

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Democratic Route to Modern Society

FROM OUR PRESENT PERSPECTIVE we might now sketch with broad strokes the major features of each of the three routes to the modern world. The earliest one combined capitalism and parliamentary democracy after a series of revolutions: the Puritan Revolution, the French Revolution, and the American Civil War. With reservations discussed later in this chapter, I have called this the route of bourgeois revolution, a route that England, France, and the United States entered at succeeding points in time with profoundly different societies at the starting point. The second path was also a capitalist one, but, in the absence of a strong revolutionary surge, it passed through reactionary political forms to culminate in fascism. It is worth emphasizing that, through a revolution from above, industry did manage to grow and flourish in Germany and Japan. The third route is of course the communist one. In Russia and China, revolutions having their main but not exclusive origins among the peasants made possible the communist variant. Finally, by the middle of the 1960s, India had no more than haltingly entered upon the process of becoming a modern industrial society. That country had experienced neither a bourgeois revolution, nor a conservative revolution from above, nor so far a communist one. Whether India will be able to avoid the appalling costs of these three forms to discover some new variant, as it was trying to do under Nehru, or succumb in some way to the equally appalling costs of stagnation, remains the ghastly problem faced by Nehru's successors.

To a very limited extent these three types — bourgeois revolu-

tions culminating in the Western form of democracy, conservative revolutions from above ending in fascism, and peasant revolutions leading to communism — may constitute alternative routes and choices. They are much more clearly successive historical stages. As such, they display a limited determinate relation to each other. The methods of modernization chosen in one country change the dimensions of the problem for the next countries who take the step, as Veblen recognized when he coined the now fashionable term, "the advantages of backwardness." Without the prior democratic modernization of England, the reactionary methods adopted in Germany and Japan would scarcely have been possible. Without both the capitalist and reactionary experiences, the communist method would have been something entirely different; if it had come into existence at all. It is easy enough to perceive, and even with some sympathy, that Indian diffidence is in good measure a negative critical reaction to all three forms of prior historical experience. Although there have been certain common problems in the construction of industrial societies, the task remains a continually changing one. The historical preconditions of each major political species differ sharply from the others.

Within each major type there are also striking differences, perhaps most striking in the democratic variant, as well as significant similarities. In this chapter we shall try to do justice to both, in analyzing certain agrarian social features that have contributed to the development of Western democracy. It is well to be explicit once more about what this rather sonorous phrase means, even if definitions of democracy have a way of leading away from real issues to trivial quibbling. The author sees the development of a democracy as a long and certainly incomplete struggle to do three closely related things: 1) to check arbitrary rulers, 2) to replace arbitrary rules with just and rational ones, and 3) to obtain a share for the underlying population in the making of rules. The beheading of kings has been the most dramatic and by no means the least important aspect of the first feature. Efforts to establish the rule of law, the power of the legislature, and later to use the state as an engine for social welfare are familiar and famous aspects of the other two.

Though a detailed consideration of the earlier phases of pre-modern societies lies outside the scope of this work, it is well to raise at least briefly the question of different starting points. Are there structural differences in agrarian societies that might in some cases favor subsequent development toward parliamentary democracy while other starting points would make this achievement difficult or rule it out altogether? Certainly the starting point does not completely determine the subsequent course of modernization. Fourteenth-century Prussian society exhibited many of the same features that were the ancestors of parliamentary democracy in Western Europe. The decisive changes that fundamentally altered the course of Prussian and eventually German society took place in the next two centuries. Yet even if the starting point is not decisive in itself, some may be much more favorable to democratic developments than others.

A good case can be made, I think, for the thesis that Western feudalism did contain certain institutions that distinguished it from other societies in such a way as to favor democratic possibilities. The German historian Otto Hintze in his discussion of the social orders of feudal society (*Stände*) has perhaps done the most toward rendering the thesis convincing, though it remains a topic of lively scholarly debate.¹ For our purposes, the most important aspect was the growth of the notion of the immunity of certain groups and persons from the power of the ruler, along with the conception of the right of resistance to unjust authority. Together with the conception of contract as a mutual engagement freely undertaken by free persons, derived from the feudal relation of vassalage, this complex of ideas and practices constitutes a crucial legacy from European medieval society to modern Western conceptions of a free society.

This complex arose only in Western Europe. Only there did that delicate balance occur between too much and too little royal

¹ See in Hintze, *Staat und Verfassung*, I, "Weltgeschichtliche Bedingungen der Repräsentativverfassung (1931)," 140-185; "Typologie der ständischen Verfassungen des Abendlandes (1930)," 120-139; and "Wesen und Verbreitung des Feudalismus (1929)," 84-119. For bringing some of the same ideas up to date see Coulborn, ed, *Feudalism* (1956).

power which gave an important impetus to parliamentary democracy. A wide variety of partial resemblances do occur elsewhere but seem to lack either a crucial ingredient or the crucial proportion among them found in Western Europe. Russian society did develop a system of estates, the *soslovii*. But Ivan the Terrible broke the back of the independent nobility. The attempt to recover their privileges came after the strong hand of Peter the Great had been removed and resulted in obtaining privileges without corresponding obligations or corporate representation in the process of governing. Bureaucratic China generated the conception of the Mandate of Heaven that gave some color of legitimacy to resistance to unjust oppression, but without a strong notion of corporate immunity, something the scholar officials created to a limited extent in practice and against the basic principle of the bureaucratic polity. Feudalism did arise in Japan, but with heavy stress on loyalty to superiors and a divine ruler. It lacked the conception of an engagement among theoretical equals. In the Indian caste system one can perceive strong tendencies toward the conception of immunity and corporate privilege, but again without the theory or practice of free contract.

The attempts to find a single comprehensive explanation of these differences, stimulated by a few offhand observations by Marx and culminating in Wittfogel's polemical conception of oriental despotism based on the control of water supplies, have not been very successful. This does not mean that they are misdirected. Water supply is probably much too narrow a notion. Traditional despotisms may arise where a central authority is able to perform a variety of tasks or supervise activities essential to the working of the whole society. In earlier times it was much less possible than it is now for a government to create situations that carry with them their own definition of what task is essential to society as a whole and make the underlying population accept it passively. Hence it is somewhat less risky to pursue this hypothesis about the locus of the performance of essential tasks for preindustrial societies than it would be for modern ones. On the other hand, there also seems to be a rather wider range of choice than was once supposed in the political level at which a society organizes the division of labor and

the maintenance of social cohesion. The peasant village, the feudal fief, or even a crude territorial bureaucracy may constitute the decisive level under generally similar agrarian technologies.

With this brief assessment of variations in the starting point, we may turn to the process of modernization itself. One point stands out quite clearly. The persistence of royal absolutism or more generally of a preindustrial bureaucratic rule into modern times has created conditions unfavorable to democracy of the Western variety. The varied histories of China, Russia, and Germany converge on this point. It is a curious fact, for which I shall not try to offer an explanation, that powerful central governments that we can loosely call royal absolutisms or agrarian bureaucracies established themselves in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in all the major countries examined in connection with this study (except of course the United States), namely, England, France, the Prussian part of Germany, Russia, China, Japan, and India. Whatever the reason may be, the fact forms a convenient if partly arbitrary peg upon which to hang the beginnings of modernization. Though their persistence has had unfavorable consequences, strong monarchical institutions have performed an indispensable function at an early point in checking the turbulence of the nobility. Democracy could not grow and flourish under the shadow of prospective plunder and pillage by marauding barons.

In early modern times too, a decisive precondition for modern democracy has been the emergence of a rough balance between the crown and the nobility, in which the royal power predominated but left a substantial degree of independence to the nobility. The pluralist notion that an independent nobility is an essential ingredient in the growth of democracy has a firm basis in historical fact. Comparative support of this thesis is provided by the absence of such an ingredient in Akbar's India and Manchu China, or perhaps more accurately by the failure to work out an acceptable and legitimate status for the degree of independence that in fact existed. The ways in which this independence has been hammered out are equally important. In England the *locus classicus* for positive evidence, the Wars of the Roses decimated the landed aristocracy, making considerably easier the establishment of a form of royal

absolutism rather milder than that in France. It is wise to recall that the achievement of such a balance, so dear to the liberal and pluralist tradition, has been the fruit of violent and occasionally revolutionary methods that contemporary liberals generally reject.

At this point one may ask what happens when and if the landed aristocracy tries to shake free from royal controls in the absence of a numerous and politically vigorous class of town dwellers. To put the question in less exact form, what may happen if the nobility seeks freedom in the absence of a bourgeois revolution? I think it is safe to say that the outcome is highly unfavorable to the Western version of democracy. In Russia during the eighteenth century the service nobility managed to have its obligations to the tsarist autocracy rescinded, while at the same time it retained and even increased its land holdings as well as its power over the serfs. The whole development was highly unfavorable to democracy. German history is in some respects even more revealing. There the nobility carried on its struggle against the Great Elector for the most part separately from the towns. Many of the aristocratic demands of the time resemble those made in England: for a voice in the government and especially in the government's ways of raising money. But the outcome was not parliamentary democracy. The weakness of the towns has been a constant feature in German history subsequent to their efflorescence in southern and western Germany in the late Middle Ages, after which they went into a decline.

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. Still the actors in the countryside have played a sufficiently important part to deserve careful inquiry. And if one wishes to write history with heroes and villains, a position the present writer repudiates, the totalitarian villain sometimes has lived in the country, and the democratic hero of the towns has had important allies there.

Such, for example, was the case in England. While absolutism was growing stronger in France, in a large section of Germany, and in Russia, it met its first major check on English soil, where to be sure the attempt to establish it was much feebler. In very large measure this was true because the English landed aristocracy at an early date began to acquire commercial traits. Among the most decisive determinants influencing the course of subsequent political evolution are whether or not a landed aristocracy has turned to commercial agriculture and, if so, the form that this commercialization has taken.

Let us try to perceive this transformation in its major contours and in comparative perspective. The European medieval system had been one in which the feudal lord had a certain portion of his land, the *demesne*, cultivated for him by the peasants in return for which the lord protected them and administered justice, very often, to be sure, with a heavy hand favoring his own material interests. The peasants used another section of the lord's land to grow food for their own support and on which to have their dwellings. A third part, generally consisting of woods, streams, and pasture, was known as the commons and served as a source of valuable fuel, game, and pastureland for both the lord and his peasants. Partly in order to assure the lord an adequate supply of labor, the peasants were tied in various ways to the soil. It is true that the market played an important part in the medieval agrarian economy, more important even at quite early times than was once realized. Yet, in contrast to later times the lord together with his peasants to a great extent constituted a self-sufficing community able to supply a large part of their needs from local resources and with local skills. With countless local variations, this system prevailed over large areas of Europe. It did not exist in China. Feudal Japan showed strong resemblances to this arrangement, and analogues can be found in parts of India.

The advance of commerce in the towns and the demands of absolutist rulers for taxes had among their many consequences the result that the overlord needed more and more cash. Three main responses occurred in different parts of Europe. The English landed aristocracy turned to a form of commercial farming that involved

setting the peasants free to shift for themselves as best they could. The French landed élite generally left the peasants in *de facto* possession of the soil. In the areas where they turned toward commerce they did so by compelling the peasants to turn over a share of the produce which the nobles then marketed. In eastern Europe there occurred the third variant, the manorial reaction. East German Junkers reduced formerly free peasants to serfdom in order to grow and export grain, while in Russia a similar process took place due to political, much more than economic, causes. Only by the nineteenth century did grain exports become a major feature in the Russian economic and political landscape.

In England itself, the turn toward commercial farming by the landed aristocracy removed much of what remained of its dependence on the crown and generated a great deal of its hostility to fumbling Stuart attempts at absolutism. Likewise the form commercial farming took in England, in contrast to eastern Germany, created a considerable community of interest with the towns. Both factors were important causes of the Civil War and the ultimate victory of the parliamentary cause. Its effects continued to be important and to be reenforced by new causes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The consequences appear even more clearly if we set the English experience alongside other varieties. Broadly speaking, there are two other possibilities. The commercial impulse may be quite weak among the landed upper classes. Where that happens, the result will be the survival of a huge peasant mass that is at best a tremendous problem for democracy and at worst the reservoir for a peasant revolution leading to a communist dictatorship. The other possibility is that the landed upper class will use a variety of political and social levers to hold down a labor force on the land and make its transition to commercial farming in this fashion. Combined with a substantial amount of industrial growth, the result is likely to be what we recognize as fascism.

In the next chapter we shall discuss the role played by the landed upper classes in the creation of fascist governments. Here we need only notice 1) that the form of commercial agriculture was just as important as commercialization itself and 2) that the

failure of appropriate forms of commercial agriculture to take hold at an early point in time still left open another route to modern democratic institutions. Both features are apparent in French and American history. In parts of France, commercial agriculture left peasant society largely intact but took more out of the peasantry, thereby making a contribution to revolutionary forces. Over most of France the impulse among the nobility toward commercial agriculture was weak compared with England. But the Revolution crippled the aristocracy and opened the way toward parliamentary democracy. In the United States plantation slavery was an important aspect of capitalist growth. On the other hand, to put it mildly, this was an institution unfavorable to democracy. The Civil War overcame this obstacle, though only partially. Generally speaking, plantation slavery is only the most extreme form of repressive adaptations to capitalism. Three factors make it unfavorable to democracy. The landed upper class is likely to need a state with a powerful repressive apparatus and thus one that imposes a whole climate of political and social opinion unfavorable to human freedom. Further, it encourages the preponderance of the countryside over the towns, which are likely to become mere transshipment depots for export to distant markets. Finally, there are the brutalizing consequences of the élite's relationship to its work force, especially severe in those plantation economies where the laborers belong to a different race.

Since the transition to commercial agriculture is obviously a very important step, how is one to explain the ways in which it took place or failed to occur? A modern sociologist would be likely to seek an explanation in cultural terms. In countries where commercial agriculture failed to develop on a wide scale, he might stress the inhibiting character of aristocratic traditions, such as notions of honor and negative attitudes toward pecuniary gain and toward work. At the beginning stages of this research, my own inclination was to search for such explanations. As evidence accumulated, grounds appeared for taking a skeptical attitude toward this line of attack, though the general issues that are raised by its use will require discussion later.

To be convincing, a cultural explanation would have to dem-

onstrate, for example, that among the English landed upper classes military traditions and notions of status and honor were substantially weaker than, let us say, in France. Although the English aristocracy was less of a closed group than its French counterpart and had no formal rule of derogation, it is doubtful that the cultural difference is sufficient to account for the difference in economic behavior. And what is one to make of the East German nobility who turned from colonization and conquest to the pursuit of exporting grain? An even more important consideration is the fact that among landed élites where the commercial impulse seems weak in comparison with England one often finds a substantial minority that has successfully made the attempt to engage in commerce where local conditions were favorable. Thus commercial agriculture for export did develop in parts of Russia.

Such observations lead to a renewed stress on the importance of differences in opportunities to adopt commercial agriculture, such as, above all, the existence of a market in nearby towns and the existence of adequate methods of transportation, mainly by water for bulky goods before the days of the railroad. Though variations in soil and climate are obviously important, the bourgeoisie once again lurks in the wings as the chief actor in the drama. Political considerations have also played a decisive role. Where it has been possible for the landlords to make use of the coercive apparatus of the state in order to sit back and collect rents, a phenomenon found widely in Asia and to some extent in prerevolutionary France and Russia, there is clearly no incentive to turn to less repressive adaptations.

Though the question of commercial agriculture among the peasants has less relevance for democracy, it will be well to say a word about it here. By and large, the elimination of the peasant question through the transformation of the peasantry into some other kind of social formation appears to augur best for democracy. Still, in the smaller client democracies of Scandinavia and Switzerland, the peasants have become part of democratic systems by taking up fairly specialized forms of commercial farming, mainly dairy products, for the town markets. Where peasants seem stubbornly to resist such changes, as for example in India, it is not diffi-

cult to construct an explanation around objective circumstances. A real market opportunity is often lacking. For peasants living close to the margin of physical existence, modernization is clearly too risky, especially if under the prevailing social institutions the profit is likely to go to someone else. Hence an abysmally low standard of living and set of expectations is the only adjustment that makes sense under such circumstances. Finally, where the circumstances are different, one can sometimes find dramatic changes in a short space of time.

So far the discussion has concentrated upon two major variables, the relationships of the landed upper classes with the monarchy and their response to the requirements of production for the market. There is a third major variable that has already crept into the discussion: the relationship of the landed upper classes with the town dwellers, mainly the upper stratum that we may loosely call the bourgeoisie. The coalitions and countercoalitions that have arisen among and across these two groups have constituted and in some parts of the world still constitute the basic framework and environment of political action, forming the series of opportunities, temptations, and impossibilities within which political leaders have had to act. In very broad terms, our problem becomes one therefore of trying to identify those situations in the relationship between the landed upper classes and the town dwellers that have contributed to the development of a relatively free society in modern times.

It is best to begin by recalling certain natural lines of cleavage between town and country and within these two sectors of the population. First, there is the familiar conflict of interest between the urban requirement of cheap food and high prices for the articles it produces and the rural desire for high food prices and cheap products from the artisan's shop and from the factory. This conflict may become increasingly important with the spread of a market economy. Class differences, such as those between landlord and peasant in the country, master and journeyman, factory owner and industrial worker in the city, cut across the rural-urban cleavage. Where the interests of the upper strata in town and country converge against the peasants and workers, the outcome is likely to be

unfavorable to democracy. However, a great deal depends on the historical circumstances within which this alignment arises.

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, where manufacturers were largely engaged in producing arms and luxury goods for the king and court aristocracy, the English bourgeoisie was vigorous and independent with far-flung interests in an export trade.

On the side of the landed nobility and the gentry, there was also a series of favorable factors. The wool trade had affected the countryside during the sixteenth century and before, leading to enclosures for sheep pasturing. The English sheep-raising upper class, a minority but an influential one, needed the towns which exported the wool, a situation quite different from that in eastern Germany where grain growing in Junker hands bypassed the declining towns.

The convergence between the landed and urban upper classes in England before the Civil War in such a way as to favor the cause of freedom was, among the major countries, a unique configuration. Perhaps the larger situation of which it was a part could occur only once in human history: the English bourgeoisie from the seventeenth through much of the nineteenth century had a maximum material stake in human freedom because it was the first bourgeoisie and had not yet brought its foreign and domestic rivals to their full powers. Nevertheless it may be useful to express certain inferences from the English experience in the form of tentative general hypotheses about the conditions under which collaboration between important sections of the upper classes in the towns and the countryside could be favorable to the growth of parliamentary democracy. As already indicated, it is important that the fusion take place in opposition to the royal bureaucracy. A sec-

ond condition appears to be that the commercial and industrial leaders must be on their way to becoming the dominant element in society. Under these conditions the landed upper classes are able to develop bourgeois economic habits. This takes place not by mere copying, but as a response to general conditions and their own life circumstances. All these things can happen, it seems, only at an early stage in economic development. That they will be repeated anywhere in the twentieth century also seems highly unlikely.

Taking on a bourgeois hue makes it easier for the landed upper classes at a later stage to hold the posts of political command in what is basically a bourgeois society, as England was during the nineteenth century. Three further factors may be suggested as important here. One is the existence of a substantial degree of antagonism between commercial and industrial elements and the older landed classes. The second is that the landed classes maintain a fairly firm economic footing. Both factors prevent the formation of a solid front of upper-class opposition to demands for reform and encourage a certain amount of competition for popular support. Finally I would suggest that the landed élite must be able to transmit some of its aristocratic outlook to the commercial and industrial classes.

There is more to this transmission than the intermarriage in which an ancient estate may preserve itself by forming an alliance with new money. Many subtle changes in attitude are involved that are at present only very imperfectly understood. We only know the consequence: that bourgeois attitudes have to become stronger, rather than the other way around, as happened in Germany. The mechanisms by which this osmosis takes place are far from clear. No doubt the educational system plays an important part, though by itself it could scarcely be decisive. An exploration of biographical literature, very abundant for England, might yield a rich harvest here, despite the English tabu on frank discussions of social structure, a tabu that sometimes is just as strong as frank discussions of sex. Where the lines of social, economic, religious, and political cleavage do not coincide too closely, conflicts are less likely to be passionate and bitter to the point of excluding demo-

cratic reconciliation. The price of such a system is of course the perpetuation of a large amount of "tolerable" abuse — which is mainly tolerable for those who profit by the system.

A brief glance at the fate of the English peasantry suggests one more condition of democratic growth that may well be decisive in its own right. Though England's "final solution of the peasant question" through the enclosures may not have been as brutal or as thorough as some earlier writers have led us to think, there can be little doubt that the enclosures as part of the industrial revolution eliminated the peasant question from English politics. Hence there was no massive reservoir of peasants to serve the reactionary ends of the landed upper classes, as in Germany and Japan. Nor was there the mass basis for peasant revolutions as in Russia and China. For quite different reasons, the United States too escaped from the political plague of a peasant question. France did not escape, and the instability of French democracy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is partly due to this fact.

The admitted brutality of the enclosures confronts us with the limitations on the possibility of peaceful transitions to democracy and reminds us of the open and violent conflicts that have preceded its establishment. It is time to restore the dialectic, to remind ourselves of the role of revolutionary violence. A great deal of this violence, perhaps its most important features, had its origins in the agrarian problems that arose along the road that has led to Western democracy. The English Civil War checked royal absolutism and gave the commercially minded big landlords a free hand to play their part during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in destroying peasant society. The French Revolution broke the power of a landed élite that was still mainly precommercial, though sections of it had begun to go over to new forms requiring repressive mechanisms to maintain its labor force. In this sense, as already noted, the French Revolution constituted an alternative way of creating institutions eventually favorable to democracy. Finally, the American Civil War likewise broke the power of a landed élite that was an obstacle in the way of democratic advance but, in this case, one that had grown up as part of capitalism.

Whether one believes that these three violent upheavals aided

or hindered the development of liberal and bourgeois democracy, it remains necessary to recognize that they were an important part of the whole process. In itself this fact provides considerable justification for designating them as bourgeois or, if one prefers, liberal revolutions. Nevertheless there are real difficulties in grouping revolutions or, for that matter, any major historical phenomena. Before proceeding any further, it might be well to discuss this point.

Certain very general considerations make it necessary to adopt broad categories of this variety. It is or should be quite obvious that certain institutional arrangements such as feudalism, absolute monarchy, and capitalism rise, have their day, and pass away. The fact that any specific institutional complex develops first in one country and then in another, as did capitalism in Italy, Holland, England, France, and the United States, is no bar to a generally evolutionary conception of history. No single country goes through all the stages, but merely carries the development a certain distance within the framework of its own situation and institutions. Thus a revolution on behalf of private property in the means of production has a good chance of succeeding in some phases and not in others. It may be hopelessly premature and but a minor current in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries and yet be hopelessly anachronistic in the second half of the twentieth. Over and beyond the concrete historical conditions at a given moment in a particular country, there are worldwide conditions, such as the state of the technical arts and the economic and political organization reached in other parts of the world, that influence heavily the prospects of revolution.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that it is necessary to group revolutions by the broad institutional results to which they contribute. Much of the confusion and unwillingness to use larger categories comes from the fact that those who provide the mass support for a revolution, those who lead it, and those who ultimately profit from it are very different sets of people. As long as this distinction remains clear in each case, it makes sense (and is even indispensable for the sake of drawing distinctions as well as perceiving similarities) to regard the English Civil War, the French Revolution and the American Civil War as stages in the development of *the* bourgeois-democratic revolution.

There are grounds for the reluctance to use this term, and it is worthwhile pointing out the way in which it can be misleading. To some writers the conception of a bourgeois revolution implies a steady increase in the economic power of the commercial and manufacturing classes in the towns up to a point where economic power comes into conflict with political power still in the hands of an old ruling class based mainly on the land. At this point there supposedly occurs a revolutionary explosion in which the commercial and manufacturing classes seize the reins of political power and introduce the main features of modern parliamentary democracy. Such a conception is not altogether false. Even for France, there are some good indications of an increase in the economic power of a section of the bourgeoisie hostile to the fetters imposed by the *ancien régime*. Nevertheless this meaning of bourgeois revolution is such a simplification as to be a caricature of what took place. To see that it is a caricature we need only recall 1) the importance of capitalism in the English countryside that enabled the English landed aristocracy to retain control of political machinery right through the nineteenth century; 2) the weakness of any purely bourgeois impulse in France, its close ties with the old order, its dependence on radical allies during the Revolution, the continuation of the peasant economy into modern times; 3) the fact that plantation slavery in the United States grew up as an integral part of industrial capitalism and presented an obstacle to democracy much more than to capitalism.

As pointed out a moment ago, the central difficulty is that such expressions as bourgeois revolution and peasant revolution lump together indiscriminately those who make the revolution and its beneficiaries. Likewise these terms confuse the legal and political results of revolutions with social groups active in them. Twentieth-century peasant revolutions have had their mass support among the peasants, who have then been the principal victims of modernization put through by communist governments. Nevertheless I shall remain candidly and explicitly inconsistent in the use of terms. In discussing peasant revolutions we shall be speaking about the main popular force behind them, well aware that in the twentieth cen-

ture the result was communism. In discussing bourgeois revolutions the justification for the term rests on a series of legal and political consequences. Consistent terminology imposes the invention of new terms that, I fear, would only add to the confusion. The main problem, after all, is what happened and why, not the proper use of labels.

Now it seems just about as clear as such matters ever can be that the Puritan Revolution, the French Revolution, and the American Civil War were quite violent upheavals in a long process of political change leading up to what we recognize as modern Western democracy. This process had economic causes, though they were certainly not the only ones. The freedoms created through this process display a clear relationship to each other. Worked out in connection with the rise of modern capitalism, they display the traits of a specific historical epoch. Key elements in the liberal and bourgeois order of society are the right to vote, representation in a legislature that makes the laws and hence is more than a rubber stamp for the executive, an objective system of law that at least in theory confers no special privileges on account of birth or inherited status, security for the rights of property and the elimination of barriers inherited from the past on its use, religious toleration, freedom of speech, and the right to peaceful assembly. Even if practice falls short of profession, these are widely recognized marks of modern liberal society.

The taming of the agrarian sector has been a decisive feature of the whole historical process that produced such a society. It was just as important as the better-known disciplining of the working class and of course closely related to it. Indeed the English experience tempts one to say that getting rid of agriculture as a major social activity is one prerequisite for successful democracy. The political hegemony of the landed upper class had to be broken or transformed. The peasant had to be turned into a farmer producing for the market instead of for his own consumption and that of the overlord. In this process the landed upper classes either became an important part of the capitalist and democratic tide, as in England, or, if they came to oppose it, they were swept aside in the convul-

sions of revolution or civil war. In a word, the landed upper classes either helped to make the bourgeois revolution or were destroyed by it.

In closing this discussion it may be useful to set down the main conditions that have apparently been most important for the development of democracy and, as a rough test of these conclusions, set them alongside the Indian experience. If it turns out that the presence of some of these conditions has a demonstrable connection with the more successful aspects of parliamentary democracy in India or the historical origins of these aspects and, on the other hand, that the absence of other conditions displays a connection with the difficulties and obstacles to democracy in India, we may have greater confidence in these conclusions.

The first condition of democratic development that our analysis encountered was the *development of a balance to avoid too strong a crown or too independent a landed aristocracy*. In Mogul India at its zenith the power of the crown was overwhelming in relation to the upper classes. Lacking any secure property rights, the noble was, in Moreland's well-known phrase, either a servant or an enemy of the ruling power. The decay of the Mogul system freed the upper classes by tipping the balance in the opposite direction toward a polity of fighting local kinglets. Nevertheless the subsequent British effort in the eighteenth century to create on Indian soil a class of vigorous progressive squires similar to their domestic variety was a complete failure. Indian society has also failed to meet the second major prerequisite: *a turn toward an appropriate form of commercial agriculture* either on the part of the landed aristocracy or the peasantry. Instead, the protective umbrella of British law and order allowed population to increase and a class of parasitic landlords to skim off, together with the moneylenders, much of what the peasants did not eat themselves. In turn these conditions greatly inhibited capital accumulation and industrial growth. When Independence came, it arrived partly under the impetus of peasant yearning for a return to an idealized village past, which further limited and even dangerously delayed real modernization in the countryside. That these circumstances have been among the major

obstacles to the establishment and working of a firmly based democracy needs no laboring here.

On the other hand, the departure of the British greatly weakened the political predominance of the landed élite. There are many who would claim that post-Independence reforms have even destroyed that power. To this limited extent, the development of democratic institutions has followed the Western pattern. Even more important, the British occupation, by resting its power on the landed élite and by favoring commercial interests in England, drove a substantial section of the urban commercial and trading classes into opposition, preventing the fateful coalition of a strong landed élite and weak bourgeoisie that, as we shall see in more detail in the next chapter, has been the social origin of rightist authoritarian regimes and movements in Europe and Asia. Thus two conditions have been met: *the weakening of the landed aristocracy and the prevention of an aristocratic-bourgeois coalition against the peasants and workers.*

India indeed constitutes an important instance where at least the formal structure of democracy and a significant portion of its substance, such as the existence of legal opposition and channels for protest and criticism, have arisen without a phase of revolutionary violence. (The Sepoy Mutiny was mainly a backward-looking affair.) Yet the absence of a fifth condition, *a revolutionary break with the past* and of any strong movement in this direction up to the present moment, are among the reasons for India's prolonged backwardness and the extraordinary difficulties that liberal democracy faces there. Some students of Indian affairs have expressed surprise that India's small Western-educated élite has remained faithful to the democratic ideal when they could so easily overthrow it. But why would they wish to overthrow it? Does not democracy provide a rationalization for refusing to overhaul on any massive scale a social structure that maintains their privileges? To be fair one must add that the task is a sufficiently formidable one to make any but the most doctrinaire radical quail at the thought of taking responsibility for it.

Though it would be tempting to discuss this point further,

Indian politics are relevant here only insofar as they serve to test a theory of democracy. The achievements and shortcomings of democracy in India, the obstacles and uncertainties it still faces, all find a reasonable explanation in terms of the five conditions derived here from the experience of other countries. That is not proof by any means. But I think it is fair to hold that these five conditions not only illuminate significant aspects of Indian history; they derive strong support from this history.