern is with the role of agrarian social classes in the actual process of modernization. The central thesis is that lord and peasant (or 'the landed upper classes' and 'the underlying population') have played a major part in determining routes to the modern world. In particular the forms of agriculture and the socio-political relations of landed property have been 'decisive factors in determining the political outcome'.[14] Throughout the book, often with great ingenuity, this thesis is pushed as far as it will go, sometiees a good deal further. It is represented as a major revision of a Marxist orthodoxy - that it is primarily the new, insurgent social classes (bourgeoisie and working class) that have shaped the modern world.[15] The landed nexus has not merely determined national routes; lord and peasant have also contributed the programmes and rhetorics of modern radicalisms and conservatisms. They have left powerful ideological legacies. The most forceful and interesting formulation of this is in connection with peasant radicalisms, or, more correctly, the radicalisms of small producers. In that odd, residual chapter on 'Reactionary and Revolutionary Imagery' Moore writes:

> Because peasant discontent has frequently expressed itself in reactionary forms, Marxist thinkers often regard peasant radicalism with a mixture of contempt and suspicion, or, at best, with patronizing condescension. To smile at this blindness, to point out that Marxist successes have come out of peasant revolutions, have almost become favourite anti-Marxist pastimes, so much so as to conceal more significant issues. As one reviews the spread of modern revolution...two points stand out. First, the utopian radical conceptions of one phase become the accepted institutions and philosophical platitudes of the next. Secondly, the chief social basis of radicalism has been the peasants and the smaller artisans in the towns. From these facts one may conclude that the wellsprings of human freedom lie not only where Marx saw them, in the aspirations of classes about to take power, but perhaps even more in the dying wail of a class over whom the wave of progress is about to roll. Industrialism, as it continues to spread, may in some distant future still these voices forever and make revolutionary radicalism as anachronistic as cuneiform writing.[16]

The passage is worth quoting at length because it illustrates Moore's characteristic stance: a scholarly kind of pessimism (?) which seems to owe something to Marcuse's formulations and a very deliberate dissociation both from 'Marxist thinkers' (who precisely?) and their obviously ideological critics.[17] More substantively, it illustrates one of the problems, perhaps, the problem with Moore - the necessary one-sidedness of his thesis. For of course in transitional phases and especially in the transition to industrial capitalism, emergent and residual social classes co-exist. History is unlikely to be determined wholly by the classes of landed society or those of modern industry. So a key question is how far his emphasis on lord and peasant seriously truncates his social histories, excising or under-playing a role for working class and bourgeoisie.

I'll return to this problem later in considering his account of England, but it is worth recording that Moore is clearly aware of the general problem and that he handles it with considerable subtlety at least in the case of the bourgeoisie. And he does this mainly through the notion of the modernizing coalition or alliance.

III

We may now look, in broad outline, at Moore's three routes. This is most conveniently done in the form of a chart which allows us to compare the decisive moments. One way of simplifying Moore's explanations - why countries took the routes they did - is to see him as using four sets of determinations:

1. The forms of agriculture which determine the nature and persistence of the landed upper classes and the peasantry into the modern world

2. The forms of the State which are inherited from periods of absolute monarchy or agrarian bureaucracy and are modified or strengthened by modern alliances

3. The nature of modernising social coalitions and especially the terms of balance of alliances struck between bourgeoisie and the landed upper classes.

And finally, though not included explicitly in the chart, the absence or presence of revolutionary violence and a decisive break from the past.

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Route I: Democratic/Capitalist (England, France & USA)

Forms of Agriculture:

1. Strong/early commercial impulse
2. Either landed upper classes absent (USA North & West) or they early adopt a capitalist form of agriculture (England) or if agriculture is feudal/commercial (France) or 'labour repressive' (USA South), they succumb to revolutionary violence (France 1789; American Civil War).
3. SO.... either peasantry absent (USA) or eliminated by capitalist agriculture by the nineteenth century (England) or, if persistent, freed from semi-feudal ties and communal institutions weakened (France).

(For what happens if no strong commercial impulse see Route III; for what happens if peasantry in feudal or labour repressive relations persist see Route II)

Forms of the State

4. Early monarchies modernize (national unification, control feudal nobility etc) (France and England sixteenth and seventeenth centuries).
5. BUT.... meet strong anti-absolutist alliances (In England a strong alliance independent of monarchy early; in France, a weaker, dependent alliance later. Hence the necessity of revolution in France to

establish democratic institutions)

(For what happens if absolute monarchy or agrarian bureaucracies persist unchallenged into the modern world see Routes II and III).

Modernizing Alliances

6. Bourgeoisie strong early (England, USA North, France more doubtfully)
7. Bourgeoisie allies with capitalist sections of the landed upper classes against the Crown and traditional sectors (Puritan Revolution) OR enters a complex shifting alliance with peasants and sans culottes against the Crown and aristocracy (French Revolution)
8. SO... industrial bourgeoisie allies loosely with an adaptive (capitalist) landed upper class leading to surrogate rule, through parliamentary institutions of landed upper class for industrial capital (England in the nineteenth century)
   OR anti-aristocratic revolution limited by upper peasantry and bourgeoisie against lower peasantry and urban radicals, leading to unstable forms of French democracy.

(For what happens if no revolutionary break from the past in capitalist adaptations see Route II)

Route II: Reactionary/Capitalist (Germany, Japan and Italy)

Forms of Agriculture

1. Some commercial impulse
2. Landed upper classes adopt feudal/commercial or 'labour repressive' forms of agriculture (re-introduction of serfdom in E. Europe; Commercial adaptation of 'feudalism' in Japan).
3. SO.... peasantry persists with weak communal institutions and tied to landed upper classes into the nineteenth century

Forms of State

4. Autocratic but fragmented (Germany/Prussia) or agrarian bureaucracy (Japan)
5. Anti-absolutist elements weak; state forms persits; parliaments weak.

Modernizing Alliances

6. Bourgeoisie weak/late/tied
7. Nineteenth-century alliance of politically weak bourgeoisie and politically-entrenched landed upper class against reaction and popular radicalism.
8. Long period of conservative, quasi-parliamentary rule and modernization from above (Germany: Bismarck to WWI; Meiji Japan 1864-1912) leading to Fascism (making reaction popular; social basis in peasantry and lower middle class). Penalty of past 'peace'.

Route III: Communism (Russia and China)

Forms of Agriculture

1. Commercial impulse weak/late
2. Landed upper classes and peasantry persist into the twentieth century.
3. Peasant communal institutions remain intact and cohesive

Forms of State

4. Agrarian bureaucracy (China); Royal Absolutism (Russia)
5. No strong countervailing alliances

Modernizing Alliances

6. Bourgeoisie late/weak/tied
7. Modernization from above extremely burdensome to the peasantry but its political cohesion marked
8. Fusion of peasant grievances and urban working class (Russia) leading to late revolution by but not for peasantry. BUT IN CHINA?

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As even this summary makes plain, Moore's arguments are very complex. At the risk of further simplification, it is worth saying a little about each of his major determinants. He stresses the first - which we might call, in very un-Moore-like language, Agrarian modes of production - because of the whole thrust of his thesis. He spends a major part of each of his case studies in examining the very varied forms of agriculture. The existence of opportunities to adopt commercial agriculture and the form in which these opportunities are exploited are crucial. A strong commercial impulse at an early stage distinguishes the capitalist from the communist routes. The social basis of communist revolution has proved to be not so much an industrial working class as exploited peasant communities which have retained (unlike the French) their internal cohesion, yet face the late strains of modernization. Communist revolution therefore depends on the persistence of peasantry and, correspondingly, upon the early weakness of a thrust towards commercial agriculture.

But the form of commercialisation is as important as its timing. The Form distinguishes democratic and reactionary routes within the broader generic type of capitalism. The most favourable agrarian mode for the development of a capitalist democracy is one in which, as in England, a peasantry is altogether eliminated; the least favourable is some 'labour repressive' mode by which peasant production is retained but a surplus is extracted by highly coercive means. This has several effects which are inimical to democracy and liberal freedoms. It preserves a peasantry

which, with little political potential of its own, may form a reservoir of popular twentieth-century anti-capitalism of a Fascist type. It requires, in the first place a repressive state apparatus and a generally authoritarian and militaristic political culture incompatible with bourgeois freedoms. It makes a persistent landed upper class especially dependent upon the control of state power to maintain its position in the phase of modernization. Presiding over a booming capitalist agriculture English aristocracy in the nineteenth century could afford a Whiggish strategy; Germany's junkers could not. One worries about the precise distinctions between some of Moore's agrarian modes but these parts of the discussion are among the most interesting in the book.

Moore notes that all of the societies he has studied (except colonial America) developed quite strong centralised governments at an early stage of their histories, usually in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.[18] A distinguishing feature of the democratic adaptation was the growth of powerful groups independent of royal absolutism or bureaucracy. Monarchy was accordingly tamed. Ideally, as once more in England, royal power was sufficiently strong in an early phase to blunt the power of feudal nobility and achieve a national unification. Yet it was not strong enough, long enough, to control, in traditional ways, a developing capitalist economy. Moore's discussion of the inherited forms of the state and certainly his case studies suggest that unless, as in France and England, strong independent alliances had broken the power of monarchy by the late eighteenth century, a totalitarian outcome was intrinsically likely. He pursues quite a familiar 'pluralist' argument: that democracy derives from a balance of social forces. But his version is characteristically subtle: balance must change in appropriate directions over time; the anti-absolutist forces must be constituted in the right way; and these past struggles may often be exceedingly violent.

Although Moore is especially concerned to trace the roles of peasantry and landed upper classes, the key element in modernizing and anti-absolutist alliances is acknowledged to be the bourgeoisie. A further distinguishing feature of the three routes is the strength and political independence of what Moore usually calls 'town-dwellers' and what we may term commercial and industrial capitalists. Moore identifies these class fragments as the main carriers of democracy and of liberal political notions. Modernizing alliances in which a bourgeoisie is predominant favour democratic adaptations; the reactionary route rests on an alliance in which the landed upper classes (of a distinctively non-bourgeois hue) are predominant and the bourgeoisie at first, politically subordinate. As Moore himself writes:

> Without going into the evidence further or discussing the Asian materials that point in the same direction, we may simply register strong agreement with the Marxist thesis that a vigorous and independent class of town dwellers has been an indispensable element in the growth of parliamentary democracy. No bourgeois, no democracy. The principal actor would not appear on the stage if we confined our attention strictly to the agrarian sector.[19]

Thus, at the risk of punching a largish hole in his own thesis, he accommodates a section of the inhabitants of towns within his histories. If one adds (as Moore also acknowledges) that the impulse of commercial agriculture depended upon the growth of urban markets, transport and trade, the way is open to a major simplification of his case, at least for England, France and America: the simple equation reads - early capitalism equals democracy. Even so, there is enough left of Moore's own thesis for us to be able to take seriously his careful reformulation: 'still the actors in the countryside have played a sufficiently important part to deserve careful inquiry'[20]

Finally, in a running battle with Conservative apologetics, Moore insists on the creative functions of revolutionary violence. It is through popular violence in England and France that royal absolutism is checked while the American Civil War - 'a bloody gash across the whole record' -[21] destroyed the plantation system, a major inhibition to a democratic form of American capitalism. But France provides the most telling instance of the role of revolutionary violence. Of all the case studies the French is most finely poised at the entry-point to different routes, so much so that Moore might have entitled his chapter 'the peculiarities of the French'. The Ancien Regime had several features which, in other cases, proved antithetical to the democratic route: a relatively weak industrial bourgeoisie; a peculiarly strong form of royal absolutism and a highly bureaucratized state; a landed upper class and even sections of the bourgeoisie without strong, independent economic roots, largely tied to monarchy and parasitic upon the court; a very large peasant class only partially emancipated from feudal entanglements in systems of agriculture intermediate between English agrarian capitalism and the estate systems of Eastern Europe. As Moore puts it at the end of his long chapter on France:[22]

> The central message that I have been able to discern in the origins, course, and consequences of the Revolution is that the violent destruction of the ancien regime was a crucial step for France on the long road towards democracy. It is necessary to underscore the point that the step was crucial for France, where obstacles democracy faced were different from those in England. French society did not and probably could not generate a parliament of landlords with bourgeois overtones, in the English manner. Previous trends in France had made the upper classes into an enemy of liberal democracy, not part of democracy's entering wedge. Hence if democracy were to triumph in France, certain

> institutions would have to be gotten out of the way. To assert that such was the connection, implies no claim that French history was inevitably bound to culminate in liberal democracy or that the Revolution was in any sense inevitable. Instead there are grounds for holding that the whole process could have worked out very differently and that, for this very reason, the Revolution was all the more decisive.

Hence the critical importance of a violent revolution that was 'bourgeois' in the sense that it abolished major inhibitions to capitalism and democracy, but was pushed in its destructive work by the radicalism of urban and rural small producers. Hence, too, once, the reaction of bourgeoisie and upper peasantry had checked the revolutionary impulse, the extreme vulnerability of French democratic institutions.[23]

IV

It is useful to turn to Moore's treatment of England both for his account of English peculiarities and for a closer testing of his thesis. An adequate critique (of the whole book) depends upon the critic's ability to match his formidable if secondarily-derived historical knowledge. It is no doubt significant that a historian who has mainly worked on the nineteenth-century finds the last section of his chapter on England the least satisfactory. But the defects of the English chapter seem also to be related to two larger failings: the tendency to under-rate the role of modern social classes, especially the working class; the buying, despite disclaimers, of some (but not all) of the characteristic myths of English historiography in its more "Whiggish" forms. These defects are in turn related to the inexact or uncritical use of key concepts: the inexact use of 'capitalism' and the failure critically to explore 'parliamentary democracy' both as a concept in liberal political science and as a concrete historical form of the state.

Moore associates the first three salient characteristics of the English route with the period from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries: the early decline of a common European form of feudalism; the evolution of a characteristically weak form of royal absolutism in the Tudor monarchy; the early growth, at least by the late sixteenth century of both mercantile and agarian capitalism. The stronger though necessarily fleeting part of this discussion is the appreciation of the early role of monarchy: the weakening of a feudal nobility and the English Church, and the establishing of an internal peace. He might also have stressed the creation of a unified nation state, the pursuit of nationalist trade and foreign policies and the first phases in the development of English colonialism. The weaker part of the discussion concerns the origins of capitalism in England and

this is all the more important since the early development of agrarian capitalism in particular is crucial for his thesis. His definition of capitalism is unclear, shifting and partial. Despite his close attention to the forms of agriculture and rural social structure throughout the book, the distinction between merely commercial and actually capitalist forms of agriculture remains unclear. This may be because his implicit definitions of capitalism are Weberian or Tawneyesque rather than Marxist. Capitalism is less a distinctive mode of production with a dominant type of economic and social relationship between classes than a set of discrete phenomena, elements of organisation or attitude. Thus Moore writes about 'the capitalist principle', 'a commercial and even a capitalist outlook' (the difference?), an attitude to the land as 'modern capitalist private property', a belief in 'self-interest and economic freedom as the natural basis of human society', the adoption of revolutionary agrarian techniques and so on[24]. As a scatter of capitalist attributes this might do, but one feels Moore misses the historical centre of the system. Thus though he illustrates the social logic of agrarian capitalism in revolutionising social relationships on the land from the sixteenth century onwards, he does not fully express the fact that capitalist requires proletarian and that capitalism creates the political problem of the proletarian presence and the means of class control. Although one can meaningfully refer to groups of proletarian workers in England long before the nineteenth century and discern too characteristically pre-industrial-revolution class relationships[25], the one-sided definition of capitalism is most seriously defective when applied to the nineteenth century.

Moore's second major argument is that agrarian and commercial capitalism developed in a close alliance and independently of the Crown. This is perhaps his most important single insight. This constellation seems to have been unique to the English route and certainly distinguished it from the French.

> A very important instance of convergent interests between major segments of the landed aristocracy and the upper ranks of the town dwellers occurred in Tudor and Stuart England. There the convergence arose at an early stage in the course of modernization and under circumstances that led both groups to oppose the royal authority. These aspects are of crucial importance in explaining the democratic consequences. In contrast to the situation in France of the same period... the English bourgeoisie was vigorous and independent with far-flung interests in an export trade.

He adds that largely owing to England's early start, this was 'among the major countries, a unique configuration'[26]. (Examination of the Dutch case would be instructive). Marx had much the same insight and it is one key to his explanation of English gradualism too:

> The only explanation M. Guizot is able to offer of what to him is a great puzzle, the puzzle of why the English Revolution was conservative in character, is that it was due to the superior intelligence of the English, whereas its conservatism is to be attributed to the permanent alliance between the bourgeoisie and the greater part of the big landlords, an alliance which essentially differentiates the English Revolution from the French - the revolution that abolished big landownership by parcellation. Unlike the French feudal landowners of 1789, this class of big landed proprietors, which had allied itself with the big bourgeoisie and which, incidentally, had arisen already under Henry VIII, was not antagonistic to but rather in complete accord with the conditions of life of the bourgeoisie. In actual fact their landed estates were not feudal but bourgeois property.[27]

In both Marx and Moore an interpretation of Puritan Revolution is placed within this context. The Civil War was a conflict between the progressive capitalist sectors of land and trade and the traditional sectors that supported an attempt to assert royal control or simply rallied to the crown to support a traditional authority. The Puritan Revolution was not 'bourgeois' in the sense that it was a revolution of the bourgeoisie (though commercial centres tended to be on the parliamentary side). Rather it belonged to the genus 'bourgeois revolution' because it was a revolution for agrarian and commercial capitalism and for parliamentary rule against royal and ecclesiastical inhibitions to both. This interpretation, still underpinned by Tawneys original research, seems very convincing. It is arguable that Moore overestimates the significance of the revolution - this kind of break was much less important for England than for France - and that he underplays religious issues. This is not to imply that they were some altogether autonomous factor, but they were the major vehicle of conflict. For protestantism (in England) was inextricably associated with capitalism just as loosely 'Catholic' religious forms were and continued to be a vehicle of English forms of conservatism.

It is difficult to fault Moore's account of the period from the Restoration to the later eighteenth century: the heyday of agrarian and commercial capitalism ruling through parliamentary means. Perhaps he assumes too great an identity of state and civil society. Like Namier, he sees the eighteenth-century House of Commons as a 'microcosm

of English society' (or of its dominant bloc), but unlike Namier he pays little attention to those sections of the landed and moneyed elite who coalesced around the crown (which was still a focus of 'political' activity in the narrow sense), formed political factions, and appropriated the considerable financial advantages of office.[28] Were we concerned with a more refined version of eighteenth-century politics, two suggestions, one from Marx, the other from Edward Thompson, would bear a closer examination.

Marx identified the Revolution of 1688 and the monarchy of William III as the fruit of an alliance between landed capital and 'the financial bourgeoisie' rather than the class as a whole. He implies that political factions with these social bases managed to appropriate state power, much as the monarchy of Louis Phillipe amounted to the rule of France's 'finance aristocracy'.[29] More accurately, perhaps, Edward Thompson has stressed the reality of eighteenth century conflicts between land and money, court and country and the very real historical presence of Cobbett's 'Old Corruption' - a kind of moneyed/landed mafia that monopolized office and milked state revenues.[30] The basic approach here, which stresses different ruling-class traditions, the repertoire of hegemonic ideas (see Edward Thompson on 'paternalism' and gentry 'theatre') and the relations of ruling class fractions is superior to Moore's blunter sociology of 'landed upper class' and 'town-dwellers'. It helps to explain, for instance, why gentry responses to populace before the 1790s were never wholly coercive. The problem of the removal of 'Old Corruption' likewise explains much in the detailed patterns of politics between the 1770s and 1832, notably the way in which the first bearers of a political radicalism were the natural oppositional groups of eighteenth-century politics - small property owners in London and the lesser gentry and free-holders of the counties. These findings, however, are not at root in conflict with Moore's major point: that the eighteenth-century English state was used primarily to benefit and reproduce agrarian and commercial capital.

The clearest case is, of course, enclosure. (The criminal code is another). And Moore's discussion here is one of the best parts of the chapter for he manages to synthesize a large and controversial debate between econmic and social historians. Wishing to argue, however, that it is legal violence that solves England's 'peasant problem' he post-dates the persistence of groups who can usefully be described as 'peasants'. Those who were proletarianised by the legal violence of enclosure were less peasants, more independent small agrarian producers (peasants without a lord?)

with some communal organisation, or semi-proletarians/semi-peasants, wage-earners primarily but with marginal access to land, those groups very commonly described as 'cottagers'. More seriously he tends to detach enclosure from industrial revolution. It is rather surprising indeed to find an account of English social development that does not use this magical phrase. Moore says next to nothing about the growth of industrial capital (not new but massively expanding) and of proletarianised groups of industrial workers. It is here, perhaps, that his attenuated notion of capitalism, the crudity of 'town-dwellers' (and even 'bourgeoisie') and the neglect of the working class begins to show. He also fails to grasp the economic as well as the political complementarity of agrarian and industrial capital.[31] Moore also overplays the passivity of English populace before and in the early stages of the industrial revolution. His 'peasants' are purely 'victims'. And this is important, for it means he also greatly overplays the ease of the transition in terms of the management of popular resistance. This bears very much on early nineteenth-century uses of the state and thence on the English potential for a reactionary (or a bureaucratic) adaptation. If anything Moore underestimates this possibility and therefore finds it rather too easy to explain why it did not occur.

V

As I suggested earlier, the nineteenth-century section is the weakest part of the chapter. Again this is related to his thesis about traditional social classes. At the point where working class and industrial bourgeoisie become major actors, determinations from a violent past are made to carry the main burden of explanation. But Moore also accepts too readily the rather assured portrayal of nineteenth-century English development which is deeply embedded in both the historical and political cultures. He fails to penetrate the quite Whiggish assumptions of the historians whose work he uses, notably Kitson Clark, Woodward, Mather and F.M.L. Thompson. Having stressed <u>past</u> violence, he is prepared to accept, with only a hint of parody, much of the usual paraphenalia of 'moderate and intelligent statesmen', 'legislation to improve the situation of the poor' (shades of Lord Shaftesbury, 'social reform' and the New Poor Law?), Whig devotion to 'the ideal of liberty' and, of course, the violent threat of Chartism.[32] His basic question about England, indeed, is phrased within this tradition. <u>His</u> question is 'why did the process of industrialization in England culminate in the establishment of a relatively free society?' A <u>more penetrating question</u>, accepting a part of the premise, would read rather: 'Since in England, both the coercive and bureaucratic apparatus of the state was (for reasons that require explanation) rather weak, how was a particularly strong and early popular challenge contained?'

Moore goes some way to supplying an answer to his own question. Legacies from a violent past included a strong parliament and a weak executive, an adaptive landed upper class which did not need to resist 'the advance of industry', no 'peasant problem', the intimate, but not too incestuous cousinhood of land and trade. In his chosen area - the relations between the landed upper class and the English bourgeoise - Moore is sound and interesting. As we shall see his version of relations within this dominant bloc are more accurate than Anderson's. Yet he does not supply an adequate explanation of English gradualism because a major historical actor is missing. The early working class, like the earlier 'peasants' play an almost entirely passive role. They are relatively easily disciplined 'with a minimum of help from the state'. (Rural police? New Poor Law? Education? Spy system? Army of the North?). Chartism presents an alien violent threat but is treated with lenience.

Against this one might insist that the new working class presence was in many ways <u>determining</u>. It 'made' not only itself, but contributed to the making of nineteenth-century English society, not least, to 'bourgeois' freedoms. It was not so much middle-class agitation nor the inherited 'amateur' culture of aristocracy[33] that made England 'relatively free', but rather a plebian agitation and culture, or more accurately still a friction of all three. If time allowed this could be demonstrated in several critical areas: in the actual achievement of 'parliamentary DEMOCRACY' (as opposed to an wholly propertied parliamentary system); in the liberty of the press and of public meeting, both freedoms being won or maintained by <u>popular exercise</u>; and, not least, in the stemming of a very real impulse towards a bureaucratic state, signalled in the popular defeat of the full Chadwickian programme of Poor Law Reform.[34]

As for the question I have unfairly fathered on Moore, he, unsurprisingly, does not answer it all. Perhaps he would not accept <u>its</u> premise. The nineteenth century, after all, 'was the age of <u>peaceful</u> transformation when parliamentary democracy <u>established itself</u> firmly and broadened down from precedent to precedent.'[35] It is possible, nonetheless, to supply something like an answer to the problem of containment in the context of a relatively weak state from Moore's chapter on ideology and culture. It is a pity that this very interesting section on 'Reactionary and Revolutionary Imagery' is so curiously divorced from the rest of the book. The general critique both of conservative historiography and of an idealist conception of culture ought to have informed his case studies. Particularly this passage:

> The assumption of inertia, that cultural and social continuity do not require explanation, obliterates the fact that both have to be recreated anew in each generation, often with great pain and suffering. To maintain and transmit a value system human beings are punched, bullied, sent to jail, thrown in concentration camps, cajoled, bribed, made into heroes, encouraged to read newspapers, stood up against a wall and shot, and sometimes even taught sociology. To speak of cultural inertia is to overlook the concrete interests and privileges that are served by indoctrination, education and the entire complicated process of transmitting culture from one generation to the next.[36]

In nineteenth century England, it is true, there was more bribing, cajoling, jailing, making of heroes, supplying newspapers and teaching in schools than the more brutally repressive alternatives, though the English criminal law retained its own refinements. It was also political economy that was taught not sociology. Yet it is precisely this dimension that ought to have informed Moore's English story, the story of what the BBC is pleased to call "Churchill's People". It is, however, precisely this dimension that is missing.

VI

The Nairn/Anderson excursion into history derived from the New Left Review's analysis of British politics in the mid 1960s, especially a concern to establish the meaning of the Labour victory under Wilson. The nature of the crisis with the origins of which Anderson was concerned is not entirely clear, but he seems to have set out to explain three inter-related British failures. The first most general failure was what Anderson called 'entropy' or the existence of 'a sclerosed, archaic society'[37] He seems to have had two things in mind: an economic failure and a social fossilization. One of the Nairn/Anderson questions is why the oldest capitalist society was, by the 1960s one of the least successful and why it appeared fixed in an almost pre-capitalist or pre-industrial mould. Thus they refer to 'the mythology of rank order', 'the pseudo-feudal coloration of British society', 'a comprehensive coagulating conservatism', the 'patrician political style' and even, in a reference to the inter-war period, 'the pseudo-feudal class structure'[38]. It is not always clear whether they are referring to an ideological conservatism, a conservatism of dominant social images or political style, or whether they are anatomising a social structure.

The second British failure was the failure of Labour or Labourism. Again this is seen as paradoxical. According to Nairn, the British Labour Party was 'one of the greatest political forces of the capitalist world'. It had the almost undivided loyalty of the working class in 'an overwhelmingly proletarian nation'.[39] Why, then, had it repeatedly failed, even from 1945 to 1951, to grasp 'the revolutionary opportunity'.

The third failure was the failure of English intellectuals: their parochialism, their crass empiricism, their failure to penetrate the fog of English traditionalism, the long and continued absence in England of either a serious Marxist tradition or a complete political theory or a classic theoretical sociology of any kind.[40] Much of the weakness of the English Left is traceable to this source. English intellectual life is a history of absences - no Lukacs, no Gramsci, no Sartre, not even a Goldman or an Althusser.

One may or may not accept this portrayal of post-Macmillan Britain, but it undoubtedly determined the Nairn/Anderson programme and especially the search for failures. It is worth saying, at this point, that this was not the most useful way to approach the history. The theory of failure, indeed coexists throughout the Nairn/Anderson project with a contradictory half-recognition of the ideological and political RESOURCES of the dominant classes in England, a powerful defence in depth. Viewed differently as I shall try to show later, each of the Nairn/Anderson 'failures' - failures that is of bourgeoisie or intelligentsia - can also be read as assets, as symptoms of strength, as a large but finite reportoire of solutions. In the work of Anderson and Nairn a half-recognition of this is overlaid by a rather self-indulgent Anglo-phobia and, as Edward Thompson convincingly shows, by a model of revolutionary and intellectual excellence based upon the no-less-specific experiences of 'Other Countries', notably France.[41] One great weakness of the whole project in comparison to Moore's is the absence of an explicit comparative dimension.

By far the best part of Anderson's analysis of the present crisis is the short passage dealing with the barriers between a labour electoral victory and qualitative social change. He points to the polycentricity of power in late British capitalism, to the relative unimportance of the military and the bureaucracy, to the direct 'striking power of capital' and to what he calls 'the extreme importance of cultural institutions'.[42] There is very little analysis of these but, after reading Moore, it is clear the right questions are being asked. And they are questions in terms of assets and repertoire not in terms of failure. If Anderson had taken that passage as his point of departure, his account would have been more revealing historically and more useful politically. As it is one has to re-interpret most of his conclusions.

One further consequence of the approach via failure is worth mentioning in passsing. It seriously skewed the Thompson response. On most but not all historical questions, the ones Edward Thompson knows most about, he is much more accurate than Anderson. But Anderson's Anglo-phobia set off a great spiral of cultural chauvinism so that a good part of the argument became the richness or otherwise of English bourgeois culture rather than its tendencies and effects. 'The Peculiarities of the English' remains a fascinating essay and a formidable polemic but is not always addressed to the most important issues.

VII

It is useful to divide a closer discussion of the Nairn/Anderson propositions into that part of the argument that deals with the history of the dominant bloc in England and the part about the working class. In considering the English ruling class it is worth recapitulating Moore's argument and comparing it with the view of Edward Thompson and of Marx and Engels. Together these accounts constitute what might be called the 'classic' Marxist version.

For Moore, the English route was the nearest thing to a success story in a very pessimistic book. This success was partly defined in terms of 'freedom'. More importantly here it was a success story for capitalism. By the early nineteenth century all the major historical inhibitions to the rule of capitalist classes had been swept away. Feudalism was long departed; royal power curtailed; peasant inertia or peasant revolution off the agendum; the landed upper class rendered bourgeois; English agriculture thoroughly modernized. Thus all the problems characteristic to the transition to industrial capitalism even in France and Germany were solved and solved early. So there was no need for a second, late bourgeois revolution on the French anti-aristocratic, anti-absolutist model. As we saw, Moore stopped short of discussing the problems, also very early in England, posed to capitalism by its internal contradictions and by working class resistance. But his basic point - the early, powerful and successful bourgeois thrust in land, commerce, industry and politics (not to say ideology) - is the key to English social development. The point is re-iterated by Edward Thompson who stresses its cultural dimensions and was also emphasized by Marx.[43]

The second feature of the 'classic' Marxist view is a particular and quite precise formulation of the relation between industrial bourgeoisie and the elder agrarian cousins. Moore, Thompson and also Poulantzas (whose contribution to the New Left Review debate is valuable)

hold to Marx's original version of the relationship: that from 1832, possibly earlier, the aristocratic cliques and parties that held formal political power within the English political system, that continued to dominate parliaments and cabinets right through to the 1880s, exercised that power in the interests of industrial capital. This was especially true of the Whigs; hence Marx's vivid satire of Lord John Russell, at face value merely a character assassination, at a deeper level a kind of micro working model of aristocratic powerlessness in a throroughly bourgeois world:

> The whole man is one false pretense, his whole life one great lie, his whole activity a chain of minute intrigues for shabby ends, the swallowing of public money and the usurpation of the mere show of power. No other man has verified to such a degree the truth of the Biblical axiom that no man is able to add one inch to his natural height. Placed by birth, connections and social accidents on a colossal pedestal, he always remained the same homunculus - a malignant and distorted dwarf on the top of a pyramid. The history of the world exhibits, perhaps, no other man so great in littleness.[44]

Though Moore's view of Whig 'statesmen' is rather different, his basic formulation is not dissimilar. Aristocratic politicians 'worked' the levers of power but learned the limits of their own. 'To concentrate on the strength of their position in the formal and even the informal apparatus of politics would give a misleading impression of the power of the gentry and the nobility'.[45] According to Edward Thompson, 1832 eroded that 'secondary complex of predatory interests' that was the nearest thing to 'aristocracy' in England. Thereafter there were two main developments: the steady pursuit by landed politicians of identifiably bourgeois economic and social policies and the steady sapping of landed power even in its county bastions. A more aggressively bourgeois strategy was simply not necessary. Aristocracy provided, in Bagehot's phrase, 'the dignified parts of the constitution' and a bourgeois tolerance of these excrescences merely illustrated a supreme confidence.[46] Both themes - the power of the capitalist impulse and the unequal political partnership - were expressed by Marx in 1850:

> A new, more colossal bourgeoisie arises. While the old bourgeoisie fights the French Revolution, the new one conquers the world market. It becomes so omnipotent that even before the Reform Bill puts direct political power into its hands it forces its opponents to pass laws almost exclusively in its interests and according to its needs. It conquers for itself direct representation in Parliament and uses it to destroy the last remnants of real power that landed property retains.[47]

The important emphases here are 'forces ... to pass', 'its needs' and 'real power'. Elsewhere Marx tried to show precisely how these mechanisms worked in terms of party, 'pressure from without' and the Whiggish alliance.[48]

Against the classic version Anderson presents us with its mirror image - a flawed or failed bourgeoisie and a hegemonic aristocracy. There are five main stages in the argument. First, Anderson agrees that the Puritan Revolution was a successful revolution for capitalism (the view is very similar to Moore's) but the English commercial bourgeoisie remained a subaltern class and the Revolution left no bourgeois ideological legacy. In a sense it failed because impure and too early. Second, the industrial revolution created both an English proletariat and the industrial fraction of the bourgeoisie. Both had some heroic moments. The industrial bourgeoisie forced the reform of parliament and the repeal of the corn laws but its courage (in some mysterious way) waned and it delegated its power to aristocracy. Thus far one can speak of two classes: aristocracy and bourgeoisie; after about 1850, they fuse, become a 'detotalized totality'.

> The end result of these convergent mutations was the eventual creation of a single hegemonic class, distinguished by a perpetually recreated virtual homogeneity and actual - determinate - porousness[49]

Yet still, within this hegemonic bloc, through its hold on formal politics and through its socialising institutions, aristocracy remains the dominant fraction. Fourthly, just when landed aristocracy was loosing its base in the agricultural depression, it received a further lease of life from Imperialism. This set the culture of the dominant class in 'a normatively agrarian mould' which it has not lost since - hence sclerosis, fossilization, 'the supercharged religion of monarchy' and the patrician political style. Finally Britain escaped most of the creative domestic effects of two World Wars. Even now (1964) the aristocratic segment within the dominant social bloc remains ascendant and it is its culture which is monolithicly hegemonic. And basically all this is the fault of the English bourgeoisie for being so supine politically and having no hegemonic ideology of its own.

There are several problems with this, its intrinsic unlikeliness apart. Many of the formulations are unclear. A case in point is the purely linguistic confusion over 'agrarian capitalists' and 'aristocrats' that led to Edward Thompson's long, very fine and mostly un-called-for lecture on the bourgeois attributes of the eighteenth-century gentry.[50] But there are many other examples of a verbal fireworks standing in for a sober careful and sociologically exact and consistent terminology. But a deeper level of unclarity concerns the kind of history Anderson was writing, admitting its schematic character. The most consistent answer is Anderson's own - that

he was writing a kind of totalizing history, but of an idealist kind, a la Lukacs, a history of superstructures.[51] But one of the troubles is that he did attempt more than this: 'the distinctive total trajectory of modern British society since the emergence of capitalism'; 'the global evolution of the class structure', no less[52]. In practice he focuses on ideology and on politics and takes modes of production and social relations as given. Hence the well-aimed Thompson criticism that his classes have no real root in a changing occupational or experiential base.[53]

It is also possible to criticise his use of key concepts, even in his chosen domain of ideology. As Poulantzas points out his use or misuse of Gramsci's term 'hegemony' has important consequencies for the whole argument. It leads in particular to the characteristic hyperbole of the conclusion - that the persistently conservative character of English society has to be explained in terms of the hegemony, right up to the present, of a recognisably aristocratic fraction. The logic of the Anderson position is this: the most pervasive feature of English society is its hierarchical, pseudo-feudal character or coloration; the carrier of these features, which are agrarian in character, must be an aristocratic class or class fraction; ergo the dominant segment of the ruling class in England has always been and remains aristocratic.

One difficulty with this is that it is extremely difficult in modern Britain to identify such an 'aristocratic' group. Certainly Anderson provides us with no solution to this problem, which, historically, becomes acute once the connection with landownership has been broken. But Poulantzas also shows that the argument is theoretically untenable or, at least, unnecessary. For he argues that Anderson mistakes 'hegemony' for 'class consciousness' and makes of it an altogether too monolithic conception. A particular dominant ideology may, in Poulantzas' words, 'comprise a number of elements which transcribe the way classes other than the hegemonic live their conditions of existence'.

> Given the peculiarities of capitalist formation in Britain, the dominant ideology there is deeply impregnated with elements relating to an aristocratic 'lifestyle', as Nairn and Anderson show. However, its internal essence, comprehensible if related to the overall unity of the formation, corresponds to the 'political hegemony' - not to the class consciousness - of the bourgeoisie, which explains those bourgeois 'features' that Thompson insists on.[54]

Put more historically and following Poulantzas, it seems possible to argue that the conservative or, if one will, 'the normatively agrarian' elements in English institutions and/or dominant ideology persisted first because the agrarian social formations did, but persist still because they have proved their value to a dominant class that is not, in any meaningful sense, 'aristocratic'. At least this releases us from what Edward Thompson calls 'the hunting of the aristocratic Snark'.[55]

A fourth main criticism concerns Anderson's view of determinations from the past. His version of English history is built around a few grand determining moments: Puritan Revolution; Industrial Revolution and Counter-Revolution of the 1790s; the moment of 'fusion', the imperialist phase, and, in a negative sense, two World Wars. At each stage something is permanently fixed in England social life. Thus the Puritan Revolution has three crucial idiosyncracies 'which have determined the whole of our subsequent history'.[56] The Counter-Revolution of the 1790s fixed 'habits and attitudes [in the English middle class] it has never lost'.[57] Imperialism 'set British Society in a matrix it has retained to this day.[58]

Of course there is some truth in all of these statements, especially perhaps, the last. But this notion of historical fixing, which is perilously close to a conservative or Burkean model, greatly oversimplifies the processes of continuity and discontinuity. One needs to look at the way in which the more permanent characteristics of a society are maintained, at the sustaining, reproducing processes, as well as at the processes of genesis. By selection, moreover, Anderson (and Nairn with reference to the working class) write out all sorts of episodes which show English bourgeoisie or working class in quite a different light and the latter in a more optimistic one. A development of this argument is reserved till later.

VIII

What, then, is left of Anderson's formulations and what elements retain a usefulness?

Anderson is right to stress the markedly traditional elements in the corpus of hegemonic ideas in England and in the whole set of governing institutions and practices. Much is recognisably nineteenth-century in character though it is arguable that these elements have much declined since 1965. But Anderson is wrong to tie this whole argument to some bourgeois fall from grace and to the persistence, up to the present, of any identifiable, socially-homogeneous aristocratic group, class fraction, or segment. These ideas and practices have, by now, a much more diffused existence. They are 'residual/corporative' in the Williams sense.[59] Although they do not require a class carrier, the problem of what sustains them is a very important one. They do not just persist by accident or by 'cultural inertia'. They require to be reproduced. In origin they can nonetheless be traced to particular past social formations and particular struggles between classes and groups.[60]

Anderson is quite wrong about the political relationship between bourgeoisie and landed aristocracy in the nineteenth century. It would even be possible to marshall a stronger case than that proposed by Edward Thompson against the view of aristocratic hegemony. For if one looks at the most active sections of what A.V. Dicey called 'law-making opinion' its bourgeois composition is quite clear. This is true of the House of Commons where middle-class men often from urban industrial constituencies were often most active on questions of policy, and it also fits the growing civil service. In the 1830s and 1840s crucial policy-making departments like the Board of Trade, the Poor Law Commission, the Home Office and the Education Department were often staffed by bourgeois 'experts' who acquired a large influence on policy and were rarely deferential to aristocratic superiors.[61] If one adds another characteristic pattern of nineteenth-century politics - the largely middle-class, extra-parliamentary pressure group - what is left of aristocratic hegemony despite the formal hold on the political domain?

Even so, it is possible at the same time to argue that this peculiar English form of rule, by bourgeoisie through an aristocratic (or more correctly landed) personnel, had important consequences for English social and political development, especially in the management of subordinate classes. The appearance of aristocratic domination was important, in ways described below.

Similarly Anderson's stress on hegemony and upon controlling ideas is valuable especially his assessment of their importance in England relative to the other resources of a dominant class. That said, he tells us very little about genesis, transmission, persistence, obselescence - the whole process of cultural reproduction. He is also misleading on the content and range of hegemonic ideas in England, simplifying to a kind of diffused conservatism. He neglects that stock of notions which has in no way been 'normatively agrarian' and which we may generically term 'liberal'. As I shall argue later the coexistence of conservative and liberal repertoires is a key feature of English ideology.

Finally, Anderson's stress on the continuities of English social development, though hardly original, is useful and true. There has been no major upheaval of a political kind since 1640 such as might have destroyed old institutions or provided a forcing house for new. The long term weakness of Marxism, another fact which the 1970s may well disprove, may be related to this. For most of the available forms have stressed the revolutionary moment. But again, English gradualism cannot be explained as a symptom of bourgeois weakness but rather as a sign of the strength of capitalism's political and ideological supports.

IX

Before leaving Anderson's ruling class it is worth trying to indicate some of the sources of this strength, though this section must be extremely tentative and provisional, and also heavily weighted towards the past.

The legacy from a past that was at once agrarian and capitalist was undoubtedly very important. Throughout most of the nineteenth-century there were not merely two sections of a ruling class (landed and bourgeois) but two co-existing modes of production, and two rather different kinds of social formation: agrarian and industrial capital, the former in relative decline but in a very flourishing state until the last decades of the century. The two kinds of capital were in many ways complementary and the very real conflicts that existed were mostly resolved early and invariably on terms dictated by industrial capital. Yet for most of the century, it is important to hold the distinction between capitalist/landowner and industrial capitalist. 1850 is too soon for the point of fusion. Before the 1880s there was indeed very little assimilation especially at the level of big landowners/'aristocrats.' This was simply because, as F.M.L. Thompson has shown, land in highly concentrated territorial blocks was rarely on the market.[62] Demand was high; supply small. Most entry to landownership was in the form of smaller gentry estates or even 'yeoman-sized' holdings. English 'aristocracy', the really big landowners holding huge territorial agglomerations, remained a quite exclusive group not so much because of legal privileges, more from family strategies of aggrandisement and the huge and hereditary nature of the estate.

And the estate, however capitalistically farmed, remained a different kind of unit of production compared with the business. There are numerous passages in Marx's writing, early and late, where he puzzles over the difference. One very interesting (and early) formulation is this:

> Landed property in its distinction from capital is private property - capital - still afflicted with <u>local</u> and political prejudices.[63]

One illustration of Marx's point must suffice. In 1845 the Duke of Devonshire wished to sell a part of his estates to clear off his debts. He sought the advice of a neighbour, the 3rd Earl Fitzwilliam who replied thus:

> I cannot conceive that your real gain by the transaction will amount to more than £5,000 per annum (!) - But what do you lose in order to gain this small proportionate addition to your disposable income? Why you lose greatly in station - you are now taking all circumstances into consideration, the first great man in the East Riding of Yorkshire .... The alienation of one of the great masses of your landed property is a very different affair, and cannot fail to make a sensible inroad upon your influence, and upon the position you hold in the great national community.[64]

In other words the estate had a much more than economical value, more than could be cashed on the market. It carried a kind of stock of status the loyalty, 'deference' or, anyway the effective voting power of tenantry and above all, perhaps, an immense stock of leisure. This derived from the dual nature of landed capital. Through his intermediary, the tenant farmer, the landowner won both rents and time, cash and leisure for conspicuous consumption, ideological show (Edward Thompson's 'theatre'), all kinds of patronage and, of course, politics. Around the nucleus of the estate system were also preserved all kinds of social values that were alien but by means antithetical to industrial capital: much of the whole conservative/ Anglican repertoire. Along with estate went a whole set of social institutions created in the days when landed wealth was king. Among the most important of these were the Anglican Church, always rurally-centred, yet having a near-monopoly of formally-sponsored education at most levels and undergoing a quite marked theological and organisational revival in the first half of the nineteenth century. Similarly linked to land were the professional cousinhoods of law and the army. The nineteenth-century professions as a whole (especially those carrying a higher status) developed as a kind of hyphen or bridge between land and industry, with a social ideal that hybridised a bourgeois and a landed culture.

This repertoire and these assets did not stand over and against industrial capital except in some popular adaptations (e.g. Cobbett's or Oastler's radicalism) and some literary formulations (Raymond Williams' 'Culture and Society' tradition). The former was a real component in popular resistence though arguably ambiguous in its tendencies. The latter usually stopped short at a 'moral' anti-capitalism and often, as in the 'social problem novel' merely provided a gloss of romantic rejection. (The difference can be gauged by comparing Feargus O'Connor's use of a pastoral 'myth' with, say, Disreali's or Elizabeth Gaskell's). Mostly the repertoire and the assets were pressed into the service, as it were, of <u>capital as a whole</u>. So throughout the century genuine attempts at a real popular emancipation always faced a double armoury: the economic power of manufacturer <u>and</u> farmer/landlord; the ideologies of 'deference' as well as those of bourgeois 'independence', self help and thrift; High Tory Anglicanism <u>and</u> methodism (in its unnaturalized forms), militant Dissent and popular anti-catholicism; Chadwick's and Peel's newly professionalised police <u>and</u> the gentry justice; popular political economy <u>and</u> 'moral and religious education'; utilitarian political philosophy <u>and</u> an anti-democratic conservatism; bourgeois special constabulary <u>and</u> an aristocratically-led plebian army. Elements in this dual repertoire came to the fore according to circumstance and need.

The repertoire had considerable stopping power. But it could also deflect. It deeply influenced the nature of English radicalism itself. When Marx and Engels wrote, as they often did, about 'camouflage' in relation to English politics, they seem often to have had this in mind.[65] For while English 'aristocracy' persisted, while agriculture remained viable enough to support the estate system without large relative costs, while 'aristocracy' seemed to dominate politics, it remained a radical target. The commonist form of English radicalism throughout the century was an anti-aristocratic populism, not, or only imperfectly or only temporarily a socialism. This is true, apart from the Chartist and Owenite interlude and the period of late nineteenth-century socialisms, right through from Paine to the early Chamberlain and Lloyd George. Its actual radicalism, its real iconoclasm depended of course on the point of appearance. Paine was a genuine Jacobin revolutionary; later variants were highly manipulative. This was especially the case when popular radicalism meshed with mass party. The most powerful mystification of all was the mid nineteenth-century Liberal Party.[66] Offering, concretely, very little to working people, it consisted of a leadership which was Whig, landowning and 'aristocratic', the organizing and propagandizing power of Dissent and the big bourgeoisie and a rank and file composed mainly of shopkeepers and artisans, all held together by an ideology that was basically anti-aristocratic. The counter-point to this was a populist, demagogic Conservatism, ringing the changes on themes of nation and empire and, perceptively from the 1860s, markedly from the 1880s, attracting the support of property of all kinds.[67]

Exactly this political dialectic has been much less marked since the end of World War I and, politically, since the decline of Liberalism and the rise of Labour. One of the tasks of an adequate twentieth-century social history would be to examine the fortunes of each element in the dual repertoire and to try to discern what was new to twentieth-century ideologies, especially the under-developed nineteenth-century repertoire of a bureaucratic, state-enhancing, Fabian-Utilitarian 'expertise' and the altogether new set of meanings around 'welfare state'. Everyday experience suggests that the repertoire of hegemonic ideas in England remains a particularly rich mix.

X

Anderson and Nairn's general thesis about the English working class may be distinguished from Nairn's more detailed discussion of the internal dimensions of Labourism. The general theory is vitiated by its derivation from the notion of bourgeois failure but Nairn's discussion of twentieth-century labour politics contains elements of independent value. In what follows I'll concentrate on the more general themes.

For the New Left Reviewers, the British Working Class, that exasperating entity, has had one abiding characteristic. In the early nineteenth-century it became and has ever since remained obstinately 'corporate'. They give a very particular meaning to this using the word quite differently from Raymond Williams. A corporate culture is self-identifying, inward-looking, purely indigenous, the opposite to hegemonic.

> A corporate class is one which pursues its own ends within a social totality whose global determination lies outside it.[68]

It is acknowledged, following Williams, that English working-class culture has been peculiarly dense and specific at least in the hinterland rather than on the vulnerable margins of the class. Hence though often penetrated by bourgeois ideas, it has never been entirely assimilated. But it has never acquired a world view complete or oppositional enough to combat hegemony over the whole range of society and in every arena. So its characteristic social state has remained that of apartheid. It was thrust into this isolated subordination in the counter-revolutionary years and, except for a partial embourgeoisement has remained there ever since.

This subordination is mainly a reflex of the failure of the bourgeoisie. As Anderson puts it:

> It is a general historical rule that a rising social class acquires a significant part of its ideological equipment from the armoury of the ruling class itself[69]

So, since the English bourgeoisie had 'no impulse of liberation, no revolutionary values, no universal language', 'a supine bourgeoisie provided a subordinate proletariat'.[70] The only real bourgeois legacy was Fabianism the pedigree of which is traced, accurately enough, to Utilitarianism. In the absence of a Marxism in England, or an intellectual socialism worth the name, the working class was infected by the Fabian taint or groped empirically towards purely pragmatic solutions. The typical form of blind activity had always been trade unionism to whose search for limited gains the Labour Party became an adjunct.

One might protest in passing that, even at the level of popular movements and of organised response, this stereotype of working class history is very misleading. Chartism and the whole first phase is seriously mis-read; the early Fabian influence on the Labour party is over-estimated and three important phases of challenge - 1880s/1890s; 1911-22; 1940-45 - are entirely neglected. These are all points where the corporative stereotype does not altogether fit and one might even argue that 1945 marks the end of a cultural apartheid if not of political containment. The larger pattern of political and industrial history is, in fact, one of

surges and waves of organisation rather than an even plateau. The notion of an abidingly corporative class provides no purchase at all on this phenomenon.

As in the case of the general scheme, this English working class has no economic function nor a social being. Nor does it change on any of these dimensions. Even an adequate overview would have to trace the changing composition of the class itself, its dominant occupations and its internal social structure. Edward Thompson's working class was a very different set of people to the men and women who voted Labour in 1945. As Hinton has observed it is very unhistorical to suppose that at some time (i.e. the 1850s and 1860s) a class can acquire certain fixed attributes which will persist independently of primary social and economic developments.[71]

Edward Thompson has rightly argued that Nairn and Anderson have neglected the whole bourgeois cultural legacy, especially political economy, protestant religion and the political ideas of possessive individualism. There was quite enough here for the early working class to cut its teeth on as the vigorous, oppositional counter-culture of 1790-1845 shows. If we must look for defects from a Marxist perspective they are better explained by the specific composition of the first working class and, as Anderson acknowledges, by the fact that it was the first. The problem is not the absence or defective nature of bourgeois ideology but why working class relations to it changed around the middle of the century from clear opposition to a more negotiated position. We should not assume that all the giving was on one side, nor that overt political challenge had been or remained the only possible form of resistance.

Finally, by virtue of the whole scheme of hegemony and corporativeness Anderson and Nairn end up with a view of class and class cultural relations which is very undialectical. Stuck in its corporative mode, the working class seems incapable of any kind of challenge. Secure in its hegemony, the dominant class is spared the trouble of continually refurbishing its armoury, accommodating new elements or responding to challenges. A sense of the necessary friction, the necessary incompatibility of bourgeois and proletarian conditions of existence seems altogether lost. The system is surprisingly self-policing. Or if real change is to be secured it must come from outside, from Marxist intellectuals.

Against this view - which is not altogether a parody - I would want to insist on a pattern of challenge and response, action and reaction, problem and 'solution', threat and containment, but containment always at a higher level. At the very least, every now and again, Nairn/Anderson's supine, untheoretical giant (who is usually pre-occupied by less dramatic but necessary

forms of subversion) has flexed muscles, hunched back and shaken the whole edifice. Then, of course, the ideologues and the politicians have got busily to work again, tying him down, eroding his gains, conceding the inevitable but patching up the bigger breaches. Hence a new 'order', incorporating a few real gains, however small when compared with the original effort.

To think in terms like these is useful in two main ways. It helps to make sense of an obvious feature of the story, the periodicity of crisis and a relative stability. As we have seen this is a recurrent pattern. One crude periodisation might go like this, with periods of crisis first:

1790-1845
1845-1875
1875-1895
1895-1911
1911-1922 or 26?
1926-1939
1939-1951 or 1940-45/8?
1951-1970
1970 and here we go again!

To think in these terms also allows us to give a proportionate historical role to what I'll call, with deliberate vagueness, popular forces, the living force that is, of 70/80/90 per cent of historical populations. This may be no more (and should not be less) than the product of working people trying to live their everyday lives under capitalism. The final criticism of both the New Left Reviewers and Barrington Moore is that neither give full weight to this force, for past, for present or for future.

References

* This is a revised version of two papers given to the Theory Seminar at the Centre in November 1974. Earlier versions were also discussed in the Social History Graduate Seminar in the School of History at Birmingham. Criticisms and suggestions at both sessions were very useful (as well as being quite different!)

1 Preface to the First German Edn., in Marx & Engels, On Britain (F.L.P.H. edn., 1962). Cited below as O.B. In the light of Engels' points about the significance of his English discoveries, it is surprising Althusser does not discuss The Condition in the context of Marx's break from Hegelianism. But for the general significance of the discovery of the English see Louis Althusser, For Marx (Penguin), p. 81

2 Engels to Marx, 19 Nov. 1844, O.B. p. 533.

3 Preface to the English edn., ibid., pp. 17-33.

4 'The Crisis in Britain and the British Constitution' (1855), ibid., p. 426.

5 There are different selections of the relevant items in O.B. and in Surveys from Exile (Penguin Marx).

6 'On Certain Peculiarities of the Economic and Political Development of England', O.B. p. 529.

7 The most important items in the debate are: Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', NLR, 23; Nairn, 'The English Working Class', NLR 23; Nairn, 'The Nature of the Labour Party' NLR 27 & 28; E.P. Thompson, 'Peculiarities of the English', Socialist Register, 1965; James Hinton, 'The Labour Aristocracy' NLR 32; Anderson, 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism' NLR 35; N. Poulantzas, 'Marxist Political Theory in G.B.', NLR 43.

8 Barrington Moore Jnr, Social Origins of Dictorship and Democracy (Penguin edn.), p. 160.

9 ibid., p. viii.

10 ibid., p. 314

11 For his choice of societies see ibid., pp. viii-x.

12 For this part of the argument, ibid., pp. 413-14.

13 c.p., for example, Marx on 'World History' in The German Ideology.

14 Social Origins, p. xiv.

15 One wonders how far this is a Marxist orthodoxy; evidently modern social classes have shaped capitalism, but Marx was very much aware of the role of old or transitional social classes, witness the key role of the French peasantry in The Eighteenth Brumaire.

16 Social Origins, pp. 504-5.

17 How far Moore himself is a Marxist is an interesting if idle speculation. There is a good deal of sniping at unnamed Marxists in the book and a persistent avoidance of the language. Genovese includes his American chapter among 'Marxian interpretations of the Slave South'. It is, indeed, 'the most successful attempt at a Marxian analysis', though Genovese notes too his tendency to 'red-baiting'. (Eugene D. Genovese, In Red on Black (Vintage Books, 1972) pp. 345-53). In reply to a long and awful review which accused him of 'neo-Marxism', Moore himself wrote as follows:

'Now my general view of Marxism is that it is often superb for the insights it gives into the behaviour of the upper classes, but that it is nearly worthless for the understanding of the behaviour of the lower classes. To be just a trifle more specific, the ways in which dominant classes pump an economic surplus out of the lower classes does, in my judgement, constitute a major key to the understanding of any specific social structure. Political levers, traditional customs, and even values, all play their part - often one more crucial than the mode of production itself, in this process of extracting the surplus. On the other hand the Marxist tradition is of little help I find in understanding those aspects of social structure among the lower classes that lead at times to resistance and revolution against the prevailing order or at other times to docile acceptance. If that is neo-Marxism... so be it... In any case, the issue is not whether Social Origins is neo-Marxist or not - but whether it is correct'.

Perhaps we should leave it at that. For the review and Moore's reply see American Political Science Review, LXIV (1970). I am grateful to Keith MacLelland for this and the Genovese references.

18 Social Origins, p. 417

19 ibid., p. 418

20 ibid., p. 418

21 ibid., p. 113

22 ibid., p. 108; emphasis supplied.

23 Moore only hints at subsequent instabilities. But his whole treatment is consonant with Marx's Class Struggles in France & Eighteenth Brumaire especially in the treatment of the peasantry.

24 Social Origins, esp. pp. 20 & p. 8. Much of the criticism that follows is based on M. Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism (Ch. I.) which contains a critique of Weberian and post-Weberian concepts of capitalism.

25 See, for example, Edward Thompson's recent essay 'Patrician Society, Plebian Culture', Journal of Social History, VII (Summer 1974) pp. 382-405.

26 Social Origins, p. 424

27 'A review of Guizot's Book', O.B. pp. 348-49.

28 Sir Lewis Namier, The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III.

29 'Guizot's Book', O.B. p. 345 & c.f. Class Struggles in France.

30 'Peculiarities of the English' & 'Patrician Society, Plebian Culture' passim.

31 c.p. Marx: 'On the one hand, the landed proprietors placed at the disposal of the industrial bourgeoisie the people necessary to operate its manufactories and, on the other, were in a position to develop agriculture in accordance with the state of industry and trade. Hence their common interests with the bourgeoisie; hence their alliance with it'. O.B., p. 349.

32 Social Origins, pp. 39 & 34.

33 Moore argues 'that English parliamentary democracy was very largely the creation of this class' viz. landed aristocracy. I do not see how this can be seriously sustained. Certainly few if any aristocrats desired universal suffrage at the beginning or even around the middle of the century. Rather it was forced upon the political elite in the course of the century. The bearers of democratic notions were rather popular radicals from a period even before the appearance of the Charter. (For Moore's argument see Social Origins p. 487).

34 The Poor Law was intended to be a model both for an 'expert', bureaucratic style of administration and for a new social policy.

35 Social Origins, p. 29

36 ibid., p. 486

37 'Origins of the Present Crisis', p. 47

38 'The Nature of the Labour Party -II', NLR, 28, p. 36.

39 'The Nature of the Labour Party -I', NLR, 27, p. 38.

40 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism', NLR, 35, pp. 21-22.

41 'Peculiarities of the English' pp. 321-22.

42 'Origins of the Present Crisis', pp. 41 ff.

43 'Peculiarities of the English' & cf 'Guizot's Book'.

44 'Lord John Russell' (1855), O.B. p. 465; emphasis supplied. I am grateful to Stuart Hall for indicating the deeper levels of Marx's satirical mode.

45 Social Origins, p. 33.

46 'Peculiarities of the English', p. 328.

47 'Guizot's Book', O.B. pp. 349-50.

48 Especially in 'The Elections in England-Whigs and Tories'; 'The Chartists'; 'Corruption at Elections'; 'The Crisis in England & the British Constitution' - all in O.B.

49 'Origins of the Present Crisis' p. 20

50 'Peculiarities of the English', pp. 315 ff.

51 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism', pp. 30-31.

52 'Origins of the Present Crisis,' pp. 12 & 13.

53 'Peculiarities of the English', pp. 342 ff.

54 Poulantzas, 'Marxist Political Theory in G.B.' p. 68

55 'Peculiarities of the English', p. 330.

56 'Origins of the Present Crisis' p. 15.

57 ibid., p. 18

58 ibid., p. 21-22.

59 c.p. Raymond Williams 'Base and Superstructure'.

60 These formulations remain very sketchy and inadequate.

61 There is a large literature on the nineteenth-century civil service. See Gillian Sutherland (ed), Studies in the Growth of Nineteenth-Century Government.

62 F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century; - F.M.L. Thompson, 'The Land Marker in the Nineteenth century', Oxford Economic Papers, IX, (1957).

63 Marx, 1844 Manuscripts (ed. D.J. Struik, 1973) p. 126.

64 Quoted in David Spring 'The English Landed Estate in the age of Coal and Iron:'1830-1880' Journal of Economic History, XI (1951).

65 Engels, 'Peculiarities' quoted p. 1 above, But a better example is Marx's analysis of the English 'crisis' of 1855: 'Then will the mask be torn off which has hitherto hid the real political features of Great Britain', O.B. p. 426.

66 What follows is based on John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party. I differ from Vincent in his view of artisan Liberal allegences as somehow natural; this ignores the previous defeat of Chartism.

67 For the changing social basis of the Conservative Party see James Corbford, 'The Transformation of Conservatism in the late Nineteenth Century', Victorian Studies, VII (1963).

68 'Origins of the Present Crisis', p. 34

69 ibid., p. 36

70 ibid., p. 36

71 Hinton, 'The Labour Aristocracy', NLR, 32.

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