

Books by Raymond Aron Published by Transaction

- De Gaulle, Israel and the Jews
- In Defense of Decadent Europe
- Main Currents in Sociological Thought
Volume 1: Montesquieu, Comte, Marx, Tocqueville,
and the Sociologists and the Revolution of 1848
- Main Currents in Sociological Thought
Volume 2: Durkheim, Pareto, Weber
- The Opium of the Intellectuals
- Peace & War: A Theory of International Relations
- Politics and History
- Thinking Politically: A Liberal in the Age of Ideology

The Opium of the Intellectuals

Raymond Aron

With a new introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield

**Foreword by
Daniel J. Mahoney and Brian C. Anderson**

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Hm
728
.A7613
2017

One wonders if Asia will tomorrow show signs of the religious intolerance which Buddhism spared it but which was the scourge of the West, or if it will interpret the new faith in such a way that the heretics will be allowed to survive, despised perhaps but not forcibly converted or conquered on the pretext of conversion.

CHAPTER IX

THE INTELLECTUALS IN SEARCH OF A RELIGION

PARALLELS between socialism and religion have frequently been drawn, and the diffusion of Christianity throughout the ancient world compared with that of Marxism in our time. The expression 'secular religion' has become a commonplace.*

Equally classic are the arguments arising from these comparisons. Does a Godless doctrine deserve to be called a religion? The faithful themselves deny the connection but insist that their belief is none-the-less compatible with the traditional faith—are not the progressive Christians a living proof of the compatibility between Communism and Catholicism?

In a sense, the quarrel is a verbal one. Everything depends on one's definition of the words involved. The doctrine provides true Communists with a global interpretation of the universe; it instils sentiments akin to those of the crusaders of all ages; it fixes the hierarchy of values and establishes the norms of good conduct. It fulfils, in the individual and in the collective soul, some of the functions which the sociologist normally ascribes to religions. As for the absence of the transcendental or the sacred, the Communists do not categorically deny it, but they recall that many societies throughout the centuries have been ignorant of the notion of a divine being without being ignorant of the way of thought and feeling, the obligations and the devotions, which the observer of today regards as religious.

* I used the expression in two articles which appeared in *La France Libre* in June-July, 1944.

These arguments side-step the real problem. One can define religion in such a way that it embraces the cults, rites and passions of the so-called primitive tribes, the teachings and practices of Confucianism and the sublime inspirations of Christ or Buddha, but what is the point, the meaning, of a secular religion in the West, in an environment impregnated with Christianity?

Economic Opinion or Secular Religion

Communism developed from an economic and political doctrine at a time when the spiritual vitality and the authority of the Churches were in decline. Passions which in other times might have expressed themselves in strictly religious beliefs were channelled into political action. Socialism appeared not so much a technique applicable to the management of enterprises or to the functioning of the economy, as a means of curing once and for all the age-old misery of mankind.

The ideologies of the Right and of the Left, Fascism as well as Communism, are inspired by the modern philosophy of immanence. They are atheist, even when they do not deny the existence of God, to the extent that they conceive the human world without reference to the transcendental. According to La Berthonnière, Descartes, however good a Catholic he may have been, can be regarded as the initiator of this sort of atheism, since he was more interested in the conquest of nature than in meditation on the hereafter. The Marxists of the second or the third International are quite ready to allow that religion is a private affair, but they regard the organisation of the commonwealth as the only serious concern.

Passions followed logically the transfer of the centre of interest. People no longer killed one another to determine which Church should be invested with the mission of interpreting the sacred scriptures and of administering the sacraments, but which party or which system offered the best chance of spreading material comfort for all in this vale of tears.

Democracy and nationalism, it is true, have aroused no less passionate fervour than the classless society. At a time

when the supreme values are linked to political reality, men are just as fanatical in their devotion to national independence as to an allegedly ideal order. In this vague sense, every political movement which has agitated modern Europe has had a religious character. Yet one does not find in them the framework or the essence of a religious philosophy. In this respect Communism is unique.

The Marxist prophetism, as we have seen, conforms to the typical pattern of the Judeo-Christian prophetism. Every prophetism condemns what is and sketches an outline of what should or will be; it chooses an individual or a group to cleave a path across the no-man's land which separates the unworthy present from the radiant future. The classless society which will bring social progress without political revolution is comparable to the dreams of the millennium. The misery of the proletariat proves its vocation and the Communist Party becomes the Church which is opposed by the bourgeois/pagans who stop their ears against the good tidings and by the socialist/Jews who have failed to recognise the Revolution which they themselves had been heralding for years.

The recriminations and prognostications can be translated into rational terms. The forces of production, developed with the help of science harnessed to industry, do not yet provide decent conditions of life for more than a minority. Tomorrow the expansion of technology, combined with a change in the system of ownership and management, will bestow on all mankind the benefits of material plenty. It is an easy transition from the Marxist prophetism to 'the great hope of the twentieth century', from revolutionary faith to the theory of economic progress.

How is it that the Marxist prophetism manages to oscillate between a reasonable opinion on the future of modern societies and a pseudo-religious dogma? How is it that it manages to inspire on the one hand the ideas and the methods of social democracy, which are those of common sense, peaceful reform and democratic liberty, and on the other hand the ideas and the methods of Communism, which are those of violence and revolution?

In the first case, the theory is toned down and it is admitted

that the work of regeneration demands the concurrence of all the victims of capitalism, of all those who, without suffering personally from the system, recognise its blemishes and desire to eliminate them. This does not mean that the vocation of the proletariat is eliminated; merely that it ceases to be exclusive. By their numbers and by their sufferings, the industrial workers are called upon to play a pre-eminent role in the humanisation of modern technological societies, but they are neither alone in suffering injustice nor alone in shaping the future.

In the second case, the proletarian character of the collective saviour and of the party which represents it, is *verbally* emphasised and strengthened. Quite simply, the Party must be proclaimed the vanguard of the proletariat, however small the part which genuine flesh-and-blood industrial workers may take in the leadership and the activity of the party. The latter approximates to a Church, which is the trustee and guardian of the message of salvation. Whoever enters this Church at once receives its baptism: those genuine proletarians who refuse to follow it automatically debar themselves from the chosen class.

Treading the first path, the prophetism reduces itself to a set of opinions which vary from nation to nation and are reasonably prosaic; Marxism is broken down into its elements—historical hypotheses, economic preferences. The second way shows us the Party/Church stiffening doctrine into dogma and elaborating an interpretative scholasticism; imbued with passionate life, the Party/Church wins over immense cohorts.

In order that the Communist system of interpretation shall never be found lacking, the delegation of the proletariat to the Party must be total and unreserved. This in turn makes it necessary to deny incontestable facts, to substitute for the real and multifarious conflicts of human life the stylised struggles of collective beings who are defined by their function in a pre-ordained destiny. From this arises the scholasticism which we have often come across in the course of the preceding pages, the interminable speculations on the infrastructure and the superstructure, the distinctions between

subtle and vulgar meanings, the rejection of objectivity, and the re-writing of history.

The social-democrats renounce this scholasticism; they do not seek to reconcile the facts with the predictions of yesterday, to enclose the countless riches of human societies in a narrow conceptual framework; but, by the same token, they forfeit the prestige bestowed by the system, the certainty and conviction, the transparent future. The Communists on the other hand seek to connect each episode in their development to the total course of history, and history itself to a philosophy of nature; there is nothing they do not know, they are never wrong, and the art of the dialectic enables them to harmonise any aspect of the Soviet reality with a doctrine that can be twisted in any direction.

The combination of prophetism and scholasticism produces sentiments analogous to those of religious believers. Faith in the proletariat and in history, charity for those who suffer today and who tomorrow will inherit the earth, hope that the future will bring the advent of the classless society—the theological virtues reappear in a new guise. But this faith is attached not so much to history as to a Church whose links with the Messiah have become gradually loosened; this hope is placed in a future which, in default of being accomplished by spontaneous forces, will be produced by violence; this charity for suffering humanity hardens into indifference towards classes or nations or individuals condemned by the dialectic. Communist faith justifies all means, Communist hope forbids acceptance of the fact that there are many roads towards the Kingdom of God, Community charity does not even allow its enemies the right to die an honourable death.

It is the psychology of a sect rather than of a universal Church. The militant is persuaded that he belongs to a small number of elect who are charged with the salvation of all. The faithful, accustomed to following the twists in the line, to repeating parrot-wise the successive and contradictory interpretations of the Nazi-Soviet pact, for example, or of the 'Doctors' Plot', become in a certain sense 'new men'. According to the materialist conception, men trained after a certain method are docile to authority and completely satisfied with

their lot. The engineers of the soul have no doubts about the plastic nature of the psychic material at their disposal.

At one extreme, socialism is reduced to a vague preference for the State control of the economy and for collective ownership; at the other extreme, it widens into a global system of interpretation which includes at once the entire cosmos and the ups and downs of civil strife in Guatemala.

It will be said that the Communist *faith* is distinguishable from a politico-economic *opinion* only by its intransigence, that a new faith is always intransigent, and that Churches incline to tolerance as they become undermined by scepticism. But it is not simply a matter of intransigence: nothing comparable to the secular religion of Communism has arisen out of nationalism or democracy. One could call it fanaticism, if that is the right word to designate decrees by which a single party is transfigured into the guide of the world proletariat, a single system of interpretation superimposed on the unintelligible complexity of the facts, a single road to socialism proclaimed obligatory for all. Fanatical, surely, is the Communist who divides mankind into two camps according to their attitude towards the sacred cause, the militant who compels the bourgeois/pagan to write his autobiography in conformity with the truth revealed by the proletarian State

Militants and Sympathisers

Communism is an ideology which, through the cult of the Party, the interpretative scholasticism manipulated by the revolutionary State, and the training and discipline enforced on the militants, has been transformed into a dogmatism of words and actions. Thus, one is tempted to take the concept of a secular religion either seriously or lightly according to whether one considers the point of departure or the point of arrival, the Marxism of 1890 or the Stalinism of 1950.

There is no better illustration of this uncertainty than the tragic and turbulent history of the rivalry between socialists and communists. The latter, of course, have never had any doubts; ever since 1917 they have been denouncing their socialist brethren as traitors who went over to the capitalist camp as soon as they failed to recognise the Russian Revolution as the first step towards the fulfilment of the

Marxist prophecies. The socialists, for their part, heartily denounce the cruelty of the Bolsheviks, the infamy of undemocratic socialism and the dictatorship *over* the proletariat. But they have never succeeded in quite overcoming a kind of guilt feeling: even if the road be horrible, is there another way?

Are not socialists and communists both agreed in their opposition to capitalism, are they not equally hostile to the anarchy of the market and equally in favour of planning and collective ownership? When the Bolsheviks liquidated Mensheviks and Trotskyists, when the great purges raged or when peasants who were unwilling to accept collectivisation were deported by the million, the Western socialists, humanitarian, accustomed to parliamentary methods, reacted with horror and felt almost as remote from these ferocious organisers as from the fascists themselves. Stalin has only to die, and his successors to tone down some of the extreme and almost pathological manifestations of the system, to hold out the hand of friendship to the progressives and the Christians, for the social-democratic Marxists to start wondering again. Perhaps, when all is said and done, the technique of despotism and five-year plans is the only one possible in Russia and other under-developed countries? The need for rapid industrialisation made the excesses of the terror inevitable, but the development of socialism will gradually eliminate the necessity for them. And with the democratisation of the Soviet régime the great schism will resolve itself.

These alternations of trust and despair cannot simply be attributed to the inexhaustible naïvety of the socialists, fated to end up in concentration camps under every sort of régime. They arise from the basic ambiguity of the secular religion. The latter, whether fascist or communist, is no more than the dogmatic hardening of opinions which are current in left-wing or right-wing circles.

Consider, for example, the case of national-socialism. The man who sympathised with the Nazis in 1933 did not always believe in racialism; he might well have deplored the excesses of anti-Semitism, and simply affirmed the necessity of a strong government to re-establish the unity of the nation, to overcome partisan quarrels, to conduct a dynamic foreign policy.

Such reserved allegiance does not only characterise the waverers or fellow-travellers; it is not unknown among those who actually belong to the party, sometimes even in the inner circles of the party. The faith of Goering was probably scarcely more orthodox than that of the old-fashioned nationalists who rallied round the brown-shirted demagogue out of pure opportunism.

In 1955, how does the progressive Christian who is not a member of the Communist Party actually think and feel? If we revert to the book published by the worker-priests, we will find them adopting—some of them at least—the interpretation of events which is taught by the Party: “The guides of the proletariat were right. The lessons of recent political and social events prove it: Marshall Plan, E.D.C., unemployment, low salaries, Viet-Nam, Africa, poverty, housing shortage, illegality, repression”.* To attribute to the Marshall Plan, which shortened by several years the period necessary for French economic reconstruction, a responsibility for poverty and low salaries represents a typical example of the substitution of dogma for fact—a substitution which is characteristic of Stalinist scholasticism.

The worker-priests came to assimilate, perhaps without being precisely aware of it, the broad lines of the Communist philosophy of history. In their book they ascribe to the working class a unique mission and special virtues. “Our class seemed to us to be beautiful in spite of its wounds, rich in authentic human values; never once did we come across a reason to disparage or underestimate it. And the prospects it opens for the history of humanity are too great and too real for the other classes to ignore it” (p. 268). One’s way of thinking, they suggest, depends essentially on the class one belongs to. “By immersing ourselves completely in the proletarian conditions of life, and being constantly and intimately connected with the working masses, a certain number of us have begun to acquire (or to regain) a new mentality, a new class consciousness. We share the workers’ reactions, we see things through their eyes, their minds—for example the sense of the class struggle for the suppression of classes, the feeling of

* *Les Prêtres-Ouvriers* (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1954), p. 268.

being inevitably interdependent, the conviction that they cannot free themselves from capitalist exploitation unless they stick together . . .” (p. 207)* The proletarian awareness to which these Christians have acceded seems to be entirely moulded by Communist ideology: “We know now that the proletariat left to itself, without class consciousness, without organisation, will never succeed in defeating an enemy which assails it on every side and which is a hundred times superior, if not in numbers and in quality, at least in means of oppression and repression which range from straightforward brutality to hypocritical benevolence and the narcotic of religion” (p. 230).†

And here is an example of the terms in which the worker-priests judge and condemn socialist reformism: “And in countries where this bourgeois social-democracy resists, it flounders about in a morass of contradictions: repression, injustice, misery, aggressive war, all due to this ‘henceforth inevitable decline’, to quote the expression of the *Osservatore Romano* . . .” (p. 272).

It is true that the worker-priests remain Catholics: “If we hold steadfastly to our faith in Jesus and His Father, the masters of History and therefore of this sociological and political history through which our brothers of the proletariat live, our faith in the Church is just as keen” (p. 269). They deny that the drama of the proletariat replaces the drama of salvation. But often the expressions they use suggest that profane events have gradually taken on the significance of the sacred in the divided conscience of the progressive Christian. “We bear in our flesh the agonies of the proletariat and not one of our prayers and our Eucharists but is concerned with these agonies. . . . Our faith, which was a powerful motivating force in this carnal communion with the working class, is in no way diminished or sullied thereby” (p. 268). One imagines the Catholic Church eventually

* The author of *Jeunesse de l'Eglise* ascribes the culpable doubts he might experience as to the divinity of the Church to bourgeois sin: “Or, if he yields to this doubt, it is because, twisted by his bourgeois past, he will not have drawn from the lives and the struggles of the working class the purpose and meaning of history and the lessons of patience it instils.” (*Les Evénements et la Foi*, p. 79.)

† Narcotic of religion = opium of the people.

receiving the working class, henceforth prepared, thanks to its temporal emancipation, for the Gospel of Christ. Meanwhile, "we think and feel, with the Church, that without these minimum conditions of material existence 'no spiritual life is possible', that a man who is hungry cannot believe in the bounty of God, that a man who is oppressed cannot believe in His omnipotence" (p. 270). In other words, therefore, the good tidings of great joy should not have been delivered to the slaves of antiquity, before slavery had been eliminated thanks to the class struggle. . . .

These quotations prove that, for these generous-hearted men, these Christians hungry for self-sacrifice, Communism means more than an opinion on the economic system of today and tomorrow, even more than one ideology among others. They have passed through the first two stages on the road which leads from ideology to religion: the vocation of the proletariat and its incarnation in the Communist Party, and the interpretation of the facts of today and global history according to the dogma. The final stage is inconceivable for a Catholic: if the classless society were to solve the riddle of History, if humanity, having organised and perfected the exploitation of the planet, were to be satisfied with its lot and cured of hope, man would no longer be the creature for whom Christ was crucified but the creature to whom Marx prophesied the end of pre-history thanks to the power of the machine and the revolt of the proletariat.

The Christian can never be a genuine Communist, any more than the latter could believe in God or in Christ because the secular religion, inspired by a fundamental atheism, teaches that the destiny of man is completely fulfilled on this earth and in the temporal city. The progressive Christian closes his eyes and his mind to this basic incompatibility.

Sometimes he reduces Communism to a technique of economic organisation; he makes a radical distinction between religious faith and collective existence and refuses to recognise that the Christian Church does not tolerate this distinction any more than the secular Church. The latter does not regard Communism as a neutral technique comparable to a machine at society's disposal; the former wants to inspire the

lives of each and everyone, all the time and in every sphere, and not restrict itself merely to the administration of the sacraments.

Sometimes the progressive Christian goes to the other extreme of error. He is so overwhelmed by the sufferings of the proletariat, he shares so passionately in the struggle of the Communist Party, that he uses the same words, with their Christian overtones, to describe the vicissitudes of profane history and the mysteries of sacred history. The Christian notion of history tends to merge with the Marxist notion, the civilisation of labour, the rise of the masses, the liberation of the proletariat. One does not know whether the progressive Christians aspire to a universal prosperity which would finally rescue mankind from his age-old servitude and persuade him to meditation on the hereafter, or whether the classless society, instead of the City of God, has become the object of the faith.

Neither the example of the socialists nor that of the progressive Christians enables one to trace the dividing line between members of the Party and fellow-travellers. There are Party members who think and feel in the same way as progressive Christians: they have taken to religion out of sheer devotion or self-sacrifice or in order to overcome an internal resistance which seems to them to be a relic of their bourgeois upbringing: they do not believe in dialectical materialism, they merely wish to serve. Many fellow-travellers, on the other hand, are innocent of religious nostalgia; they calculate the chances of the Party and accept without the least repugnance the system of automatic reflexes, while retaining for themselves the advantages of semi-liberty.

One will search in vain, within the Party, for one single comprehensive version of the historical dogma or the day-to-day teaching. As we have seen,* it is impossible to say precisely what the membership of the Party as a whole believes in (apart from the Party itself). When an official communiqué proclaims that nine doctors in the Kremlin have assassinated certain dignitaries of the régime, chosen at random among

* Cf. Chapter IV, pp. 112-113.

the dead, and plotted to assassinate other dignitaries who are still alive, the militants, from top to bottom of the ladder, know what they have to say (though not what they *will* have to say three months hence), but they do not know the causes and objectives of the operation. No-one in his heart of hearts can unreservedly accept the interpretation which reverberates from one end of the Communist universe to the other in countless motions adopted at countless meetings—and each man chooses for himself his own esoteric interpretation.

There is another and no less disturbing ambiguity when the State decree affects the broad lines of the dogma. What is the meaning which the believers—men of the inner circles of the Party, higher officials, local bosses—give to the major concepts? Do they believe in the identification of the Party and the proletariat in Great Britain, where the Party scarcely exists? Do they believe in the withering away of the Soviet State, when no régime has ever commanded such a vast police force? How can they envisage the classless society when a new hierarchy is gradually crystallising?

We have made the distinction between 'Churchmen' and 'faithful', between those whose primary allegiance is to the Party and those who first and foremost subscribe to the doctrine. The distinction does not coincide with that between the militant and the sympathiser. The militant has taken the decisive step and accepted the discipline, while the sympathiser remains on the threshold. But the latter is not necessarily one of the faithful, in the sense in which we have used the term, nor is the former always a true man of the Church. Certain fellow-travellers ignore the vocation of the proletariat or the classless society and simply submit to the historical necessity revealed by the unification of eight hundred million men under the same laws. There are some militants who are idealists intent on self-sacrifice, and some fellow-travellers who are cynics anxious to further their careers.

Where, then, is the true Communist to be found? In theory, he must have been through the three stages—the cult of the Party, the interpretative scholasticism, the training of the militant—but once he has graduated he acquires the right to 're-think' the dogma in his own way. He will adopt in his

own mind a symbolic version of the Party-Church nexus, of the world revolution—a version which will ultimately be identical with that of the men who refuse to get involved. The militants are not all 'true believers'. In fact, they are quite conscious both of the other side of the picture and the esoteric meanings. In spite of this knowledge, they retain their allegiance to the movement and their expectation of a future which is at once inevitable and shaped by the Party.

Must one really take seriously a secular religion which teaches its dignitaries as much scepticism as faith, whose doctrine eludes one's grasp, and which exists as such only through a series of decrees which are intellectually absurd? As soon as one rejects the idea of the identification of the Party with the proletariat and the interpretative scholasticism, the religion dissolves into a conglomeration of opinions. Can a durable religion be based on affirmations which are contrary to the facts and to common sense?

The answer to such a question, I fear, is far from being established.

From Civil Religion to Stalinism

The intellectuals invented ideologies, systems of interpretation of the social world which imply an order of values and suggest reforms to be accomplished, upheavals to be feared or hoped for. Those who, in the name of Reason, condemned the Catholic Church came to accept a secular dogma because they were dissatisfied with partial knowledge or because they coveted the power which is given only to the high-priests of the Truth.

The French philosophers of the eighteenth century were already intellectuals in the modern sense of the word; they earned their incomes from their pens and claimed the right, which they used freely, to express their opinions, most often critically, on the subjects of history or politics. Neither in their thought nor for their means of livelihood did they depend on the Church; they were connected with the rich rather than with the old nobility, and they propagated a conception of the world which was radically opposed to that of Catholic and monarchical France.

The conflict between the clerics and the philosophers was

historically but not metaphysically inevitable. The Church does not have to condemn the effort to organise the earthly existence of the greatest number as comfortably as possible; it can allow the right of free enquiry in matters on which Revelation is silent. The desire for knowledge and technical progress is now regarded as meritorious, even if the encyclicals continue to condemn scientific optimism about human nature and maintain the principle of authority in matters of dogma and morality. Once the philosophy of the *Ancien Régime* was eliminated from Catholic doctrine, intellectuals had no longer, in theory, any quarrel with the Church.

The quarrel was prolonged in France by the social and political role which the Church so often played and which was always attributed to it. A hierarchical society which proclaims a revealed truth, the Church finds it difficult to break off its connections with the powers and the parties which also refuse to accept that authority can come from below or that men, in their weakness, are capable of governing themselves.

The compromising of the Church with anti-democratic movements* is not the only, or even the principal, cause of the persistent rivalry between clerics and intellectuals. Perhaps the clerics found it difficult to resign themselves to the existence of a would-be lay State; perhaps the intellectuals were loth to accept a subordinate position. Freed from ecclesiastical despotism, they aspired to replace what they thought to have destroyed.

Certain intellectuals of the Left, revelling in their atheism and radically hostile to the religious life, sought to spread unbelief as missionaries spread belief, convinced that they were liberating mankind by destroying the gods and pulling down their altars. Others were disquieted by the irremediable decline of Christianity and improvised dogmas which might be reconciled with rationalism and be capable of re-establishing spiritual unity. Bolshevism combines both aims: it is inspired by the combative ardour of the godless, and it has elaborated an orthodoxy which claims to conform to the teachings of science. Communism is the first intellectuals'

* This remark does not apply in all Western countries or even, in France, to the whole of the nineteenth century.

religion to have succeeded—but it was by no means the first to make a bid for success.

It was Auguste Comte, perhaps, who formulated more clearly than anyone else the ideas which inspire the search for a rationalist religion to replace Christianity. The essence of these ideas is as follows. Theology and metaphysics are incompatible with positive knowledge. The religions of the past are losing their vitality because science no longer permits one to believe what the Church teaches. Faith will gradually disappear or will decline into superstition. The death of God leaves a void in the human soul; the needs of the heart remain and must be satisfied by a new Christianity. Only the intellectuals are capable of inventing, and possibly preaching, a substitute for the ancient dogmas which might be acceptable to the scientists. Finally, the social functions which were fulfilled by the Church are with us still. What will the communal morality be based on? How will the unity of belief, without which civilisation itself is imperilled, be safeguarded or restored among the members of the collectivity?

We know how Auguste Comte sought to answer this historic challenge. According to his system, the laws established by science reveal a cosmic order, a permanent order of human societies, and an order of historical development. The dogma is scientific and yet it offers to the mind definitive truths and to the heart an object of love. The society of the future will be total but not totalitarian. It will embrace all the wealth and complexity of human nature, it will balance power with public opinion, and force with charity; it will make the past present; it will open the road to Progress without revolution; it will accomplish Humanity.

Except in Brazil, Positivism has never transcended the limits of a sect. It never became the doctrine of a movement or a party, any more than the 'New Christianity' of Saint-Simon and his followers. The work of a mathematician, it remained the creed of a small, eccentric group.

The search for a civil religion originated well before the French Revolution. The chapter of the *Social Contract* which Jean-Jacques Rousseau devotes to this question expresses the two ideas which he himself had picked up from the works of

his predecessors and which haunted the minds of the eighteenth-century theorists. The separation of the temporal and the spiritual power is a principle of weakness: "The humble Christians changed their tune, and soon one saw this alleged kingdom of the other world become, under a visible leader, the most violent despotism in this one. Meanwhile, since there has always been a prince, and civil laws, there resulted from this double power a perpetual conflict of jurisdiction, which made any reasonable policy impossible in Christian states; for men were never able to discover whom they were supposed to obey, the master or the priest." And Rousseau adds: "Hobbes was the only man who dared to propose that the two heads of the Eagle should be united and everything brought back to a state of political unity, without which neither State nor Government will be properly constituted." One remembers the famous phrase: "a society of true Christians would no longer be a society of men"—which Hitler would have approved.

Political preoccupations—what religion will best promote the power and prosperity of the State?—might have prompted Rousseau to proclaim, like Machiavelli, the superiority of national religions. His own religion—Christianity reduced to a sort of theism—makes him hesitate on this slope. He does not deny the advantages of the national religion which "unites divine worship with a love of the law" and which, "by making the fatherland the object of the adoration of the citizens, teaches them that to serve the State is to serve its tutelary God". But, since it is based on error, it misleads men; "it makes a people bloodthirsty and intolerant", and puts it into a natural state of warfare with all the others. Rousseau finally settles for a purely civil creed which will make each citizen enjoy his duties. The existence of God, the After Life, and the punishment of the guilty—such are the dogmas of this religion which will bind the citizen to his State without forcing him to look on every other State as his enemy. Between the strictly national, or pagan, religion whose restoration could not be regarded as possible or desirable by a philosopher of the Age of Enlightenment, and the universal religion of redemption which inspires indifference to temporal grandeur, the civil religion would avoid fanati-

cism without weakening the individual's devotion to the sovereign or introducing into the body social a principle of division and discord.

The French revolutionary cults shared something of the ambiguity of Rousseau's civil religion. Their basis was patriotism, "a love of the ideal society, based on justice, much more than love of the national soil".* But, at the same time, the legislators did not agree to the separation of Church and State. The latter divorced itself from the old Church but tried to keep a religious character, to impose itself "on the masses under the aspect of a Church with its feasts and its obligatory rites". Reason, the new supreme being, would be the object of a belief which, purged of all superstition, would serve as the foundation of a fatherland destined by its virtue for a limitless future.

The revolutionary cults remained a unique and short-lived episode, although they had a symbolic and historical significance which did not escape August Comte. Neither the nostalgia for a national religion, nor the feeling that the Revolution would introduce a civic and universal faith, disappeared with the restoration of the monarchy and the Catholic Church.

Shintoism represents the equivalent of a national religion; it comprises, besides elements which plunge into the most distant past, the cult of the Emperor as the descendant of the Sun and the embodiment of eternal Japan. The Japanese aristocracy, when it made up its mind to borrow from the West the secrets of military power, simultaneously decided to revivify these ancestral beliefs and practices so that technical westernisation would not compromise the authenticity of Japanese culture. On the morrow of the First World War, Ludendorff offered Shintoism as a model for the German people in search of spiritual unity; he reiterated the sayings of the theorists from Machiavelli to Rousseau on the drawbacks of dualism and the fervour induced in the masses by the conviction of fighting and dying for God and the Nation alike.

* A. Mathiez, *Contribution à l'histoire religieuse de la Révolution* (Paris, 1937), p. 30, quoted by H. Gouhier in *La Jeunesse d'Auguste Comte et la formation du positivisme* (Paris, 1930), p. 8.

The new 'German Christianity' was a conscious attempt to nationalise a religion of salvation. In his funeral oration for Hindenburg Hitler used the old Germanic word *Walhalla*, and the young Hitlerites dabbled in a species of fire-worship. But one is tempted to impute these episodes as much to the over-exuberance of boy scouts as to a serious revival of pagan rites. In the event of victory in the Second World War, Hitler would probably have launched an all-out war against Christianity; he would have invoked materialism and racialism, the confused jumble of ideas opposed to democratic rationalism rather than 'German Christianity' or the 'Teutonic faith'. Racial inequality, the leader-principle, the unity of the nation, the Third Reich—these themes, not so much organised into a system as orchestrated by Nazi propaganda, would have inspired the running of the State and the education of the élite; they would have established a hierarchy of values, excited ardent passions, inspired the communion of the faithful; they would have been sanctified by quasi-religious ceremonies. Would they, in a civilisation bearing the imprint of Christianity, have been experienced in a genuinely religious way? The same question arises in the case of Communism, which seemed to offer at last a prescription for the substitute religion which the militants of the French Revolution, the Positivists and the Saint-Simonists dreamed of.

"The Revolution did not adopt a Church. Why? Because it was a Church itself"—Michelet's dictum can be applied to Communism. Like the civil religion, it sanctifies the duties of the individual in relation to the Party, the socialist State, and the future of humanity. An official religion as soon as the party is in power, it remains in opposition, in its esoteric teaching, a universal religion. In the same way as Positivism, it claims to gather up the creations of the past and transmit them to the society which will fulfil the vocation of humanity. It breaks with the individualism of the age of Enlightenment, but it promises happiness for everyone. It shows no pity for the weak nor trust in the common man, but it justifies the building up of the socialist State by humanitarian sentiments, and the unconditional authority of the leaders by the necessity to instruct the masses. It harnesses science to its purposes,

but in the name of science. It turns Western rationalism upside down, but it continues to pay lip service to it.

What is the explanation of its success? The Marxist prophetism transfigures an evolutionary pattern into a sacred history of which the classless society will be the outcome. It gives a disproportionate significance to certain institutions—the system of ownership and the functioning of the economy—and makes planning by an all-powerful State a decisive stage in history. The intelligentsia lapses all too easily into these errors, to which its devotion to left-wing principles predisposes it. Obsessed by the need to increase national productivity, it is ready to borrow the Soviet short-cut to material plenty.

The content of the dogma is an interpretation of history: Stalinism has been diffused in a century convulsed by catastrophes. Just as astrology was not immediately eliminated by scientific astronomy, so positive history fails to destroy historical mythologies. Before the advent of modern physics, the order of the cosmos offered itself to the awestruck eyes of observers. Until recently, every society believed itself to be unique and exemplary. Unconscious of the immensity of time, they did not accept their modest place in a mysterious process of evolution. The historical mythologies do not express anachronistic beliefs so much as a very human revolt against the lessons of experience.

In our day, technological progress is definitely the basic factor. It is this that uproots the old gimcrack foundations of civilisation, and our contemporaries do not seem to envisage any higher aim than the power and prosperity created by the machine. The priority of the interests of labour is confused with the causal primacy of the forces of production, and this muddled synthesis is regarded as a conquest of knowledge.

Marxist ideology discerns a fixed order of development under the blind, anarchic muddle of human interests. Each man obeys only himself and all men together produce what the higher intelligence ought to have willed. The capitalists, in search of profits, are dragging to its death the system to which they owe their success. From the struggle of the classes will arise the classless society. The perfect market, like the Hegelian 'Ruse of Reason', uses the egoism of individuals

with a view to the greater good of all. But there is a decisive difference: the liberal regards men as basically imperfect and resigns himself to a system where the good will be the result of countless actions and never the object of a conscious choice. In the last resort, he subscribes to the pessimism which sees politics as the art of creating the conditions in which the vices of men contribute to the good of the State. The Marxist admits, as far as the past is concerned, the heterogeneousness of intentions and events, but he guarantees escape from the tyranny of environment once the skein of hidden forces is unravelled. Thanks to his knowledge of the laws of history, man will attain the goal to which he aspires. Foreknowledge of the future makes it possible to manipulate both enemies and supporters.

It is at this precise point that the ideology turns into a dogma. The collective saviour no longer submits to history; he creates it, he builds the socialist State, he moulds the future. This transfiguration of the party into a Messiah remains a sectarian aberration just so long as the party vegetates and struggles in impotent and irreconcilable opposition. The seizure of power authenticates its claims. The more closely the party is identified with the State, the more genuinely it can claim to represent and embody the cause of the proletariat.

The explanation of the unique success of Leninist-Stalinism among all the attempts at a substitute religion is in the last analysis quite simple: it was the victory of the Revolution which allowed the diffusion of Communism, not the appeal of the secular religion which prepared the way for the ten days which shook the world. Unarmed prophets inevitably perish; the future of the secular religion primarily depends on the balance of power.

Secular Clericalism

The intellectuals of France were the first to undertake the search for a substitute religion. Today, their colleagues on the other side of the Iron Curtain are consolidating the legitimacy of Soviet absolutism just as the jurists of old consolidated that of the royal absolutism; they interpret the sacred scriptures, the declarations of the party congresses

and those of the Secretary-General, after the fashion of the Christian theologians. The left-wing intelligentsia, which began by claiming freedom, ends up by submitting to the discipline of party and State.

Has the ideology in fact become the equivalent of a religion? Once again, it is difficult to give a positive answer. Under the Soviet régime, as in the Byzantine tradition, the head of the State is identical with the head of the Church. The ideology, in the same way as the transcendental faith of old, determines all that really matters; it justifies authority, and it promises, not to the individual but to individuals in the mass, a just retribution in the historical hereafter, that is to say the earthly future. But Communism does not see itself as a religion, since it regards all religion as anachronism; it fights the Church in the name of atheism, or brings it to heel in the name of socialism—as with every other institution. Its totalitarianism enlarges out of all proportion the meaning of a partial doctrine so that it can appear to embrace every aspect of human power.

The ambivalence of the relations between Christians and Communists might well have encouraged the governments of the Peoples' Democracies to instigate heretical ventures comparable to those of 'German Christianity', to reconcile the Christian faith with fragments of the official ideology. This does not, however, seem to be the dominant tendency on the other side of the Iron Curtain.* The Communist authorities endeavour first of all to break the bonds between the national Church and the Papacy: any international system is intolerable to them. They then impose on the ecclesiastical dignitaries a verbal allegiance to the State orthodoxy—but this is no more than they demand from musicians, chess players or novelists. They endeavour to impart a political character to the activities, or at least to the language, of the 'popes' or bishops, but they do not encourage a religious interpretation of the historical ideologies. It is in the West rather than in

* There have, however, been reports of the activity in Poland of 'patriot priests' who are Marxists as well as Catholics. The new Catholic seminary in Warsaw is said to be giving priests a Marxist as well as a Catholic training. Cf. *New York Times*, December 19, 1954. In this connection also, W. Banning's *Der Kommunismus als Politische-Soziale Weltreligion* (Berlin, 1953) is worth referring to.

Eastern Europe that certain believers find it difficult to distinguish between the drama of the Crucifixion and the drama of the proletariat, between the classless society and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Communism is thus not so much a religion as a political attempt to find a substitute for religion in an ideology erected into a State orthodoxy—an orthodoxy which goes on cherishing claims and pretensions abandoned by the Catholic Church. The theologians now admit fairly and squarely that the Christian Revelation cannot compete in the realms of astronomy or physics, that the knowledge it contains about these subjects is rudimentary, and expressed in terms accessible to the minds of the peoples living at the time of Christ. The physicist learns nothing from the Bible about nuclear particles; he will not learn much more about them from the sacred scriptures of dialectical materialism.

The Christian faith may be said to be total, in the sense that it inspires the whole of existence; it was totalitarian when it refused to acknowledge the autonomy of profane activities. The Communist faith becomes totalitarian as soon as it aspires to be total, since it cannot create the illusion of totality except by imposing official truths, by subjecting to the orders of the central power activities whose very essence demands autonomy.

One can conceive how poets might be animated by the Communist faith, as others by the Christian faith, how physicists or engineers might passionately desire to serve the proletariat. But it is essential that this conviction and this devotion should be authentic and not dictated from outside by the bureaucrats in charge of culture. It is essential that the latter should leave the artist free to find his own forms and the scientist his own truths. Socialist realism or dialectical materialism cannot mobilise an entire community into a unanimously experienced creed or philosophy. A pseudo-unity is obtained by subordinating the specific meaning of each spiritual universe to the social function which is assigned to it, by setting up equivocal or false propositions as the basis of a doctrine which is alleged to be at once scientific and philosophical.

We in the West have no need to look for a rival orthodoxy to compete with historical materialism—as though a philosophy could or should establish the principles and concepts of the natural sciences and the broad lines of their results—the more so because criticism alone is enough to exorcise the ghost of Soviet cultural unity and because this artificial synthesis will eventually dissolve of its own accord. Already the mathematicians, physicists and biologists know that Marxist-Leninism may be able to offer a terminology—at the beginning and the end of the book—to synchronise the results of their researches with the official theories, but not an instrument of exploration. The historians, even if they admit on the whole the validity of the Marxist categories, feel themselves to be the prisoners of an orthodoxy which is both absolute and ever-changing. It is true that Catholic dogma, apart from unprovable affirmations relating to subjects which are beyond the grasp of human reason, contained the summary or the systematisation of an imperfect scientific knowledge. But having shed this burden of profane acquirements, Catholicism was able to purge itself without betraying its principles—to go deeper, in fact, and closer to its own essence. The Communist orthodoxy, on the other hand, could not purge itself or allow a rational expression of scientific problems without splitting itself up into its component parts, without dissolving into a conglomerate of more or less equivocal opinions on the society of today and tomorrow.

The ideology becomes a dogma by acquiescing in absurdity. Once it is acknowledged that in every society a minority exercises the leading functions, the assimilation of the party dictatorship to the dictatorship of the proletariat collapses immediately, and all that remains is to compare from experience the advantages and the risks of the single party with those of a parliament elected by peaceful competition. If the claim to universality were dropped—not necessarily that of the Marxist prophetism but merely the Leninist version—the bluff would be called. The socialist society would remain the objective of historical evolution, but there would be many roads leading to it. The social-democratic parties would no longer be traitors but brothers; they would fulfil the

redemptory function in the West, where the rigours of Bolshevik technology are unnecessary. In other words, the Communists would accept sincerely the interpretation which is suggested to them with anxious goodwill by those Marxists who have not taken leave of their senses, who admire the five-year plans but detest the concentration camps. The Communists would really believe what they now pay lip service to, on orders, when the interest of the Soviet Union demands it.

Such a conversion seems an easy one, yet it would be enough to call the essentials of the dogma into question. If the identification of the proletariat with the Communist Party is not universal and unquestionable, the Revolution of 1917 loses the place which is assigned to it in the sacred history and becomes no more than a lucky coup. In this case, how can one foretell which countries are destined for the harsh benefits of accelerated industrialisation, how, if the supporters of the Second International are no longer excommunicated, maintain that the transition from one régime to another demands a violent break? Without the idea of a revolution which marks the end of pre-history, the Soviet reality would be no more than what in fact it is—a brutal method of modernisation under the command of a single party nominated not by destiny but by the unforeseeable vicissitudes of human conflict.

If the Russian Communist Party sticks to its claim to represent and embody the cause of the world proletariat, it must plunge ever deeper into the mysteries of the esoteric scholasticism. If it renounces this claim, it abdicates completely. Soon, adopting the counsels of social-democratic wisdom, it would begin to share its disabilities. Bourgeois and boring as the British Labour Party, recovered from its illusions and cured of terror, it would advance resolutely towards a sort of twentieth-century Louis-Philippism.

When all is said and done, isn't this conversion inevitable? Isn't it already beginning to happen before our eyes? Already the Party seems to be drawing in its horns and restricting its activities. It has allowed some liberty to scientific controversy and tolerated literary works—novels and plays—which ridicule certain aspects of the régime. The extreme and almost monstrous lengths to which the enslavement of the

creative intellect had been carried during the last years of Stalin's life have been attenuated. The interpretative scholasticism remains obligatory, but it does not permanently maintain a sort of logical insanity. The régime is becoming more bourgeois and broad-minded and in practice if not in theory is tending to renounce the universality of Marxist-Leninism.

The return to normal life, the waning of ideological ardour, was bound to come sooner or later. The Revolution may be permanent, but the revolutionary spirit evaporates. The third generation of leaders, if not the second, may heed the lesson of Cincinnatus and renounce impossible conquests. How, in the long run, could the stability of a bureaucratic despotism be combined with the proselytism of a conquering sect? The revolutionary ideal, orientated towards the future, lives on illusions; but the main characteristics of the existing Soviet order cannot easily be ignored.

The Stalinist régime overcame the contradiction between the justification of present authority and the expectation of a perfect future by simultaneously resorting to terror and ideology, by exalting the present not for its own sake but as a stage on the road to the classless society. Meanwhile, the results of industrialisation, the consolidation of the new ruling class, the gradual eclipse of the promethean act which originated the superhuman enterprise—all this has conspired to undermine a faith which dissolves into opinions as soon as it ceases to be animated by fanaticism. Such, in the long run, seems to me to be the most likely prospect. It would be wrong to conclude from this that the nightmare will vanish, that the imprint of Marxist-Leninist training will somehow fade and the unity of the bourgeois and Communist civilisations be miraculously re-established. Between belief and disbelief, between total adherence to the Stalinist scholasticism and categorical rejection of the mental universe of the Party, there is room for many intermediate stages. Doubts about details of interpretation do not necessarily affect the solidity of the whole. The main concepts of the doctrine are preserved, and the militants continue to reason in terms of relations of production, social classes, feudalism, capitalism and imperialism.

Perhaps the Communist way of thought and action survives

the loss of the faith longer than the conceptual apparatus. Intransigence turned against the comrades of yesterday; the tendency to follow to the bitter end the logic or the alleged logic of the struggle, to see the world in black and white; reluctance to admit the fragmentation of problems, the non-unity of the planet and the plurality of doctrines; these hangovers from the training he has received often characterise the ex-Communist, the unfrocked priest of a militant sect.

Probably the intellectual has more difficulty than the common man in freeing himself from this ideology which, like the State which derives from it, is his especial handiwork. The Soviet government rules in the name of a doctrine elaborated by an intellectual whose life was spent in libraries and interpreted for the past century by countless other intellectuals. Under a Communist régime the intellectuals, sophists rather than philosophers, rule the roost. The examining magistrates who unmask deviations, the writers coerced into socialist realism, the engineers and managers who are supposed to execute the plans and to interpret the ambiguous orders of the central authority—all must be dialecticians. The Secretary-General of the Party, master and arbiter over the lives of millions of men, is also an intellectual: at the end of a triumphal career he offers to the faithful a theory of capitalism and socialism—as though a book represented the highest accomplishment. The emperors of old were often poets or thinkers; for the first time the emperor actually reigns *qua* dialectician, interpreter of the doctrine and of history.

Capitalists, bankers, aristocrats—all those who, in a parliamentary democracy, bar the intellectuals' road to power—have disappeared. In the eighteenth century, the intellectuals denounced the concentration of enormous riches in the institutions of the Church, but they accepted without scruple the protection of the rich merchants or *fermiers-généraux*. They attacked inequalities of personal status and pleaded the cause of the rising bourgeoisie. Before the French Revolution, the left-wing intellectual did not resent commerce or competition or well-earned fortunes, but wealth that was either inherited or sequestered, and discriminations of birth. In every period, he has set himself up as the adversary of the powerful, first the Church, then the nobility, and finally the bourgeoisie.

Now, however, in the case of the bureaucratic dialecticians, he seems to have acquired a sudden tolerance, as though he saw in them his own likeness.

The Communist State needs managers to direct factories, and writers, professors and psychologists to spread the doctrine. Both the engineers at grips with brute matter and the engineers in charge of souls enjoy substantial advantages: prestige and glamour, a high standard of living, the sense of participating in a stirring achievement. They are not so ingenuous as to be taken in by propaganda for the masses, but they are too keen on their privileges to refuse to justify the régime and their own docility towards it. Thus they combine belief with scepticism, verbal allegiance with mental reservations; they are incapable either of wholeheartedly accepting an irrational dogmatism or of shaking off the spell of an elusive orthodoxy.

Can they not, in the final resort, invoke the example of the transcendental religions? Christianity brought its message to the slaves as well as to the kings; it taught that men were equal in the eyes of God in spite of social hierarchies. The Church nevertheless legitimised the *de facto* authority and assuaged the conscience of the powerful. And there were times when it aspired to reign on this earth. How could the progressive intellectuals refuse to offer their talents to a State which proclaims the true doctrine, to the building up of a society which conforms with the hopes of revolutionary rationalism and which is generous to experts and men of letters—*providing they obey*?

* * * *

Marx called religion the opium of the people. Whether it wants to or not, the Church consolidates the established injustice. It helps men to support and to forget their ills instead of curing them. Obsessed by the hereafter, the believer is indifferent to temporal things.

Marxist ideology, as soon as a State has built it up into an orthodoxy, lays itself open to the same criticism: it also teaches the masses obedience and confirms the authority of the rulers. Moreover, Christianity has never given the rulers a completely free hand. Even the oriental Churches reserved

the right to condemn an unworthy sovereign; the Tsar, though titular head of the Church, did not control the dogma. The Secretary-General of the Communist Party retains for himself the liberty, whenever circumstances require it, to rewrite the history of the Communist Party which constitutes the essence of the Stalinist dogma. The concept of the classless society is emptied of meaning as the régime born of the Revolution becomes stabilised into an old-fashioned bureaucratic despotism. Justification by means of the historical hereafter declines, with the famous trials, into a linguistic comedy: the 'other world' is not so much the future as the present reality transfigured by the words which are used to define it.

It will be said that the Communist religion in our time has a quite different meaning from the Christian religion. The Christian opium makes the people passive, the Communist opium incites them to revolt. Undoubtedly, the Marxist-Leninist ideology has contributed to the training if not the recruitment of revolutionaries. Lenin and his comrades obeyed not so much a doctrine as a political instinct, a taste for action and the will to power. The Marxist prophetism nevertheless orientated their lives and aroused an infinite hope. What did millions of corpses matter beside the classless society!

Even now that it has been hardened and sterilised by dogmatism, the Marxist ideology continues to exercise a revolutionary function in the newly-awakened countries of Asia and Africa. It encourages the mobilisation of the masses, it cements the unity of the intellectuals, bewildered by the dispersion of the religious sects. As an instrument of action it remains effective. Elsewhere, in France for example, it is quite otherwise. There, the cult of the Revolution and the pathetic apostrophisings of history represent a sort of escapism. The yearning for the Apocalypse does not inspire impatience for reform but resigned acceptance of present reality combined with verbal refusal, which is the point of honour of this so-called non-conformism.

This is not to deny that even in France millions of men are waiting for an event, terrible as a cosmic catastrophe, intoxicating as a carnival, which will alter their whole destiny.

The argument which impresses so many progressive Christians—how to imbue the lives of the poor and the unfortunate with meaning and hope—had no force for a mind like that of Simone Weil, who could not conceive that faith could involve the sacrifice of truth. One respects the believers, but one must combat error.

The Stalinist religion mobilises the masses with a view to the seizure of power and rapid industrialisation; it sanctifies the discipline of the fighters and the builders; it adjourns until after the Revolution, and then into a future which recedes further and further as one advances towards it, the moment when the people will gather the fruits of their long patience.

The Communist régime which has put an end to a century of troubles in China is certainly more effective, and perhaps more concerned with the lot of ordinary men, than the régimes which preceded it. It is useless to regret that these reforms were not brought about at smaller cost, without the regimentation of the entire people and the massive liquidations. Yet, even so, one cannot but be hostile to the secular religion.

He who does not believe in God is not necessarily hostile to the religions of redemption which proclaim eternal truths: that man's social destiny is not the be-all and the end-all of his existence; that the hierarchy of wealth and authority does not reflect the hierarchy of values; that worldly failure is sometimes the road to higher success; and that men are united by a mysterious fraternity in spite of the free-for-all struggle.

He who does not believe in the Marxist prophetism must denounce the secular religion, even if, here and there, it produces desirable changes. It is a superstition which encourages turn by turn violence and passivity, devotion also and heroism, but finally scepticism, mixed with fanaticism, war against the unbelievers even though the faith has gradually emptied itself of its substance. It will prevent human friendship and brotherhood, on this side of politics or beyond it, until the day when, rendered otiose by the *embourgeoisement* of the bosses and the relative contentment of the masses, it will decline into a humdrum, commonplace ideology and will no longer evoke either hope or horror.

It would be wrong to object that in our age religion must logically be secular since, according to the dominant philosophy, the destiny of mankind goes no further than the rational organisation of the planet. Atheism, however sure of itself, neither implies nor justifies ideological dogmatism. The separation of Church and State, which is the origin of the peculiar greatness of the West, does not demand a unanimous faith in the double nature of man. It does not even demand that a majority of the citizens should continue to believe in the Revelation. It survives, in the century of unbelief, provided that the State itself does not profess to be the embodiment of an idea or the sole witness to the truth.

Perhaps a prophetism is the heart and soul of all action. It challenges the world and affirms the dignity of the human mind in defiance or aspiration. But when rulers, proud of a successful revolution, seize upon a prophetism in order to establish their power and confound their enemies, the secular religion is born, condemned from the start to become petrified into an orthodoxy or to dissolve into indifference. The men of the West have remained too Christian to deify the temporal city. How can the pundits of the Soviet law maintain the revolutionary fervour? If the reality satisfies the living, the time of indignation and ferment is over. If it disappoints them, how will it be acknowledged as the road towards the millennium?

The secular religion will probably resist for some time the contradiction which haunts it. But in the West it represents no more than an inevitable step towards the end of Hope.

THE DESTINY OF THE INTELLECTUALS

IT would be tempting to compose a diptych on the panels of which were painted the two contrasting images of the intellectuals under a Sovietised régime and the intellectuals in France.

On the one side, large numbers of experts and men of letters seem to be alienated: the former do not acknowledge as legitimate and beneficent the authority of the managers or financiers, the latter indignantly protest against the intrigues of the politicians and the brutalities of the police, and feel a sense of responsibility in the face of human misery—starving peasants in India, ill-treated South African negroes, the oppressed of all races and all classes, ex-Communists persecuted by McCarthy, worker-priests disciplined by the Vatican.

On the other side, in the People's Democracies, experts and men of letters sign motions and manifestoes against the very same men and the very same events which arouse the anger of their Western colleagues: the rearmament of Western Germany, the execution of the Rosenbergs, the conspiracies of the Vatican and Washington against peace, etc. They have retained the right to indignation, but only at the expense of the capitalist world which they are not free to know objectively or to visit. They accept the reality which surrounds them, and deny the other, while the left-wing intelligentsia in free Europe does precisely the opposite.

One could also paint a third picture, that of the ex-Communist or the anti-Communist in the West, who subscribes to the same values as the Communists but regards the bourgeois democracies as less unfaithful to his ideal than the People's Democracies. In some cases he will sign every conceivable manifesto—for the Rosenbergs and against the