POLITICAL PILGRIMS

Travels of Western Intellectuals
to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba
1928–1978

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Themes

> A world purified of all evil and in which history is to find its consummation—these ancient imaginings are with us still. NORMAN COHN[1]

> A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep. SAUL BELLOW[2]

The Political Judgment of Intellectuals—A Point of Departure

Although much has been written about Western intellectuals, the relationship between their critical and uncritical attitudes—or, between estrangement and affirmation—remains to be more fully explored and much better understood.

My interest in this matter was sparked initially by the political judgments of contemporary Western intellectuals, both distinguished and less distinguished. For many years prior to conceiving of this book, I harbored misgivings about their ability to make what I considered sound political judgments. It seemed that they had a tendency for a selective preoccupation with various historical and social events and issues while allowing others to bypass them completely. I was struck by a puzzling juxtaposition of insight and blindness, sensitivity and indifference. As time went by, I came to discern a pattern. It appeared to me that most of these intellectuals tended to be rather harsh on their own societies, and surprisingly indulgent of as well as uninformed about others, unless the defects of these societies were somehow linked to their own.

My misgivings gradually broadened into an interest in the political values, cultural beliefs, and deeper apprehensions of intellectuals about the social world they inhabited. As the signs of psychic and political discomfort multiplied among Western intellectuals during the 1960s and early 70s, I became increasingly eager to comprehend better their attitudes and the less self-evident sources thereof. It appeared that the broader ramifications of this study were associated with the ambiguous

position of intellectuals in contemporary Western societies and with their contradictory attitudes toward power and powerlessness, belief and disbelief, social order and disorder. Intellectuals in Western societies at once articulate, occasionally attempt to solve, and sometimes themselves create certain social problems and conflicts. Their self-images too are often ambiguous, replete with paradox as they combine self-doubt with a sense of entitlement to influence, assertions of powerlessness with claims on power, humility with self-righteousness. Many Western intellectuals view themselves as the true elite of our times, especially in their capacity as opinion makers, and there are those among them who would feel comfortable with the appellation "engineers of the soul."[3]

I came to believe that the most distinctive trait of a large segment of contemporary Western intellectuals has been the fluctuation in their attitudes between estrangement and affirmation. Moreover, I felt that a more systematic examination of the relationship between the two could lead not only to a better understanding of these intellectuals but also of certain socio-cultural problems in contemporary Western societies.

I discovered that there is a body of literature that could provide much of the information required to examine the connections between estrangement and affirmation and between belief and disbelief: the reports of intellectuals on their visits to societies they found appealing. Such writings contained both lengthy statements about the attractions of the countries visited and detailed criticisms of the social system of their own countries. These books and articles offered more than an outline of the political values of a sizable group of Western intellectuals: they contained their notions of good *and* bad society, social justice *and* injustice. Almost invariably they contrasted the defects of their own societies with the virtues of those visited. Not surprisingly, these writings revealed more about their authors—and about the societies which nurtured them, if that is the right word—than about the countries ostensibly depicted.

The phenomenon of such political tourism, and the accounts written about it, provided an excellent opportunity for an inquiry into the grasp of reality, common sense, and political "instinct" of these tourists. Moreover, an examination of the politically purposeful travelers was bound to intersect with the broader issue of the relationship between alienation and utopian impulses in contemporary Western societies.

In recent times intellectuals in pursuit of political utopia have been particularly interested in four countries. Naturally enough, following the October Revolution of 1917, the Soviet Union was the first focus of attention, although many of the visits only took place after the mid-1920s,

and the greatest number of such visitors arrived there in the early and mid-1930s. Less numerous but propelled by similar motives were the trips undertaken to Cuba, especially in the first years after the 1958 revolution, and to North Vietnam in the mid- and late 60s.* Interest in China among American intellectuals intensified after the diplomatic initiatives in 1972 which also allowed for the spectacular expansion of visits. Western European intellectuals visited China in more substantial numbers during the 1950s and 1960s.

Those political tours and pilgrimages are significant in several ways. In the first place they provide documents that can aid in understanding the values, aspirations, longings, and revulsions of an important and influential segment of Western intellectuals. The reports of the travelers have also molded our conceptions of the societies they described, and of those from which they have become estranged. At a minimum, the surge of favorable assessments of these societies contributed to the drowning out of voices more critical (or reduced their credibility) and certainly neutralized the expression of many skeptical viewpoints. By sheer repetition certain seemingly unassailable platitudes and axioms have evolved, gained footholds, and acquired plausibility.†

The travel reports also offer some startling illustrations of selective perception and the associated capacity for selective moral indignation and compassion—attitudes which were among the principal concerns of this study.

Why was it that sensitive, insightful, and critical intellectuals found societies like that of the USSR under Stalin, China under Mao, and Cuba under Castro so appealing—their defects so easy to ignore (or, if observed, to excuse)—and so strikingly superior to their own societies? How was it possible for many of them to have visited these societies often at their most oppressive historical moments (as was clearly the

* Trips to North Vietnam were unusual insofar as it was a country in a state of undeclared war with the United States. At the same time the American bombing of North Vietnam was a major cause of the sympathy that country evoked among many American intellectuals who often were more opposed to the American policy in Vietnam than in favor of the political system prevailing in North Vietnam.

† Edward Shils, for example, has stated that "Among the collectivistic liberals of the West, the exhilaration which accompanied the early years of the Soviet Union has expired. Nonetheless, a certain image of the institutions and practices of the Soviet system has over four decades become imprinted in the minds of Western intellectuals; it comprises 'public ownership' of the instruments of production, social security from the cradle to the grave, 'no unemployment,' the avoidance of inflation, the extirpation of the 'acquisitive instinct,' or the 'profit motive,' social equality and the solution of the 'ethnic problem.' "[4]

case of the USSR in the 1930s and China during the Cultural Revolution) and yet *not* notice their oppressiveness? Or, if they did, what psychological and ideological mechanisms enabled them to take a tolerant view?* One's sense of bewilderment deepens, since it is usually taken for granted that a key attribute of intellectuals is a keenly critical mind, fine tuned to every contradiction, injustice, and flaw of the social world.

Intellectuals critical of their own society proved highly susceptible to the claims put forward by the leaders and spokesmen of the societies they inspected in the course of these travels. They were inclined to give every benefit of doubt to these social systems and were successful in screening out qualities that might have detracted from their positive vision. How could such contradictory attitudes coexist and be reconciled with one another in such a highly patterned way? How do intensely critical (even suspicious) frames of mind blend with highly impressionable and uncritical mental postures? Do such opposing mental postures form some sort of a "dialectical" unity? Are they mutually supportive and made possible by one another, or do they represent compartmentalized contradictions?[6] Or is it perhaps possible that what appears at first a merciless, but realistic, critical impulse—exhibited by these intellectuals toward their own society—is *also* distorted because they are predisposed to attribute the worst to the social setting with which they are familiar and systematically to ignore its positive characteristics? To what extent were the favorable perceptions and judgments induced by the way the hosts controlled and manipulated the impressions and experiences of the visitors?

While the manipulations of the visitors' experiences—or as I call them, the techniques of hospitality—doubtless influenced the judgments—both by exposing them to reality selectively and by the highly flattering personal attentions they showed them—I do not believe that these techniques were decisive. What was decisive was the predisposition of the intellectuals themselves. And this leads us back once more to the crucial question: under what circumstances and for what motives do "critical

* Hans Magnus Enzensberger, the radical German social critic, posed essentially the same question when he wrote: "such an analysis [of these attitudes] would have to go beyond individual idiosyncrasies and search out the historically determined elements of the wishful thinking and their blindness to reality and their corruption. The point is not to discover that 'man is evil', but why professed socialists let themselves be politically blackmailed, morally bribed and theoretically blinded, and not just a few individuals, but in droves. . . . the 'Tourism' of the Revolutionaries' . . . is only one of the symptoms."[5]

intellectuals" become uncritical ones? What pressures lead to the apparent suspension of critical judgment in certain situations? How can sensitivity to social injustice and indignation over the abuses of political power so abruptly give way to the cheerful acceptance, or denial, of comparable flaws in other social systems?

The answer to these questions lies in the realization that intellectuals, like most other people, use double standards and that the direction of their moral indignation and compassion is set and guided by their ideologies and partisan commitments.

I hope that this study may contribute to a reexamination of certain widely held views about intellectuals. It will, if nothing else, show that their political attitudes and moral commitments are more contradictory and complex than has generally been envisaged. It will also show that their critical impulses are neither infallible nor consistent—above all, that being of a critical disposition per se may not be the major defining characteristic of Western intellectuals but instead an attribute of their ideal, or rather idealized, image.

Alienation, Utopia Seeking, and Choosing the Model Societies

The most striking paradox in the political judgment of intellectuals involves the contrast between their views of their own society and of those they designate—from time to time—as lands of promise or historical fulfillment. Correspondingly, in the interstices and interconnections of these two attitudes—estrangement and affirmation—lie the cherished values of Western intellectuals, their conceptions of good and evil in politics and history.

Not surprisingly, my inquiry found that alienation from one's own society and susceptibility to the attractions, real or imagined, of others are very closely linked. The late 1920s and early 1930s provide an excellent example. Then, as in the 1960s and early 1970s, Western intellectuals responded to the crises and problems of their society with intensified criticism and a surging interest in alternatives. The Soviet case offered the most hopeful alternative to the economic and social chaos of the first period. In more recent times the problems of Western societies were less economic and more spiritual and political in nature. In the 1960s and early 70s the putative emptiness of affluence and material comforts provided the broad background against which specific causes for discontent and social criticism came to be projected: Vietnam, race relations,

corporate capitalism, consumerism, or the bureaucratization of life. More generally, I contend that in recent times the increasing strains of secularization played an important part in predisposing many intellectuals to admire such societies as China under Mao or Cuba under Castro. These were social systems which exuded a sense of purpose and appeared to have provided meaningful lives for their citizens. Evidently social criticism must rest on a vision of alternatives. Hence, estrangement from one's society invariably precedes or accompanies the projection of hope and affirmation upon other ones. This reciprocal process is enhanced by the circumstance that the societies these Western intellectuals tend to idealize in turn attack Western societies—through their spokesmen and mass media—on almost exactly the same grounds as the estranged intellectuals. Kindred voices are raised, it would seem, across the various geographical and ideological boundaries, which denounce capitalistic greed and wastefulness, excessive military expenditures, racism, poverty, unemployment, the impoverishment of human relationships, the lack of community, the vulgar noises of advertising, the crudeness of commercial transactions—practically everything that is intensely disliked by the Western intellectual. How could he fail to find some sense of affinity with those who seemingly share his values, his likes and dislikes?

The remarks of Tom Hayden and Staughton Lynd are illustrative of these attitudes:

> . . . we also discovered that we felt empathy for those more fully "other" members of the other side, spokesmen for the Communist world in Prague and Moscow, Peking and Hanoi. After all, we call ourselves in some sense revolutionaries. So do they. After all, we identify with the poor and oppressed. So do they.[7]

Thus a favorable predisposition toward these societies was based in part on the belief that they stood for the values the intellectuals cherished. Moreover, their very existence meant that Western intellectuals did not have to retreat to purely utopian alternatives to the evils they deplored. Intellectuals critical of their society must believe that social institutions superior to those in their own society can be created. They must be in a position to point, at least tentatively, to the actualization of their ideals in some existing society in order to lend strength to their social criticism at home. If other societies are no better than the one they know best how can they rise to intense moral indignation about the defects of their own society? While it is possible to reject one's society without becoming favorable toward another, it is psychologically difficult and rare to do so, for it generates a sense of hopelessness. Much of the literature we examined shows that most people estranged from their own society tend to drift to the idealization of others—or, rather, they cannot idealize others without a previous alienation from their own. The admission or realization that other social systems represent little or no improvement over one's own dilutes moral outrage; if social injustices and defects are endemic and discernible even in "new" revolutionary societies, it becomes difficult to sustain an impassioned criticism of one's own. Most of us are not capable of vehement and prolonged criticism about such ills which are widespread, seem to resist eradication, and appear determined more by impersonal forces than by identifiable human beings. By contrast, when particular defects of a society are seen as easily remediable, and when specific societies can be pointed to as illustrative of such improvements, a new and vastly superior basis for the critique of one's society is created.

It was precisely this need for new alternatives—along with certain historical facts and new information increasingly difficult to ignore—that explains why the Western intellectuals' attachment to the Soviet model-exemplar was relinquished with the passage of time. Since the late 1950s there has been not only an impressive accumulation of information concerning the departure of Soviet society from its revolutionary origins and ideals, but also the emergence of new and seemingly more authentic revolutionary societies—such as Cuba, China and North Vietnam—which could absorb sentiments and sympathies which had earlier been reserved for the Soviet Union.* H. Stuart Hughes's comment about the late J. P. Sartre (one of the few older intellectuals whose political attitudes and commitments formed a bridge between two periods and generations, having shifted from pro-Soviet to pro-Cuban and other more diffuse "Third World" sympathies) is readily applicable to many New Left radicals of the 1960s in search of new models of political rectitude: "Like Lenin before him, Sartre discovered the underdeveloped world when he needed it most to buttress a faith that seemed increasingly inapplicable to European conditions."[9]

The importance of unfamiliarity as a component of the appeal of distant societies and their leaders was also noted by Hannah Arendt in her comment on the popularity of Mao, Castro, Che Guevara, and Ho Chi Minh as compared with the lack of interest in and enthusiasm for the

* Once more one could witness what James Hitchcock, the historian, called "the obscure process by which people in a declining and weakening culture come to admire the vitality and self-assertiveness of a culture seemingly on the rise."[8]

much more accessible Yugoslav system and its leader, Tito.[10] It should be stressed, however, that geographical distance as such is not the decisive criterion in endowing countries with some sense of mystery, promise, or exotic attraction. The recently emerged popularity of Albania among Western European radicals shows that geographic proximity can be compatible with political appeal *if* little is known about the country in question. Thus, for example:

> A recent visitor to a Scandinavian university, after a heated debate with a group of students who had complained bitterly about the lack of freedom in their own countries and in the West in general, asked which country in the world they most admired. The answer was Albania. None of the students were familiar with conditions in Albania, none had been there or had the faintest wish to go, but Albania was nevertheless the name of their utopia.[11]

George Kennan reported a similar experience:

> I asked a Norwegian student recently what it was that the radical students at the University of Oslo most admired—what did they look up to as an example of a hopeful civilization? After considerable brooding and thought-taking, he said it was . . . Albania! Can anyone think of anything more miserable than the regime of Albania? Obviously there is not one shred of reality in this view—no interest at all in the objective truth about Albania. Albania is picked up simply because it seems to be a club with a particularly sharp nail at the end of it with which to beat one's own society, one's own traditions, one's own parents. . . . Apparently the criterion of their affections is the degree of hatred . . . for the West, and especially for their own societies.[12]

Indisputably the solution of these Scandinavian students is extreme but in some ways very consistent: the selection of a totally unknown country such as Albania confirms the symbolic nature of the quest for a model of a perfected social order.

There is another option for intellectuals who are reluctant to project their hopes on or invest their sympathies in known, existing political systems because of the lessons or history or common sense. It is to idealize abortive revolutions or social movements which were not given a chance to go stale or become oppressive. A recent example is the French student rebellion of 1968, which an American social critic considered "the most significant event in Western politics in a generation."[13] Admiring defeated revolutions has the same advantages as worshipping from a distance a beautiful woman (or man) whose charms have never been tested by sharing a bed, bathroom, or kitchen.

Apparently the appeals of political systems, revolutionary or other,

are determined not by the volume of information that is available about them, nor by their actual accomplishments, nor by the degree of personal access to them. It is at least plausible to suggest that the needs of the observer—as the case of Albania's admirers suggests—frequently take precedence over the evaluation of social-political realities. The Soviet Union enjoyed the greatest prestige among Western intellectuals at the times when it was most savagely repressive, most severely plagued by material shortages, and subject to Stalin's personal dictatorship—that is, during the early and mid-1930s. By the time it had shed some of its most unattractive features—that is, after Stalin's death and under Khrushchev—the USSR no longer enjoyed the interest and endorsement of Western intellectuals. To be sure, following the death of Stalin more information became available about Soviet society, much of it unflattering. Yet the shift in attitudes cannot be explained merely as a rational response to more information. Nor can it be argued that in the 1930s, the time when the Soviet Union was so popular among Western intellectuals, there was no information at all about the Purges and other unappealing products of the Soviet system. Such information was available (for example, through Trotsky and his followers), but neither was it widely enough disseminated nor were intellectuals so receptive toward it, while much counter-information (or rather, misinformation or propaganda) was disseminated to neutralize it by the Soviet Union and its supporters abroad.

Adam Ulam's explanation for the waning popularity of the Soviet system among Western intellectuals is the most persuasive:

> . . . an intellectual often finds a certain morbid fascination in the puritanic and repressive aspects of the Soviet regime and also in its enormous outward self-assurance, which contrasts so saliently with the apologetic, hesitant self-image of the democratic world. When this facade of self-assurance began to collapse, first after the revelations about Stalin in 1956, and then as a consequence of the split in the communist camp, many Western intellectuals began to shed their loyalty to the one-time idol, now certainly more humane than it had been under Stalin.[14]

The same process is apparently taking place in regard to the attitudes toward China since the death of Mao. As in the Soviet case following the death of Stalin, the outward self-assurance and image of monolithic unity of the Chinese regime has been seriously hurt by the power struggle resulting from the elimination of what came to be called the "Gang of Four," who had earlier been major repositories of power and authority. Mao's death and the instability associated with it also allowed the

revelation of many shortcomings of the Chinese regime, partly as a result of the desire of the present leadership to discredit the defeated competitors for power, partly as an unintended consequence of a somewhat loosened grip on power. Also, as in the Soviet case in the post-Stalin period, the waning popularity of the Chinese regime among Western intellectuals has coincided with its becoming less, not more, repressive.

A more general aversion toward modern, highly bureaucratized industrial societies (of which the USSR is one) elaborated by Marcuse and his followers further explains why the Soviet system can no longer inspire the majority of Western intellectuals. Indeed, these generalized reservations on the part of intellectuals about industrial society are among the major differences between the sensibilities of the 1960s and 1930s.

Thus both the popularity and unpopularity of the Soviet Union among Western intellectuals have more to do with the state of Western societies than with that of the Soviet. Admiration of the Soviet system peaked not when its performance was the most impressive or its policies most humane, but at the time when a severe economic crisis buffeted the Western world (in the 1930s), which helped create a perception of the Soviet Union as an island of stability, order, economic rationality, and social justice. Likewise the attractions of China, Cuba, and North Vietnam emerged and intensified during the 1960s when, once more, a crisis of confidence shook the United States (this time on account of Vietnam and racial conflict), and when both in the United States and in Western Europe rising non-material aspirations were unmet by new spiritual resources. Clearly it is possible to admire countries when one knows little about them; political systems can also be detested when there is scanty knowledge about them.*

While the amount of information may not be important or decisive in shaping opinion, there are other factors which play a greater part in the process of attitude formation—namely, the extent to which the information is visual, vivid, and dramatic. Arthur Koestler noted: "A dog run over by a car upsets our emotional balance . . . three million Jews killed in Poland cause but a moderate uneasiness. Statistics don't bleed; it is the detail which counts."[16]

As far as such "details which count" are concerned, there is a striking imbalance between the unavailability of unflattering visual information about the most repressive police states (and especially those with a left-wing one-party system*) and the abundance of such information about the unattractive features of American and other Western societies. This is significant, since the availability or absence of vivid, visual information relating to various social-political issues is a major factor in the creation of stereotypes, both negative and positive. The unappealing features of Western societies and particularly the United States can be seen and have indeed been depicted on television, in movies, magazines, and newspapers with considerable regularity.[17] Western, and again preeminently American, audiences have been provided, for some time, by the mass media of their countries with vivid images of the worst aspects of their societies. We have all seen them: ethnic slums, street corner gangs, welfare clients and the unemployed in line, angry strikers, political protesters on the campuses or streets, dilapidated schools, overcrowded hospitals, bleak prisons, policemen dispersing demonstrators, the grief of families who lost their sons in Vietnam, scenes of bloodshed and violence in Vietnam (and elsewhere in the West), photogenic extremists and bigots of many varieties, farmers destroying food, the ravaged physical environment, garbage-strewn city-scapes, scenes of crime, distress, waste, destruction and brutality—the list is endless. We do have a richly documented pictorial inventory of the ills of our society.

What of the other side? It is hardly news that police states, among them the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, North Vietnam, North Korea, Cambodia, Albania (and many others), are not in the habit of this kind of critical self-exposure, or of allowing outsiders to produce critical photographic inventories. They do not invite foreign cameramen to make

* Thus, for instance, the U.S. has become a symbol of evil and a global scapegoat in the eyes of many Third World intellectuals who know little about it. A study of anti-Americanism and the reasons why the U.S. has become a near universal scapegoat symbol today would be no less fascinating than the one pursued here. Such attitudes represent the other side of the coin, as it were: uncritical, unreflective rejection rather than unreflective acceptance. Four attributes of the U.S. seem to invite, in my view, such worldwide animosity: 1. affluence; 2. a pervasive global *cultural* presence and appeal; 3. the combination of power with the weakened will to use it, or the image of the cowardly bully that can finally be taunted and abused with relative impunity; 4. at last, the American propensity for guilt and self-criticism, since people do not think well of those who think poorly of themselves.[15]

* I emphasize the unavailability of such information on left-wing police states, since right-wing dictatorships, or more precisely those of a non-Leninist persuasion, tend to be more negligent about the control of the mass media and communications in general. Since they are not quite as serious about treating ideas as weapons, their systems of propaganda and censorship tend to be less refined. Several unflattering newsreels and documentary movies have been made in and of the South African regime, various Latin American dictatorships, former Western colonies, South Vietnam, Franco's Spain, etc. It would be hard to come by such documentaries or even isolated photographs of this kind about the USSR, China, Cuba, North Vietnam, Albania, etc.

visual records of the seamier sides of their life, though they will occasionally allow them to make a record of their accomplishments. Western audiences have not seen many (if any) pictures of what Soviet, Chinese, or Cuban prisons look like; of people in those countries lining up for food; of scenes of heavy, demeaning, and fatiguing manual labor performed by women,* of substandard housing, crowded public transportation, house searches, early morning arrests, deportations (or relocations of segments of the population), factories with few safety devices, rotting crops which do not get harvested, industrial equipment left to rust in the open, shoddily built housing complexes, and empty stores. Likewise, they had few glimpses of the officials riding in curtained limousines or of the private retreats (or second homes) of members of the elite groups. Nor have Western audiences been treated to interviews with ordinary citizens of Cuba, China, or the USSR who would express criticism of any aspect of the system under which they lived.

Until recently, not only visual information and images but even graphic descriptions of the less attractive sides of life in such countries were not available or scarce.† The importance of such information is illustrated by the impact of Solzhenitsyn's artistry and power of description which for millions around the world made it possible to grasp the concept of Soviet concentration camps, if not necessarily to visualize.

What I wrote almost a decade ago contrasting American and Soviet attitudes toward publicity and societal self-exposure can be extended to other "closed" societies discussed here, such as Cuba, China, or North

* An exception to this are the occasional photographs of women cleaning the streets in the Soviet Union. Such picture-taking is much disapproved of in the USSR but not always prevented.

† For example, a recent survey of human rights around the globe had this to say about China: "So little is known about what goes on in Asia's largest nation, China, that outsiders can only guess at the state of human rights there."[18] Such a bland assessment reflects not only the actual paucity of information but a somewhat strained benefit-of-doubt posture. If Mr. Gwertzman had said that not enough is known to make specific assessments about the *magnitude* of the violation of human rights, one may leave it at that. But to suggest that there is so little known that *nothing* can be said (that one can only make guesses) is going too far. In any event this quote and the associated attitudes illustrate the point that was made above. Many Western intellectuals or public figures require mountains of evidence about the unappealing aspects of left-wing dictatorships before they abandon their benefit-of-doubt attitudes. There is in fact a discernible parallel here between the Soviet and Chinese cases. There was just as little disposition in the 1930s among Western intellectuals and opinion leaders to believe in the existence of Soviet concentration camps as there is today to believe in Chinese violations of human rights. And in neither period was information quite as scarce, or evidence so unsubstantiated, as the benefit-of-doubters would have us believe.

Vietnam. By the same token, a good deal of what was said about the American attitudes toward publicity applies, with some qualifications, to other Western societies and their mass media. Thus it may be said that the images of all the societies discussed in this book are influenced by contrasting levels of censorship, political constraints as well as cultural differences toward publicity and collective self-exposure. (However, cultural factors become subordinated to political requirements if they offer resistance to the policies of revolutionary systems.)* This is what I wrote about the contrast between American and Soviet society in regard to publicity:

> . . . The United States is an immensely publicity-conscious, publicity-oriented society. A more limited sense of personal privacy has its counterpart in the public realm, slanted toward sensationalism and exposure. Much of the indigenous publicity in the United States concerning American society might be described as scandal-minded, or on a more serious level, problem-oriented. The commercialism of the mass media and their quest for the eye-catching and sensational supply some of the motivation for this. Other motives are provided by the long standing tradition of social criticism. American society and its domestic . . . critics do, as a rule, a far better job at exposing its defects than the most venomous foreign critics. . . . Indeed a large proportion of Soviet (and other foreign) critiques of American society rely on American sources.† By contrast Soviet society is not publicity oriented except in a narrow, programmed sense. . . . These differences affect profoundly the images of the two societies throughout the world . . . it is a gap of particular importance in a comparative assessment of the images of American and Soviet society. Poverty, oppression, urban decay and rural stagnation, abuses of public office, political dissatisfaction and social conflicts are not recorded by reporters

* The primacy of the political over the cultural factors in such matters is well illustrated by the fact that, contrary to what one might expect by focusing on certain Latin American cultural stereotypes or traits—e.g., openness, expressiveness, volubility, etc.—Cuban censorship is not noticeably different from the Soviet one, and the Cuban mass media hardly more lively or apt to reveal the less appealing aspects of Cuban life than the Soviet.

† Which are often permeated by a breast-beating quality. An advertisement in the N.Y. *Times* exemplifies this: ". . . We, the American people—We: Affluent, corrupt, dehumanized, brutalized, chauvinistic, racist, white America—who share guilt for U.S. policy and for the atrocities. . . ."[19]

A European writer who arrived in the 1960s, commenting on these propensities, noted that social protest ". . . is a new industry, a new way of making money and accumulating affluence. Three things are necessary to start this business: a pen, a guitar, and a free society as one's professional space. Written protest brings decent livings, vocal protest brings millions. One who knows how effectively to exhibit his social misery and anguish rapidly becomes a millionaire."[20]

(domestic or foreign) in the Soviet Union; nor are they depicted in photographs, films or television tapes . . . whatever disturbs the Soviet citizen . . . is not conveyed to worldwide (or domestic) audiences as is the case with the ills of American society. This . . . helps to explain not only certain Soviet perceptions of American society but also in part the worldwide phenomenon of anti-Americanism, coupled with a comparatively mild or neutral position toward Soviet society. . . . The highly unfavorable [collective] self-images disseminated by the American mass media may also account for the paradox pointed out by Jacques Barzun: "As a nation whose citizens seek popularity more than any other kind of success it is galling (and inexplicable) that we, the United States, are so extensively unpopular." ("The Man in the American Mask," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1965, p. 427.) Ideas are weapons, as generations of Soviet leaders have believed. The control of the mass media and publicity is more than an irrational reflex of a sensitive political system. In the final analysis the finer points of the freedom of expression and criticism score less than the visible portraits of misery, injustice and despair.[21]

Even when the quality of information available about political regimes carries considerable weight in the making of political judgments, ultimately such judgments are the products of deeply held values.

While intellectuals are especially critical of their society in periods of crisis, turmoil, and collective self-doubt (which they voice most eloquently and which they sometimes magnify), idealistic men and women need no such upheavals to become sensitized to the defects of their society. Even during periods of relative tranquility, many intellectuals find reason for disenchantment with a social environment* which offers them few spiritual challenges and no relief from the burdens of the human condition.

The Techniques of Hospitality

Although it is my belief that the intellectuals' predisposition played a greater part than the actual travel experience in their assessments of the countries concerned, the nature of the visits also deserves close attention. On the one hand, without some measure of favorable predisposition the conducted tour aspects would have been ineffectual and possibly

* Many critically disposed intellectuals are distinctly unhappy in quiescent periods when the absence of social turmoil or political crisis reduces the resonance of and receptivity to their social criticism; hence, the increasing retrospective denunciation since the mid-1960s of the "complacent," "smug," and quiescent 1950s in the United States. But even during the period itself many intellectuals were visibly pained by its tranquility.

counter-productive. On the other hand, the particular manifestations of hospitality were important in swaying those who came with a neutral or benefit-of-doubt attitude rather than outright enthusiastic anticipation. And even in the cases of those who went on the journey with the most favorable expectations, the actual travel experience had a positive function because it confirmed these expectations. Thus, no matter what the attitudes of the visitors, the actual travel experience (with very few exceptions) rarely led to disillusionment. Those with favorable predispositions emerged from the experience with these attitudes strengthened and vindicated, while the wavering were moved to more sympathetic positions.

Later, I will offer a detailed examination and examples of the techniques of hospitality in individual countries. Here I want to note that these techniques divide into two complementary parts. The first has to do with the personal treatment of the visitor, his comfort and welfare, and the measures taken to make him feel important, appreciated, well liked. The goal (and usually also the result) of these measures is to make it psychologically difficult for the visitor to develop and express negative sentiments or critical thoughts toward his hosts and toward the society they represent. It *is* difficult to be critical of people who are kind to us, attentive to our personal comfort, take an interest in our personality, and appreciate our work. It is also difficult to be critical of the broader social setting in which all these agreeable personal attentions are received. An American scholar writing about the Soviet treatment of foreign visitors observed: "Thus we have a picture of lavish entertainment of foreigners, including many who (in their own opinion) had been underrated and ignored at home. Every individual was made to feel important. How could one criticize a host who contributed to one's sense of dignity and expended the valuable time of important top officials in this endeavor?"[22] Naturally, the quality of such treatment varied with the importance of the visitor, or groups of visitors, and with the particular objectives pursued by the various regimes concerned at certain periods.

The second major component in the techniques of hospitality is the selective presentation of "reality," which accounts for the highly organized and planned nature of the tours. The probability of gaining positive impressions is obviously enhanced when a visitor is systematically and purposefully exposed only to the attractive features of a country: good food and accommodations, comfortable travel, politeness and attentiveness at every turn, pleasant, interesting, or inspiring sights. (Which is not to say that the appropriate agencies of the host country

always accomplish these objectives satisfactorily. They do, however, strive to attain them and do so with a good measure of success, again in part depending on the perceived importance of the visitor.) Under such conditions, even if the visitor harbors any abstract or generalized notions about the possibilities of social injustice, material scarcity, or institutional malfunctioning (and few come with such expectations), the visible, tangible realities he comes in contact with powerfully counteract his apprehensions. The visitors are shielded from unappealing aspects of life, and they are not allowed to intrude on those selected by the hosts and calculated to make favorable impressions. Moreover, for the most part what the visitors see is real:* there are in these (as in most) countries enough feats of engineering, impressive cultural institutions, natural wonders, historical monuments, and attractive individuals that are appealing and interesting. What the visitors are in no position to know is *how typical* or how characteristic such sights and impressions are, or how adequately they convey the flavor of life in the country at large.

It is the cumulative impact rather than the specific details of the hospitality that matters. Warm reception on arrival, comfortable accommodations, pleasant travel arrangements, fine food, interesting sights, encounters with important and busy political figures—all add up to a set of experiences calculated to make the visitor feel receptive to the messages his hosts intended to convey. Thus, given the combination of (various degrees of) favorable predispositions, personal flattery, physical comforts, and carefully screened sights and contrived personal encounters, it would be surprising if the visitors did not leave the countries concerned with their favorable predispositions strengthened and with a new fund of enthusiastic observations and judgments.

Even if most visitors would (and did) agree that their hosts were anxious to make a good impression, there would be less agreement about the results of all the attentions received. Surely, most travelers would argue that they were not bribed or blinded by any manifestation of hospitality. Nor can it be proven that such was the case. All one can say is that the hosts were intent on making a good impression, and in

* I said "for the most part" because there are also instances of total deception, things built or specially arranged for visitors which have no independent existence, or justification apart from being a showpiece or showplace of some kind. Specific examples of such sights and arrangements, modern "Potemkin villages," will be given later on.

most instances the visitors did depart with such impressions as reflected in the written accounts of their trips.

In regard to the Soviet Union, it has been clearly established that the visitors in the 1930s had been deceived, not necessarily by staged events, fake settings, or the unrepresentative sampling of the sights, but by the overall image of Soviet life and society conveyed to them. The Soviet case at any rate makes clear that "being on the spot" and "seeing things for oneself" are not a guarantee or sufficient condition for assessing accurately the nature of a country and its social system.

More generally speaking, it is one of the paradoxes of our times that greater physical mobility and potential access to new places and their inhabitants do not necessarily broaden or deepen our understanding of these places and peoples—a phenomenon also illustrated by the millions of non-political tourists who manage to visit many diverse parts of the world without learning anything of importance about them. Of course, most non-political tourists do not go abroad in order to enlarge their knowledge of the world: they merely wish that a *somewhat unfamiliar* setting provide them with familiar pleasures.[23] At best, they are interested in a handful of the most stereotyped features of the "strange lands" they visit, those which had been made familiar to them by the mass media and tourist advertising (gondolas in Venice, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, changing of the Guard in London, calypso music in the West Indies, etc.). Thus "being on the spot" may mean a very small spot indeed, and what one may "see for oneself" may not always be worth seeing.

Or, as a visitor in China pointed out, tongue-in-cheek:

> Some years ago, on the basis of careful research, I announced a theorem, which slightly simplified reads: anything that can be learned by travel, can be learned faster, cheaper, and better in a good library. The accumulation of evidence supporting the travel theorem is now overwhelming. What, then, can one report about China on the basis of a 19-day visit? Very little from the travel itself. . . .[24]

While this may be an overstatement, the point of view deserves a hearing, since the perceptions of the travelers, and the often sweeping conclusions drawn from what they had seen, rest on exactly the opposite premise: namely, that what they had seen represents a fair, typical, and informative sampling of the social institutions and aspects of life in the country they visited. If the idea crossed their mind that they might have been exposed to carefully pre-selected sights, events, or groups, such

doubts were usually brushed aside. For the most part our intellectuals succeeded in believing or in gradually convincing themselves that what they were shown was neither unusual nor exceptional. It is for that reason that they felt free to generalize: about health care in the country as a whole on the basis of one or two hospitals; about the system of education after seeing a handful of classrooms; about attitudes toward the political system after conversing with a few citizens selected by their hosts, and so on. They rarely confronted the self-evident limitations of their experience and its implications for generalizing about all they had not and could not have seen. Among these limitations was the fact that most of the visitors did not speak the language of the countries visited, and therefore most of their contacts with the "natives" were limited to communications through interpreters (occasionally they spoke to individuals other than the interpreters who knew the visitors' language, but these were hardly chance encounters). Characteristically they traveled in groups and were escorted by guide-interpreters. As a rule, even those traveling alone had a guide assigned to them. Frequently the visitors were either guests of the government (or some official organization or agency) or were given a significant reduction in their travel expenses. (Sometimes some organization of their own country footed the bill or made contributions to it.) In most instances the visitors had never been in the country before, and, generally speaking (though with some notable exceptions), their knowledge of the country and its history and culture was limited.

For the most part, people who had given indication of a critical attitude toward the countries involved were not invited or encouraged to go on such trips; sometimes they were refused entry if intending to do so.

Although there were many similarities between the techniques of hospitality used in all four societies and in both periods, this by itself does not prove that visitors to China, Cuba, and North Vietnam were misled in the manner their predecessors had been in the Soviet Union in the years of Stalin.*

There are, however, grounds for suspecting that in the more recent instances too the gap between the selected sights the tourist was allowed to see and what he had no opportunity to see was considerable, and consequently such a tour was conducive to the serious misapprehension of the character of the political systems concerned. The lesson of

* Both before Stalin's rise to power and after his death travelers could learn more about Soviet realities.

the Soviet conducted tours is that such techniques of hospitality, combined with a favorable predisposition on the part of the visitors, can lead to bizarre misperceptions of a political and social system. The post-Mao revelations in China, both official and unofficial, lend support to the suspicion that visitors to China too were given a distinctly unrepresentative and misleading impression which contributed significantly to their misjudgments and admiration of that society.

A definitive assessment of the contributions of the techniques of hospitality to the positive visions of China, Cuba, and North Vietnam must await the further accumulation of reliable information about these societies. In the meantime, we can only make guesses as to the magnitude of the gap between their idealized images and their more mundane and unattractive aspects.

The Source Materials: Their Sampling and Context

The sources to be used in this study were more or less ready-made. Since I was interested in the views and professed values of contemporary intellectuals of some distinction, I turned to their writings, in particular to their writings about their visits to the countries selected. Possibly these interests could also have been pursued through interviews with many of the authors still alive. However, written accounts were preferable because they were intended for a wider public, and therefore their authors invested more care and energy in them than they would have in an interview (assuming that they would have granted an interview). Interviews, in any event, are by necessity short and may reflect more about the interviewer—through his questions—than about the respondent. It would have been also of limited usefulness to interview people years or decades after their travel experiences. Over time opinions and attitudes get revised, impressions fade, memories become extinct. I was interested in the written testimonies of the travelers because they were for the record, because they are fuller, richer, more detailed, and more accurately reflective of the attitudes and experiences of the authors at the time of the visit than interviews could have been.

The travel writings proved to be excellent source material because they contained detailed inventories of *both* the alienated aspects and attitudes of intellectuals (or, of their critical sides) *and* their affirming, enthusiastic, and supportive ones. Taken together, these accounts afforded considerable insight into the values which sustained their authors. It became apparent very soon that the choice of politically attractive

countries on the part of intellectuals was highly patterned. First, they had to be relatively distant and/or poorly known. Second, they had to be revolutionary or post-revolutionary societies, seemingly dedicated to some semi-utopian goals, to radical social transformation. Third, and in connection with the second criterion, such countries had to be claimants of some variety of the Marxist ideological legacy.* Fourth, they had to be and were hostile to the United States and most Western countries. Fifth, and perhaps most important, was the victimized, underdog image. (This image sometimes endured well beyond the time when any rational, objective, or historical basis could be found for it. Victim and victimizer were frozen permanently in the minds of many observers.) Each country at the time of the visits was seen as a victim of the West or a particular Western power: Russia, many times invaded by Western countries in its history; China, exploited by the colonial powers and much maligned after World War II by the American mass media; Cuba, the victim of American economic imperialism; North Vietnam, destroyed by American air power. Correspondingly, the appeal of the Soviet Union declined by the mid-1950s, partly because it became rather difficult to cast it in the role of the underdog once it had become the second major industrial and military superpower in the world. On the other hand, it should also be noted that the image of the former underdog combined with that of an emergent and avenging power—the process of the weak becoming strong—had its own fascination. Thus, many Western intellectuals were able to find the military muscle of revolutionary societies thrilling while they abominated militarism at home.

Finally, there was the appeal of underdevelopment per se as distinct from that associated with the victimized status. All four countries chosen were technologically and industrially underdeveloped at the time of their greatest popularity—although the Soviet Union in the 1930s had already made much progress in closing the gap, and the other countries too were undergoing development in various ways. Yet the fact remains that, at the time of the most enthusiastic travel reports, none were highly de-

* The tenacious "leftism" of Western intellectuals and the continued (or periodically resurgent) hold of (some version of) Marxism on them was one of the interesting findings of this study. So was the attraction exercised by almost any set of claims, slogans, and terminology vaguely Marxist. As will be further discussed below, Old and New Left were united—despite many differences—in being drawn emotionally to some variety of Marxism or some elements of Marxism. This author often wondered as did Saul Bellow: "why it should rend people's hearts to give up their Marxism. What does it take to extinguish the hopes raised by the October Revolution? How much more do intellectuals need to learn about the USSR?"[25]

veloped industrial societies and each partook of the virtues—real or imagined—of the amorphous entity that came to be known as the Third World. Certainly, the appeal China, Cuba, and North Vietnam had in the eyes of many Western intellectuals was part of the more general appeal of the Third World. Underdevelopment, in the eyes of such beholders, is somewhat like innocence. The underdeveloped is uncorrupted, untouched by the evils of industrialization and urbanization, by the complexities of modern life, the taint of trade, commerce, and industry. Thus, underdevelopment and Third World status are, like childhood, easily associated or confused with freshness, limitless possibilities, and wholesome simplicity.* Sympathetic visitors usually did not fully grasp the contradiction that, although largely untouched by the original sin of industrialization at the time of their visits, the countries in question were furiously trying to expand their industries. In any event, admirers of these countries maintained that they learned the lesson and were not going to repeat the disruptions and vices of Western-style industrialization. It is the centerpiece of the myth of socialism that it promises to combine modernization with social cohesion and sustaining community.[27]

The two groups of intellectuals who journeyed to the various countries in the 1930s on the one hand and in the 1960s and 1970s on the other belonged, with few exceptions, to different generations and were in some ways of different political persuasion. As noted before, one of the most obvious differences between them was that by the 1960s alienated Western intellectuals were no longer looking to the Soviet Union (or Soviet bloc countries) for inspiration.† Nor, as a rule, were the alienated

* As Peter Berger put it, "Perhaps what is at work here is an archaic mythic motif, that of simpler and purer lands far away, from which some healing secret might be learned."[26]

† There were a few odd exceptions. For instance, Angela Davis visited and lauded the Soviet Union in 1973 very much in the style of the 1930s and was given the appropriate VIP treatment, which included the publication of a sixty-page pamphlet about her visit, printed in 45,000 copies. An explanation of her untimely affection for the Soviet Union may lie not only in her membership in the pro-Soviet Communist party of the U.S. but perhaps also in her being one of those Western intellectuals who cannot help sympathizing with every authoritarian regime which bestows the "socialist" title upon itself. (She has also written with much enthusiasm about her visit to Cuba in her autobiography.) An equally curious (and probably transitory) enthusiasm was provoked in Dr. Ralph Abernathy, the civil rights activist, by East Germany, one of the most oppressive of the Soviet-type regimes. At the end of his two-day visit he said: "Every minute of my stay in your wonderful country was filled with joy and valuable political experience. I go back to my country the richer for having learned to know and appreciate the German Democratic Republic." In turn, Scott Nearing, the American social critic, on his visit found that East Germany was governed wholly without coercion.[28]

Western intellectuals of the 1960s adherents, members, or fellow travelers of the pro-Soviet Communist parties in their own countries. Thus, a comparison of the two groups or generations also amounts to a comparison of the Old and New Left, and especially of the social criticism these generations had formulated.

The differences between these two generations were more sharply defined in the case of the Americans. There seemed to be a greater number of estranged American intellectuals in the 1960s than in the 1930s, and they also appeared more intensely estranged than their predecessors. The more recent generation of critical American intellectuals also seemed more alienated in comparison with their English, French, German, or Scandinavian counterparts. If such impressions are correct, Vietnam and the American racial conflict—problems without equivalent in Western Europe—may provide the explanation.

The apparent growth of alienation* in the United States might have also been a reflection of the growing number of people ready to claim intellectual status and the stances associated with it. In the United States, perhaps more than other Western societies, some degree of proclaimed estrangement from the major values and institutions of society became an informal norm or expectation during the 1960s among intellectuals and aspiring intellectuals. Perhaps for the first time in history, during these years the lone voices of beleaguered intellectuals forming a small, isolated, critical vanguard were replaced—in the United States at any rate—by a vast, well-orchestrated chorus of standardized nay-saying emanating from what may be described as a massive subculture of alienation, or establishment of estrangement. By the end of the 1960s it ceased to be clear which attitudes represented conformity or nonconformity: the traditional support for existing social institutions and values or their reflexive disparagements. The spread of higher education was doubtless related to this phenomenon:

> The enormous expansion in higher education . . . means that we now have a large class of people . . . who though lacking in intellectual distinction (and frequently even intellectual competence) nevertheless believe themselves to be intellectuals. . . . in a country like America today [there are] . . . several million "intellectuals" who are looking at their society in a highly critical way and are quick to adopt an adversary posture toward it.[30]

* Various aspects of alienation will be discussed in the next chapter. The essential psychological component of this concept, as I see it, is the feeling that there is little if anything of value and worthy of respect in society, combined with profound pessimism as to the chances of improvement. Two trends and traditions often interwoven might be discerned in contemporary discussions of alienation. One is the Marxist, the other the Weberian. Both account for alienation, largely with reference to the loss of tradition; the former stresses economic factors, the latter the process of secularization and bureaucratization.[29]

Certain qualitative changes in the attitudes of estranged American intellectuals (and to some degree those in Western Europe too) also had a bearing both on the character of their social criticism and on their susceptibility to the appeals of other societies. I am referring here primarily to the "revolution of rising expectations" which, contrary to popular belief, has been much more a Western than "Third World" phenomenon.* Clearly, the growth of individualistic expectations and their corollary—the unwillingness to accept scarcity or deprivations of any sort—have contributed to the intensification of social criticism both on the part of intellectuals and the social groups for whom they strive to be spokesmen.

The spread of such attitudes has been related not only to the greater accessibility of higher education, but also to the changes in its quality and content. Specific trends, innovations, and movements in American education have done much to encourage the belief in the limitless potential and unique personal qualities and needs of every individual. Such beliefs have, of course, always been part of American culture rich in egalitarian traditions, but in the 1960s there were renewed and more determined attempts to implement them.

While setting the chronological boundaries of this study, and especially focusing it on the 1930s and 1960s, was fairly easy to resolve, selecting particular works as source material was more problematic. It required deciding who the important and influential Western intellectuals are. By what criteria should one choose among the many who qualify? Obviously the choices were to be made among those who were at some stage in their life strongly critical of their own society and favorably disposed toward one of those mentioned before and, moreover, expressed such sentiments in published writing. I was not concerned with the durability of such attitudes, or with the proportion of the authors who subsequently changed their political sympathies. The process of political disillusionment is a subject of inquiry in its own right and deserves extended analysis as much as the issues being grappled with here. I was interested in the growth of political faith and its particular manifestations and not in the process of disillusionment, however often it followed.

As far as the nationalities of "Western" intellectuals were concerned,

* By the end of the 1970s it had become fashionable to talk about declining expectations in the United States and the West in general, tied to economic difficulties.

they ended up being primarily American,[31] British, and French. There were more of them, more distinguished figures among them, and they wrote more about their political tours. This, however, did not exclude interesting and relevant materials produced by other Western nationalities.

It may be suggested that I "loaded" the sample by picking authors whose attitudes and writings illustrated the points I wanted to make. While to some degree this is true, the crucial fact is that such a group could be selected without any difficulty: there were more than enough intellectuals of importance who went on these trips and wrote the kind of travelogues which support the propositions I entertained about Western intellectuals. I seriously doubt that a counter sample of a similar size could easily be assembled consisting of prominent Western intellectuals who had visited the same countries and wrote indignant exposés on their return. It is a historical fact that large numbers of prominent (and less prominent) Western intellectuals have been (or were) sympathetic, with varying degrees of intensity and duration, toward regimes they perceived as socialist and intent on implementing the most idealistic teachings of Marxism.

Not *all* the travelers chosen for this study were seekers of utopia. Rather, they represent a range of attitudes which includes the quest for utopia as well as milder degrees of favorable predisposition and susceptibility toward the appealing facets of the new societies. Not every traveler set out to find a close approximation of his ideals and longings, but many did. Others went on their tours out of curiosity or because they felt that it was important that they themselves evaluate societies often seen as misrepresented in the mass media of their own countries. Numerous visitors embarked on these trips because of specific concerns and interests: wanting to know how particular problems unresolved in their countries were handled, from race relations to public health, from industrialization to day-care centers, prison reform, or the state support of the performing arts. Thus, while many intellectuals projected extravagant hopes on the countries concerned, envisioning a totally new way of life and a radical break with all the familiar imperfections of the past and of organized social existence, others focused on the more tangible and specific accomplishments, on new forms of economic organization or administrative techniques, on various more rational (or seemingly more rational) solutions to age-old problems. It stands to reason that the perceived attractions of these countries depended—in addition to the particular historical circumstances and spirit of the times—on the personal and social background of the visitors. Different individuals had different susceptibilities. Occupational backgrounds doubtless played an important part in the selective appreciation of the various features of the countries inspected.

Could the political pilgrims be regarded as fellow travelers? Certainly there is a similarity between the concept of the political pilgrim and that of the "fellow traveler." Both share a critical stance toward Western societies and sympathy toward "socialism." Many fellow travelers even traveled to the USSR. However, "fellow traveler" had a more limited meaning: it referred to Soviet and Communist sympathizers of the 1930s and 40s who made no formal political commitment and remained outside the Communist party for various reasons. Their services were eagerly sought by the party and the Soviet Union, since their symbolic neutrality seemed to enhance their credibility and propaganda value. They had no organizational commitment and therefore a greater freedom of action and expression. On the whole, the views of the fellow travelers represented slight modifications or variations of the official line, or its softened version.* The term lost much of its applicability in the post–World War II period when the original species, the devoted helper of the Soviet cause, loosely affiliated with the Communist party (through front organizations), gradually disappeared. The term implies, despite some appearances, a more enduring, stable, and structured political commitment, which the Western intellectual of the 1960s and 70s seldom had. It would seem that the cycle of commitment and disenchantment accelerated in our times. Intellectuals may visit Cuba or China in a sympathetic frame of mind, write a book or some articles reflecting such sentiments, and a few months or couple of years later their enthusiasm fades. They may be getting ready to find a new object of veneration. After all, Mao shook hands with Nixon, and the Chinese regime reintroduced competitive examinations at universities, while Castro has been persecuting homosexuals. Things may be different in Albania or Mozambique. Thus, the locale of enthusiastic interests may shift once more, though not the core of estrangement which underlies these shifting susceptibilities.

* Fellow travelers usually purveyed what Gabriel Almond designated as the "exoteric" view of the party line which would appeal to the greatest number of people and offend the fewest sensibilities—the most diluted and palatable version of the party line, that is.[32]

Unlike David Caute, the English writer and academic, I find it difficult to reduce the phenomenon of the utopian susceptibility of contemporary Western intellectuals to a "postscript to the enlightenment," the subtitle and main theme of Caute's book.[33] He locates the basis of pro-Soviet fellow-traveling in values and attitudes deriving from the Enlightenment, which include rationality, belief in progress, the benefits of science and technology, planning, or, more generally speaking, benevolent intervention in social affairs. If fellow-traveling (and political utopia-seeking) was a postscript to anything, it was more to nineteenth-century romanticism than eighteenth-century rationalism, though admittedly there was an overlay of rationalism. I also share Lewis Feuer's criticism of Caute's thesis:

> Men of the Enlightenment . . . were ready to denounce the suppression of freedom from whatever quarter it issued; they were enemies of every despotism. They liked to imagine themselves as influencing monarchs, but they never wrote apologies for Prussian or Russian serfdom. They also retained a scepticism concerning grandiose political claims. . . . The fellow-travelers, on the other hand, were less children of the Enlightenment than the heirs to the platonic aspiration toward the status of philosopher-kings.[34]

The appeals of the social systems considered here (including the Soviet Union in the 1930s) transcend the rationalistic themes and boundaries Caute proposed. It is one of the main contentions of this study that the major attractions of the new societies have not been political, not at least in the relatively narrow and conventional sense of the word, despite all appearances to the contrary. Instead, I found that these appeals have coalesced around two main themes. One of them is certainly social justice and its many tangible components—material, economic, political, cultural, and organizational. The second theme is more elusive but probably the more important. It comprises the achievement of or the striving for "wholeness," the sense of identity and community, meaning and purpose in life. Such appeals mirror a malaise which goes beyond and beneath dissatisfaction with specific political arrangements, the defects of capitalism and the particular forms of social injustice found in Western societies. They derive their force from "civilization and its discontents," some of which are endemic, while others intensify in an increasingly secular society that can no longer either legitimate the curbing of individualistic impulses and fantasies, or offer fulfilling social myths and values which could divert attention from the growing preoccupation with the self. Behind the metaphors of wholeness, identity, and community lies a craving for a universe that has meaning, purpose, and direction. Apparently such a craving is, contrary to what some might expect, more pronounced among intellectuals than among "ordinary" people. Of late it appears that the former find it less tolerable and more troublesome to live in a world of "disenchantment" from which "the ultimate and sublime values have retreated"—as Max Weber characterized the corrosive process of secularization. It is one of the paradoxes of our times that intellectuals, once the vanguard of secularization, seem to have become its struggling victims, unwilling or unable to come to terms with an existence, personal and social, that offers so few authentic versions of "enchantment."

Western Traditions of Utopia-Seeking

The utopian susceptibilities of contemporary Western intellectuals are part of a long-standing tradition of seeking heaven on earth which took more specific form when the belief in a heavenly heaven, as it were, began to lose its hold on the imagination of Western man. This is not to say that utopian and religious designs are antithetical, but that the utopian ones often feed on and derive from religious impulses. While the underlying desires for heaven on earth and for supernatural gratifications may be presumed to be similar, there are empirical, observable differences between orientation toward gratification here and now, or at an other-worldly plane of existence.

While utopias differ in respect to their specific objectives and the methods proposed for their attainment, the hoped-for benefits of utopias have much in common.[35] They all are blueprints or proposals for some radical, sweeping alteration and improvement of the human condition, for the rectification of widely shared human frustrations and discontents. Utopias differ from other plans of such improvement by their universality—they are in principle applicable to all mankind—and also by the comprehensiveness of their objectives. As Adam Ulam noted, they "must promise not more of the same but an entirely different and marvelous world. . . ."[36] It is on account of their bold designs and ambitiousness that utopias are often thought of as unrealistic.

Utopias incorporate both themes peculiar to the strains and discontents of a particular historical period and elements, secular as well as religious, which are common to many cultures and eras. Isaiah Berlin has firmly grasped the latter, more universal core of all utopian beliefs and aspirations:

> . . . the belief that somewhere, in the past or in the future, in divine revelation or the mind of an individual thinker, in the pronouncements of history or science, or in the simple heart of an uncorrupted good man, there is a final solution. This ancient faith rests on the conviction that all the positive values in which men have believed must, in the end, be compatible, and perhaps even entail one another.[37]

Berlin's point goes to the heart of the notion of utopia, namely, harmony: harmony between different values and goals, between individuals, between groups, between society and the individual, human society and nature, between public and private interest, aspiration and achievement, desire and opportunity. That is to say, utopia is a form of social organization which has banished scarcity, frustration, and conflict, which maximizes happiness, freedom, and self-realization through the combination of communal bonds and the creation of material and institutional opportunities for self-development. Utopia is obviously not compatible with poverty, scarcity, inequality, coercion, or repression. It is a state in which individual and group satisfactions converge rather than conflict.

Another core component of the utopian idea is that society (or the community) must assume full responsibility for the individual. Utopians do not believe that "The attainment of happiness should be left to our private endeavours."[38] They lean to the belief that most people do not know what is good for them, that the individual pursuit of happiness is inefficient and often leads to the collision of the desires of different individuals (which could be averted in the utopian framework proposed). It follows from the compelling character of many utopian schemes that those intent on their realization cannot, in good conscience, exclude the use of force to bring it about and to maintain it.[39]

The fact that most utopias involve plans and call for implementation helps to distinguish them from myth or collective fantasy. Furthermore, the somewhat contradictory blend of rational and religious elements, including the orientation toward change, reminds us that utopian thinking is a relatively modern phenomenon dating back no further than the Renaissance and receiving new impetus from the French Enlightenment and the advances of science in the nineteenth century.[40] ("To seek salvation on this earth, to achieve human perfectibility in this life would have been inconceivable before the onset of rationalism.")[41]

Utopian thinkers (and doers) are inclined to consider human nature and needs more or less fixed, allowing for the ultimate reconciliation of divergent human values and wishes. This perspective creates tension between human nature (and behavior) as it is, here and now, and

"true" or "real" human nature, which is supposedly realizable in everybody when this positive, universal essence is unearthed and allowed expression thanks to the efforts of the utopian educator, revolutionary, or philosopher king. Utopians often view their task as removing obstacles from the path of self-realization, or creating conditions for it. In practice this tends to lead to programs and policies aimed at modifying and changing human nature, or at least observable behavior, in conjunction with the long-term objectives of the utopian plan. Lewis Mumford identified a major pattern in regard to conceptions of human nature and utopian proclivities:

> If the medieval thinkers were convinced that, on the whole, nothing could be done to rectify men's institutions, their successors in the 19th century committed the opposite error and absurdity: they believed that human nature was asocial and obstreperous only because the church, the state, or the institutions of property perverted every human impulse. Men like Rousseau, Bentham, Godwin, Fourier and Owen might be miles apart from one another in their criticism of society, but there was underlying consensus in their belief in human nature. They looked upon human institutions as altogether external to men; these were so many straitjackets that cunning rulers had thrown over the community to make sane and kindly people behave like madmen.[42]

Marx and his followers also entertained similar beliefs about the relationship between human nature and social institutions. Marx's utopia—communism—entailed not only changes in the system of production and other institutional arrangements but also the unfolding of human potential and the appearance of human characteristics which do not overwhelm us with their presence through recorded history (e.g. unselfishness, kindness, lack of aggression, rationality). The successors and disciples of Marx accepted his premises but projected the rejuvenation and total renovation of human nature to the more distant future and made these transformations dependent on not only structural changes in society but also patient didactic efforts through education and propaganda.[43]

It is hard to conceive of utopian schemes which exclude the belief in virtually unlimited human potential. All existing political systems displaying utopian pretensions take this position, for understandable reasons. Professing faith in a virtually unlimited and universal perfectibility of human nature is compatible, in the short run, with treating actual human beings like raw material whose present nature leaves much to be desired, but can be radically improved by relentless molding.

From the contemporary perspective the most important distinction

among utopian designs appears to be between what may be called traditional-rational and less rational or non-rational conceptions of utopia. This is a difference between the emphasis on making social organization more rational and perfecting control over the physical environment, as opposed to the more recent interest in creating liberating, non-repressive, unregulated, or quasi-anarchistic social arrangements. Eugene Goodheart refers to these two currents of thought and attitude as the "utopianism of reason" versus the "new utopianism of the passional imagination."[44] The new utopians include preeminently Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, R. D. Laing, and Theodore Roszak. The difference between the two utopian currents is of some relevance for our study as it underlies certain differences between the "pilgrimages" of the 1930s and those of the more recent period. It may be suggested, at the cost of somewhat oversimplifying the issue, that the first wave of utopia-seeking approximated more closely the "utopia of reason," while the more recent one approximated that of "passional imagination," with its focus on freedom from societal and sexual repression and liberation from all "unnecessary" restraints. The new utopianism also incorporated elements of anti-intellectualism, including hostility to science, industry, and technology. Correspondingly in the 1930s Soviet society was appealing on account of its rationality, planning, and benevolent application of science and technology, while such themes were less prominent in the 1960s when much of the emphasis shifted to a yearning for simplicity, authenticity, and community, discerned in the newly discovered societies.

If the outlines of utopias have much in common, so do the various forms of utopia-seeking. The least arduous is what may be called armchair utopia-seeking, that is, theorizing and speculation without attempting to implement the schemes proposed. A more serious pursuit of utopia has been the setting up of small-scale utopian communities cut off from the rest of society, such as the nineteenth-century utopian communities in the U.S., the American communes in the 1960s, and the kibbutz in Israel (the third example differs from the first two in that it emerged not in opposition to but in support of society as a whole, although it remained limited in scale). Setting up small-scale utopian communities may also be combined with the geographic move from one country or even continent to another. Indeed this has been the origin of many American utopian communities, most recently of the Peoples' Temple in Guyana.

The pursuit of utopia can also take explicitly political forms when through a revolution or uprising an attempt is made to create a social

order so different from other known or existing systems that the utopian appellation becomes justified.

Lastly, there is the pilgrimage to distant lands in the hope of finding utopian social arrangements at places unknown or poorly known. The hopes of such a discovery may be intense or tentative, the motives may range from mild curiosity (about the prospect of finding something better than the familiar social arrangements) to the more intense expectation and even certitude that social systems far superior to those known must exist and can be found. This is the form of utopia-seeking most central to this study. The motives underlying such political pilgrimages have certain things in common with some of the impulses which prompt people to travel in less purposeful ways. The essential motive behind much travel is the desire for new experience, for escaping the familiar. The pursuit of the unusual, exotic, or exciting has for centuries been a part of the tradition of traveling, especially as practiced by members of the upper classes, adventurers, artists, and intellectuals—categories which often overlap. Expectations of adventure, enrichment, and above all, new experience of a transforming character have always been part of the lure of travel. In this regard travel and revolution have something in common. Both are routine-shattering, seen as open-ended and leading to some, not fully definable, transformation of personal lives. There is also the hope, often associated with travel, of finding instructive lessons about how to lead a fuller, richer life, of learning from the "natives." Such impulses have been viewed by some authors as part of an age-old quest for some lost paradise, or innocence. Manes Sperber has written that "a yearning for paradise includes both wanderlust *and* homesickness, a longing for vanished childhood, lost youth, the fire of burnt out passions. Anything lost in time, or undiscoverable, we tend to seek in a remote place, in Utopia."[45]

The compensatory functions of utopia-seeking through travel is also a major theme of Baudet's study of European images of non-European man. In his introduction Franklin L. Baumer wrote: "The European's images of non-European man are not primarily if at all descriptions of real people, but rather projections of his own nostalgia and feeling of inadequacy. . . . The outsider, whether primitive or civilised, is held up as a model of what he (the European) has been in happier days, or of what he would like to be and perhaps could be once again."[46]

The view expressed by British historian V. G. Kiernan of the part played by the Orient in nineteenth-century Western imagination could be generalized to other times and parts of the world: "To its own deni-

zen a realm of necessity or destiny, to Western fantasy this Orient was one of freedom, where man could expand beyond all common limits, with the unlimited power that Napoleon dreamed of there . . . all those inordinate things that orderly modern man had to renounce and live as if born, . . . with a bit in his mouth. If, as we are now told, our dreams are necessary to our mental equilibrium, Europe's collective day dream of the Orient may have helped to preserve it . . ."[47]

In our times there has been a new spurt of self-consciousness about the personal and social problem-solving potentials of travel, an increasingly stereotyped linking of "discovery" and "self-discovery." Much of this has only limited political significance and may instead be considered one among the many by-products of the upsurge of individualism in Western countries and especially in the United States. Thus travel for many has become increasingly an ego-enhancing activity, a rejuvenating device which provides new settings against which to display and reexamine the same old ego. Travelers often look for a stage where they can place themselves, in the hope of rediscovering youth, strength, forgotten interests or talents, a more harmonious relationship between the self and nature, or the self and the social world. The expectations which can be attached to travel are virtually endless and contradictory. We may travel to be alone or to find company; to solidify existing ties or to forget about them; in pursuit of knowledge or escape; with the burden of social responsibility or of total irresponsibility. Travel is especially irresistible to those—and their numbers may be increasing—who seek instant solutions to personal or social problems. Moreover, movement—*going somewhere*—suggests a clear purpose. (This may also help to explain why Americans move so much within their own country and why they like to attend meetings and conferences in different places.) "This promise of a change of scene," Sperber wrote, "is virtually an announcement of imminent solution or salvation."[48]

It might be expected that there would be a high representation of intellectuals among different types of contemporary travelers and especially among those whose movements are propelled by more ambitious motives and imaginings. While undoubtedly more intellectuals in our times travel in search of some form of political fulfillment or enlightenment, the phenomenon of intellectuals traveling with more in mind than diversion or recreation is far from new. Men of letters in the past, though smaller in number and usually more privileged in their social origins, often responded to the same impulse when embarking on visits to distant and poorly known lands. Those tired of or uneasy with their

own culture and civilization have frequently cast wistful glances at faraway places where the uncorrupted natives dwelt in innocence, harmony, and authenticity. European, and more recently American, culture has for many centuries been permeated by ambivalence toward itself, toward the complexities, restraints, and pretenses that go with civilization, with high levels of social organization and differentiation. A better human condition was assumed to exist either in the past, or in distant, little known regions or—more recently—in a future utopian state that combined some characteristics of this idealized past and idealized spatial remoteness. As Baudet has observed:

> . . . the old, never entirely forgotten idea of an ideal age has, through constantly changing interpretations, continued to offer opportunities for culture to make contact with that unfaded prehistory; all idealism, all morality, all unattainable dreams of happiness from humanity's obscure beginnings, which form a vivid contrast with present day shortcomings, will then shine forth. . . . So the "noble savage" or a tenuous prefiguration of him, has been present in our culture from earliest times. . . .
>
> The glorification of all things primitive, the culture-less as a characteristic of the true, the complete, the only and original bliss: that is one of the fundamentals of our Western civilization.[49]

Many times in European history such longings intensified at times of crisis when dissatisfaction with existing conditions prompted a quest for alternatives. Thus the more recent twentieth-century travels to new societies may fit into a broader, long-standing historical pattern. This is suggested by one recurring theme of the accounts of both sets of travelers: the theme of simplicity, community, and authenticity allegedly found among the peoples of the new societies ("The natural goodness that developed so harmoniously in others formed a striking contrast to our errors and corruption . . ." again, as Baudet put it).[50]

The repository of all this "natural goodness," harmony and authenticity, was the Noble Savage, whose image continued to exert a powerful influence on the fantasies and wishes of Westerners and who keeps reemerging in forever new incarnations but incorporating the core elements—whether he is projected on the preliterate "native," robust proletarian, earthy peasant, or tenacious Third World guerilla. The Noble Savage was everything the traveling aristocrat, artist, patrician, or intellectual was not. Judged by his remarkably stable configurations, some of the major discontents and frustrations of Western civilizations have changed little over the centuries, at least as experienced by these trav-

elers and explorers. V. G. Kiernan sees the Noble Savage as a "compound of . . . open-mindedness and self-deception" characteristic of the age in which it originated (at least in its most elaborate version in eighteenth-century France), and ". . . it suited the mood of the middle class pining for 'freedom' [and] a Europe burdened with its own complexities. Commonly the ordinary man, in or out of Europe, was regarded as a born Caliban, only redeemable by paternal control. But perhaps on the contrary, what he was suffering from was too much control, too much artificiality and class division. If so, man in his primitive condition might be expected to exhibit naturally the virtues that civilized men had to toil painfully for. The idea went through many metamorphoses, and Noble Savages turned up in all sorts of places. . . ."[51]

Ignacy Sachs, another recent student of Western attitudes toward the non-Western world, emphasizes the more novel elements of ambivalence in such perceptions:

> Average Europeans continue to see the inhabitants of the Third World . . . through two contradictory stereotypes which are, however frequently linked together in very different combinations. This "other" appears now as the cannibal, the Anti-Christ, the destructive demon preparing to overwhelm the developed countries in his demographic tidal wave, and now as the being on the right side of the angels, the child of nature, the creator of exquisite cultures, worthy of our greatest respect . . .[52]

The pursuit of uncorrupted simplicity was not the only source of the tradition of wistful curiosity about distant lands on the part of the literati. On closer inspection one finds yet another appeal, in many ways diametrically opposed to that of the simple, spontaneous, unregulated life associated with the Noble Savage. In this view, order and rational design are imposed by enlightened authority and contrasted with the familiar scenes of disorder, pettiness, and pursuit of conflicting group interest which obstructed the realization of higher purpose in their own society. Eighteenth-century French intellectuals were notable precursors of contemporary intellectuals impressed by the enlightened, orderly designs of socialist systems such as the Soviet or Chinese. As is so often the case, Tocqueville had some pertinent observations about a phenomenon which has persisted from his lifetime to the present:

> Not finding anything about them which seemed to conform to their ideals they went to search for it in the heart of Asia. It is no exaggeration to say that everyone of them in some part of his writings passes an emphatic eulogy on China. . . . That imbecile and barbarous government . . . appeared to them the most perfect model for all nations of the world to copy.[53]

L'Abbé Baudeau, an eighteenth-century admirer of China, wrote:

> More than 320 million people live there as wisely, happily and freely as men can ever be. They live under a most absolute but most just government, under the richest, the most powerful, the most humane and the most welfare-conscious monarch.[54]

Another eighteenth-century writer, Poivre, claimed that "China offers an enchanting picture of what the world might become, if the laws of that empire were to become the laws of all nations." Voltaire too believed that the Chinese empire "is in truth the best that the world has ever seen, and moreover the only one founded on paternal authority."[55] Russia was held in a similar esteem by the French men of letters of the period. Their admiration also foreshadowed the twentieth-century veneration of the Soviet Union and especially its capacity to overcome backwardness and modernize itself with such apparent dispatch and speed. They believed, as Lewis Coser put it, that

> Everything . . . is possible, if in a country that had been until recently wholly barbaric, one man aided by right reason could transform a whole people. Russia had made enormous progress within the short span of a few decades. . . . It moved ahead so fast that, in many respects, it was already a model of other countries of much older civilization. And what, if not enlightened despotism, had allowed the Russians to make such giant steps forward? . . . Russia's advance revived the spirits of those discouraged by the anarchy and apparent hopelessness of the political scene at home. . . . In enlightened Russia, in contrast to Western Europe, the sovereign was not hindered by all sorts of obsolete and obsolescent resistance to his beneficient actions. There one could paint with broad strokes upon the canvas of the future.[56]

Kiernan has explained the appeals of enlightened despotism for the eighteenth-century intellectuals rather persuasively: "What these intellectuals of an aristocratic society were predisposed to look for and to admire was something resembling themselves, a class of men of enlarged minds and sympathies benevolently guiding ordinary mankind."[57]

Just as the eighteenth-century French intellectuals were impressed by the powerful central authority found in both Russia and China, capable of bringing about desirable social change, their twentieth-century counterparts found much to admire in the methods of government and determination displayed by the rulers of China and Russia in their times. The

attitudes being sketched here reflect a dislike of political pluralism shared by many intellectuals of the eighteenth as well as the twentieth century. Again, as Coser put it:

> Suffering from a multiplicity of laws and authorities, fragmentation of political will, lack of concerted planning in governmental affairs and all the privileges accruing to favored estates and orders, the philosophers yearned for a body politic that would be efficiently run by a central administration. . . . Reason could not be expected to prevail in a society split into autonomous, warring powers. . . .[58]

Finally, certain patterns in the eighteenth-century veneration of China and Russia foreshadowed yet another source of the more recent approval of these countries on the part of Western intellectuals—an appreciation of the treatment extended to their fellow intellectuals by the rulers: "China and Russia to the *philosophes,* were unlike in many respects, but they had one thing in common and a most important thing at that: in both these great empires, the men of letters served in places of eminence, at the very center of things. . . . There the powerful knew how to give due honor to the men of letters."[59]

The attitudes toward distant lands, past or present, may also be probed with the help of the metaphors of romantic lover and religious pilgrim. Parallels with the latter are the more obvious. The political pilgrim, like the religious one, is propelled by faith and hope on his visits to the holy places of his secular religion. They may be Lenin's or Mao's tomb (a rather literal parallel), the walls of the Kremlin, the symbolic heart of socialism (as Moscow used to be considered),[60] a commune in China, the setting of sugar-cane harvest in Cuba, a school for reformed prostitutes, a model prison, a new factory, a folk dance festival, a political rally—or any other setting, event, or institution in the countries concerned that symbolizes the realization of the dreams and values of the pilgrim. He returns to his homeland, after the pilgrimage, spiritually refreshed and rejuvenated. The pilgrimage functions either to confirm and authenticate the beliefs already well established, or if they are faint, to produce a conversion experience (which may or may not endure).

The political pilgrim also resembles the romantic lover in that his passions are fueled by the unattainability of the love-object, by the carefully retained obstacles to the fulfillment of his longings. He knows that he will not live in the society he admires but will return to the boredom and comforts of the one he despises. G. B. Shaw spoke for many such travelers when he said, embarking on his return trip from the Soviet Union in 1931, "Tomorrow I leave this land of hope and return to our

Western countries of despair."[61] Although the traveling intellectual seeks to immerse himself in the setting of his ideals, he will not become a part of it. Distance remains, and it helps to conserve the dreams. Usually he knows neither the language nor the unappealing features of the country visited, and he is shielded by his hosts from a close embrace with the object of his affections. Mysteries will persist, although he may succeed in convincing himself that he knows all that is to be known. Both the institutions and individuals representing the longed-for social order will remain partially and poorly known. He can continue idealizing and projecting his desires.

It is in part by a process of elimination that the search for utopia comes to be focused on specific historical societies which become the objects of what Peter Berger called "redemptive expectations."

In our times traditional religious beliefs do not, as a rule, provide psychic sustenance for intellectuals. Likewise, religious innovations, though widely pursued by various churches and denominations, especially in the United States, had only a limited and transient impact. The more traditional secular values—for example the American belief in success, hard work, social mobility, and material acquisition—were also found wanting in the 1930s as later in the 60s. Political ideologies offer alternatives, but their implementation in the domestic context has proved difficult. By contrast, distant countries provide examples of the apparent implementation of the political beliefs attractive to many Western intellectuals.