

Box 6, Folder: New West
The latest formulation

Oct. 16/58

FOR A NEW WEST

by

Karl Polanyi

Some of us still recall the First World War that awakened our generation to the fact of history. Catastrophe was from then on our bedfellow. History was not a matter of the past as a thoughtless philosophy of the Hundred Years' Peace would have us believe. And once started, it did not cease to happen.

I will seek to evoke the scenes we have witnessed and take the measure of our frustrations. Great triumphs and grave disappointments have been met with. However, it is not such a balance of our experiences, of achievements and omissions, that stands to question. Nor am I scanning the horizon for a mere break. The time has come to take note of a much bigger change.

There are signs of a barrenness of the cultural West in its encounter with the world at large. What matters here is not the level of its achievements in literature or the arts, which flourish as only rarely before, but the weight of its mind and life values as measured by the rest of mankind. The material and scientific products of the West are avidly consumed by the nascent nations, but with an unconcealed contempt for the interpretations set upon them by ourselves. That cultural entity, the West, of which the thinkers and writers were the traditional vehicles, is no longer listened to, not on account of a hostile public, as we persuade ourselves to believe, but because it has nothing relevant to say. We must face this fact squarely, even if it means laying bare the essential nature of our civilization, as it is now revealing itself, together with the unexpectedly changed circumstances in which our ultimate convictions will have to prove themselves from now onward.

Since this is not a theoretical disquisition I will simply imagine myself addressing a public that is fairly sure to remember the opening scenes.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was patently a continuation of the French Revolution of 1789, in its eastern advance. It smashed autocracy, gave land to the peasant, liberated oppressed nationalities, and in addition promised to rid the industrial system of the blemishes of exploitation. In this its heroic age, Soviet socialism was given selfless support by the writers and artists of the West. They steeled their muscles in an epic defence of freedom, democracy and socialism against the pagan upsurge of Teutonic Fascism. Hitler's persecution of Bolsheviks and Jews was in the last resort directed against Christian universalism and its derivatives in the industrial present. His onslaught on traditional values, root and branch, created the modern West. Hence its ascendancy over the civilized world and beyond, to the tribal communities of Inner Asia and tropical Africa, a moral triumph crowned by the victory of the political West, and its ally, the Soviet people, those beggars of yesterday, over the Germanic might. But the raising of the level of economic life in Russia from the ethical indifference of a capitalist market system to the conscious responsibility of a socialist basis did not by itself prevent human degradation. The defeat of fascism was almost reversed by Stalin's crimes. The disillusioned West lost status, stature and self-confidence. A shift in the continental balance of power then evoked the spectre of a third world war. A power vacuum had resulted from the disappearance of German and Japanese hemispheric structures creating enmity between America and Russia - islands of world power in an empty ocean - which inevitably was a permanent menace to peace. The blast of Hiroshima multiplied a thousand fold the threat of that vacuum. By sheer weight of numbers Russia's army overshadowed Eurasia and was a nightmare to Washington. The replacement of Chiang by Mao on the Chinese continent hit America as if it had been defrauded of its heritage. The British felt threatened in the Near East and the Balkans. The West now emerged as a designation for a political power grouping. An atomic attack on Soviet Russia became a possibility. Even a Bertrand Russell advocated preventive war. The thinkers, writers and artists,

deprived of a substance of their own, shut their eyes to reality. The national uprisings in Asia, a link in the chain reaction started by the American, French and Russian revolutions, was misread for a Communist ramp. Propaganda for policies set by government officials, themselves mere cogs in the wheels of history, appeared as the only function to which Western intellectuals now felt confident to aspire. Yet at the root of this lack of creativity there lay a real change in the life conditions of the world as a whole.

As the dust settled the awe-inspiring feature of the moral landscape emerged. Not the cold war, nor the civil wars in Asia stood out. The mushroom was the symbol of unspeakable perils, born from forces responsible for our own origins. And mankind began to grasp the nature of the development that held it in its grip.

The Industrial Revolution was a watershed in the history of mankind. Three forces, technology, economic organization and science in this sequence, each from separate and undistinguished parentage, linked up, inconspicuously at first, to form hardly a hundred years ago into a social maelstrom, that is still engulfing new and new millions of people in an irresistible rush. The contraptions were the beginning, a movement towards a deliberate organizing of markets followed, science -- almost a century later, but with an explosive effect -- joined up last. All three then gathered speed: technology and science formed a partnership, economic organization made use of its chance, forcing the efficiency principle in production both by market and planning to vertiginous heights. Western culture is what science, technology and economic organization mutually reinforcing one another, unbridled and unrestrained, are making of man's life. Their subordination (science and technology, as well as economic organization) to our will to a progress that is human and to the fulfillment of a personality that is free has become a necessity of survival. It falls to the West to discipline its children. For the sociologist, nuclear fission,

atom-bomb and Asian revolutions may well seem to fall into unrelated fields: science, technology and politics. Actually they are proximate steps in the growth of an industrial civilization. Progress may be geographical, theoretical, practical. The directions vary, the tendency of advance is the same. For the West they represent one problem: How to find creative answers to responsibilities to which it is committed by its past.

The tasks of the cultural West are interlaced with the rebirth of a continent. Industrialization is for Asia not an absolute; it is accomplished under reservations. What these imply, only time will unfold. The West is held responsible for the industrial, scientific and economic road on which our world has embarked. We are in the dock. Also the leaders of Western thought, entangled in power politics, were the moral victims of the Cold War and its violent perversion of the minds. They lost caste, when democracy was made synonymous with capitalism, in the U.S.A., and national status was identified with colonial possessions, in Britain and France. Western spiritual ascendancy, gained in the long battle against Hitlerism was frittered away in the hopeless support of a decaying past.

But the perspectives in which we grew up have dissolved. Universalism postulated our identification with the wide - world, the oecumene. Its conquest by a technological civilization is unexpectedly producing separate and distinct cultures, all of them industrial, but not only different on the capitalism - socialism axis, but different moreover on other scales some of which are based on incommensurable core values. To penetrate and internalize the position in which the West is placed is the task. A circumscribed, reduced West is both a concentrated and radical West and an adjusted, tolerant West; it is the parent of the industrial society as well as of its derivatives, and the equal member of a family of such societies; it is an offshoot of a universalism of a pre-industrial type and the first representative of a universalism of a post-indus-

trial type; it is a result of early illusions and of late recognitions of a unique sort; it has passed through the liberal utopia of unrestricted freedom and the illiberal utopia of general regulationism; it has probed authoritarianism and libertinism; traditionalism and antitraditionalism; class elite and mob rule; it has passed through the methodological discoveries of general law and historical specificity; of empiricism and phenomenology; of logical positivism and symbolism; thomism and existentialism. So have other cultures. But none in the same way. Western universalism - this is the Jewish - Christian inheritance - was the claim to a way of life of universal validity. This received a massive topical content when the West became the bearer of an industrial civilization which capitalist or socialist soon comprised almost half of the planet. We were somehow thinking about and for the rest. It was not a conversation, rather a spirited monologue. Since no answer came, we carried on our train of thought unstained^{vs}, but also uncontradicted. No one was overruled, bossed or made to listen. It was just that we were without a partner.

THE NEW WEST

barrenness

Concern

Signs are multiplying of a ~~crisis~~ in Western culture. ~~We are here concerned~~
 less with its implications for the political West, grave ~~as they may be,~~ than for *maybe, but that is not here our*
 mankind as a whole. *It is Western culture itself. Actually, the*
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 Even declines in the past may be risks to date. *cannot be*

Toynbee preferred to reckon the decline of history from the end of the
 classical republic, somewhere about the middle of the third cty. B.C. He *have been*
 right of course, though he relegated thereby to the age of stagnation and decay,
 the Gracchi, Julius Caesar, the Augustan age, Marcus Aurelius and the spread of
 Christianity from India to western Ireland, including the establishment of most
 of the sites of European civilization. By all measures, eventful decline! *(On*
~~this showing, the present predicament of the West might just as well result in~~
~~its rebirth in the U.S.S.R., or in the reverse, in a spreading over of Buddhism~~
~~into the Christian world.~~ History teaches us to guard against the temptation
 mapping out its course in advance.

Let us draw our distinctions: Western culture is a network of values of
Jewish-Christian origins, and evolved in the Mediterranean and around the Atlantic;
 "The West" as currently understood is a grouping of ~~forces~~ Powers which justifies *occasionally*
 its activities in terms of those values. The crisis of Western culture, at least
 in the form in which it has arisen, stems precisely from this conjunction.
~~Whether apart a crisis was due to fall,~~ *Western civilization has resigned itself to serve as a shield in a power*
 may seem a moot point, though it is not *pattern.*
 entirely so. The suddenness with which it set in and the depth to which the

⊕ What the word is used to describe Western civilization is
 the singular conviction of the state of the West with the *the*
 culture of Europe is

prestige of Western culture has sunk was ~~certainly~~ ^{undoubtedly} caused by the identification of democracy with capitalism in the United States ~~and~~ ^{world-wide} in the 1950ies and of national status with ^{colonial possessions} in Great Britain and France. ~~Already~~ ^{It} must be clear to the onlookers that unless these false identifications are reversed, the fateful impetus must persist.

The distinction between the political West and Western culture is vital to the unraveling of the knot. ^{Actually,} ~~The~~ growth and expansion of that culture is accompanied by a recession of Western power. ^{It} This is the imprint of the crisis. To employ the word "civilization" for a whole area of statehood cemented by a definite culture, we may say that whether Western civilization will be declining or not may well depend upon the failure or success of Western culture to free itself from power entanglement and make a bid for universality.

What appears as a decline of Western civilization is a loss of prestige of Western ^{values.} ~~values.~~ Its prime cause lies in an historical development which is increasingly making our culture a ^e more instrument of power ~~poli~~ policy, at a time when that culture is challenged by ^{universal} ~~universal~~ tasks of great magnitude.

The awakening of Asia and Africa to nationhood is accompanied by a ~~the~~ geographical expansion of material ^{wellbeing}, while some essentials of our culture are rejected at the same time. Inner freedom and ^{technological} development are the prerequisites of the universalization of our culture. Hence the fateful obstacle that political entanglement causes for the creative ^{faculties} ~~faculty~~ of our culture. ^{capabilities}

Admittedly, ^S speaking in political and military terms, the incipient awakening of Asia ~~and~~ Africa to modern nationhood has shaken the supremacy which the European enjoyed since he ~~had~~ raised the siege of Vienna by the Turks, in 1683; and, if we exclude Russia from the ranks of the West (an act of doubtful justification on

many counts) the armed forces of the West ^{have} ~~has~~ now ceased to overshadow the globe. But this set-back in the Western advance towards an absolute superiority cannot be called ~~a sweeping decline~~, especially as long as the United States ^{can} ~~is~~ still ^{be} justly regarded as the most powerful single country ~~in the world~~. If, for all that, we interpret a wide-spread loss of prestige as a symptom of a general decline of the West, ^{this happens} ~~neither it is~~ neither on political nor on military grounds, but on account of the paralysis of its spiritual forces. ^{It is (of its)} Its voice is no longer listened to by the peoples of Asia, ^{it is not} Not because of ~~some~~ successful jamming or ^{sheer} ~~a hostile~~ public, but because that voice ~~has~~ nothing to say.

^{Then} The ~~decline~~ decline of the West is spiritual. Whether measured by the standards of its overseas audiences, or by the standards of the West itself, there is a shrinking of moral stature. The trappings of a great civilization, in which power-policies were clothed, are wearing thin. Fear and a bad conscience made the source of much truth run dry. Yet again, it would be superficial ^(besides being unjust) to blame ^{on its avenge} ~~on~~ political abuse of the deep-seated troubles that ~~happen~~ ^{to} appear in the fabric of a civilization. Greater matters are at stake. For ^{those} weaknesses are not ^{so much the} ~~a~~ result of ~~our~~ failures, ^{than} but rather of ~~our~~ ^{its} successes.

The typical achievements of Western civilization in thought and life, ^{Science} ~~science~~, technology, economic organization, whether capitalist or socialist ~~having~~ reached ~~previously~~ unimagined heights, now bar the road to human advance. ^{not a breath} At almost all points ^{difficulties} ~~obstacles~~ arise and dangers ^{for the West} ~~loom~~ that its own triumphs ^{combines as a} ~~have~~ created. The subordination of science and technology to the will for human progress and to the fulfilment of personality has become a requirement of survival in freedom. Though living by cultures of their own and in the main adjusting to an environment shaped by the Old West, the new nations are busied with questions that are either variants of our own, or at least their derivations. Yet ^{the} ~~the~~ blind faith ^{with them} ~~that this~~ ^{the} ~~is~~ here absent ^{that} ~~the~~ parent nourishes for his offspring, ^a ~~a~~ faith which introduces into what often may seem a mere imitation of

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the West, an element of creativeness^{ity} to which justly fond hopes attach. Industrialization, the generating of mechanical power administered by government and the renewal of a functioning world economy are such problems of the youngest nations which belong to the purview of those broader issues that ^{are} ~~are~~ the crux of the West.

New West

THE NEW WEST

(Revisions of July 28/58)

Signs are multiplying of a barrenness in Western culture. Its implications for the political West may be grave, but that is not here our concern. It is Western culture itself. Actually the threat to our culture springs more than from any other cause from its close alignment with Western politics.

Speaking of signs of the time, we must avoid entangling terms. Spengler's decline of the West still stands for the best-attested failure of a sociological forecast ever made by a brilliant author. Anyway, it is both futile and harmful to try guessing what the future may hold. More insight into the present is what we need. If anything, Western civilization is spreading more rapidly than ever. Even declines in the past may be risks to date.

Toynbee preferred to reckon the decline of history from the end of the classical republic, somewhere about the middle of the third ~~city~~ B.C. He may have been right of course, though he relegated thereby to the age of stagnation and decay, the Gracchi, Julius Caesar, the Augustan age, Marcus Aurelius and the spread of Christianity from India to western Ireland, including the establishment of most of the sites of European civilization. By all measures, ^{an} eventful decline! On this showing, the present predicament of the West might just as well result in its rebirth in the U.S.S.R., or ⁱⁿ ~~on~~ the reverse, in a spreading over of Buddhism into the Christian world. ^{warns us not to map} History ~~teaches us to guard against the temptation mapping~~ out its course in advance.

Let us then draw our distinctions: Western culture is a network of values of Jewish-Christian origins, evolved in the Mediterranean and around the Atlantic; "The West: as currently understood is a grouping of Powers which occasionally justifies its activities in terms of those values. What the world is used to call Western civilization is the singular ^{Conjunction} ~~association~~ (?) of the states of the West with the lawful (?) culture of Europe. The crisis of Western culture, at least in the form in which it has arisen, stems precisely from this conjunction. Western culture has resigned itself to serve as a skein in a power pattern. Whether a crisis was already in the offing may seem a moot point for the suddenness with which it set in and the depth to which the prestige of Western culture has sunk was caused by the identification of democracy with capitalism in the United States, in the 1950ies, and of national status with colonial possessions, in Great Britain and France. It must be clear to the onlookers that unless these false identifications are reversed, the fateful impetus must persist.

The distinction between the political West and Western culture is therefore vital to the unraveling of the knot. Actually, a growth and expansion of that culture is accompanied by a recession of Western power. This is the imprint of the crisis. To employ the word "civilization" for a whole area of statehood cemented by a definite culture, we may say that whether Western civilization will be declining or not may well depend upon the failure or success of Western culture to free itself from power entanglement and make a bid for universality.

What appears as a decline of Western civilization is a loss of prestige of Western values. Its prime cause lies in an historical development which is increasingly making our culture a more instrument of power policy, at a time when that culture is challenged by tasks of great magnitude.

The awakening of Asia and Africa to nationhood is accompanied by a geographical expansion of material well being, while some essentials of our culture are rejected at the same time. Inner freedom and technological development are the prerequisites of the universalization of our culture. Hence the fateful obstacle that political entanglement causes for the creative capabilities of our culture.

Speaking in political and military terms, the incipient awakening of Asia and Africa to modern nationhood has shaken the supremacy which the European enjoyed since he had raised the siege of Vienna by the Turks, in 1683; and, if we exclude Russia from the ranks of the West (an act of doubtful justification on many counts) the armed forces of the West have now ceased to overshadow the globe. But this set-back in the Western advance towards an absolute superiority cannot be called decline, especially as long as the United States can still be regarded as the most powerful single country. If, for all that, we interpret a wide-spread loss of prestige as a symptom of a general decline of the West, this happens neither on political nor on military grounds, but on account of the paralysis of its spiritual forces. If its voice is no longer listened to by the peoples of Asia, it is not because of successful jamming or sheer prejudice but because that voice has nothing to say.

The decline of the West is then spiritual. Whether measured by the standards of its overseas audiences, or by the standards of the West itself, there is a shrinking of moral stature. The trappings of a great civilization, in which power-policies were clothed, are wearing thin. Fear and a bad conscience made the source of much truth run dry. Yet again, it would be superficial (besides being unjust,) to blame on its political abuse the deep-seated troubles that appear in the fabric of a civilization. Greater matters are at stake. For those weaknesses are not so much the result of its failures, than rather of its successes. Science, technology, economic organization, whether capitalist or socialist, having reached unimagined heights, now bar the road to human advance. Not a breakdown but a triumphant advance of Western civilization is at the root of its crisis.

At almost all points difficulties and dangers arise for the West that its continuous advance has created. The subordination of science and technology to the will for a human progress and to the fulfilment of personality has become a requirement of survival in freedom. Though living by cultures of their own and in the main adjusting to an environment shaped by the Old West, the new nations are busied with questions that are either variants of our own, or at least their derivations. Yet the blind faith is absent that the parent nourishes for his offspring with them. This secret doubt introduces into what often may seem a mere imitation of the West, an element of creativity to which ~~justly~~ ^{found} hopes attach. Industrialization, the generating of mechanical power administered by government and the renewal of a functioning world economy are such problems of the youngest nations which belong to the purview of those broader issues that are the crux of the West.

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Some of us still recall the First World War that awakened our generation to the fact of history. Catastrophe was from then on our bedfellow. History was not a matter of the past as a thoughtless philosophy of the Hundred Years' Peace would have us believe. And once started, it did not cease to happen.

I will seek to evoke the scenes we have witnessed and take the measure of our frustrations. Great triumphs and grave disappointments have been met with. However, it is not such a balance of our experiences of achievements and omissions that stands to question. Nor am I scanning the horizon for a mere break. The time has come to take note of a much bigger change.

[There are signs of a barrenness of the Cultural West in its encounter with the world at large. What matters here is not the level of its achievements in literature or the arts, which flourish as only rarely before, but the weight and influence of its life values with the rest of mankind. The material and scientific products of the West are avidly consumed by the new nations, but with an unconcealed contempt for the valuations and interpretations set upon them by ourselves. The voice of that cultural entity, the Western mind, the thinkers and writers who were its traditional vehicles, is no longer listened to, not on account of a hostile public, but because it has nothing of importance to say.] It seems to me we must face this fact squarely, even if it means laying bare the essential nature of our civilization, as it is now revealing itself, together with the unexpected but permanent circumstances in which our ultimate convictions will have to prove themselves.

Since this is not a theoretical disquisition I will simply imagine myself addressing a public that is fairly sure to remember the opening scenes.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was plainly a continuation of the French Revolution, in its eastern advance. It smashed autocracy, gave land to the peasant, liberated oppressed nationalities, and in addition promised to rid the industrial system of the blemishes of exploitation. In this raw dawn of its heroic age, Soviet socialism was given selfless support by the writers and artists. They steeled their muscles in an epic defence of freedom, democracy and socialism against the pagan upsurge of Teutonic Fascism. Hitler's persecution of Bolsheviks and Jews was in the last resort, directed against Christian universalism, and its derivatives in the industrial present. His onslaught on traditional values, root and branch, created the modern West. Hence its ascendancy over all our civilized world and beyond, to the tribal communities of Inner Asia and tropical Africa, a moral triumph crowned by the victory of the West, and its ally, the Soviet people, those beggars of yesterday, over the Germanic might. But the ~~real~~ raising of the level of economic life in Russia from the ethical indifference of a capitalist market system to the conscious responsibility of a socialist basis did not by itself prevent human degradation. The defeat of fascism was almost reversed by Stalin's crimes. The disillusioned West lost status, stature and self-confidence. A shift in the continental balance of power evoked the spectre of a third world war. A vacuum had resulted from the disappearance of German and Japanese hemispheric structures with the consequence of enmity between America and Russia - islands of world power in an empty ocean which inevitably constituted a permanent menace to peace. The blast of Hiroshima fatefully accentuated that vacuum. By sheer weight of numbers Russia's continental divisions which overshadowed Mao on the Chinese continent hit America as if it had been defrauded of its heritage. The British felt threatened in the Near East and the Balkans. The West now emerged as a designation for a political power grouping. An atomic attack on Soviet Russia unleashed by the supporters of preventive war became a possibility. Even a Bertrand Russell once advocated such a course. The thinkers, writers and artists, denuded of a substance of their own, shut their eyes to reality. The series of national uprisings

*Amel
hissing*

Western Europe...

in Asia, a link in the secular chain reaction started by the American, French and Russian revolutions, was misread for a Communist ramp. Propoganda for policies set by such as were themselves mere cogs in the wheels of history, appeared as the only function to which Western intellectuals would feel confident to aspire. Yet at the root of this lack of creativity there lay a real change in the life conditions of the world as a whole.

As the dust settled the awe-inspiring feature of the moral landscape stood out. Not the cold war, nor the civil wars in Asia were the overriding concern. The mushroom was the symbol of unspeakable perils, brought into the world by the very forces responsible for our own origins. Now only did mankind grasp the nature of the development that held it in its grip.

The Industrial Revolution was a watershed in the history of mankind. Three forces -- technology, economic organization and science -- each from separate and undistinguished ^{parentage} ~~beginnings~~, linked up, ^{at first,} inconspicuously to form into a social maelstrom, that is still engulfing new and new millions of people in an irresistible rush. The modest contraptions were ^{the beginning,} ~~first,~~ a movement towards profitable markets followed, science -- almost a century later, but with an explosive effect -- joined up last. Since then all three gathered speed: technology and science formed a partnership, economic organization ^{made use of its chance,} ~~followed suit,~~ forcing the efficiency principle ^{through} ~~by methods~~ both ~~of~~ market and ~~of~~ planning to vertiginous heights, ~~and renewed great expansion.~~ Western culture is what science, technology and economic organization, mutually reinforcing one another, unbridled and unrestrained, are making of man's life. It falls to the West to discipline its children. The subordination of science and technology, as well as economic organization to our will to human progress and to the fulfillment of personality has become ~~to-day~~ a requirement of survival. For the sociologist, the atom-bomb and the Asian revolutions may well seem to fall into unrelated fields: science and politics, ~~respectively.~~ Actually, they are proximate steps in modern civilization. The spread of industry into Asia

is geographical progress; its spread into the atomic field is scientific progress. The directions may vary, the tendency of advance is the same. They represent one complex problem To the Western mind, namely, how to find creative answers to responsibilities to which it is committed by its past.

The tasks of

~~Thus from the start the new tasks of the cultural West are interlaced with the rebirth of a continent. Industrialization is for Asia ~~is~~ not an absolute; commitment; it is accomplished under reservations. What these imply, only time will unfold.~~ Inevitably, the West is held responsible for the industrial, scientific and economic road on which our world has embarked. We are in the dock. Also entangled in power politics, the leaders of Western thought were the moral victims of the Cold War and its violent perversion of the minds. They lost caste, when democracy was made synonymous with capitalism, in the U.S.A., and national status was identified with colonial possessions, in Britain and France. Western spiritual ascendancy, gained in the long battle against Hitlerism, was frittered away in the hopeless support of a decaying past.

Moreover,

The senselessness of the West was not a mere ideology. It mirrored our actual position. ~~We must press on to the vantage points whence the new secular limitations of human existence become apparent so we can recognize the shapes and directions that our effort must take, both intellectually and morally.~~

~~The perspectives in which we grew up have dissolved. Universalism predated our identification with the wide - world, the oceanic, its conquest by a technological civilization unexpectedly produced separate and distinct cultures, all of them industrial, yet not only different on the a capitalism - socialism axis, but different also moreover on other scales some of which are based on incommensurable core values. To penetrate and internalize the position in which the West is placed is the task, prime reorientation. The reduced West is both the concentrated radical West & the adjusted, tolerant West;~~

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a partner. ^{seemed to} And since valid thinking is confirmed by the absence of contradictions, ^{the}

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The Russian Revolution of 1917 was patently a continuation of the French Revolution of 1789, in its eastern advance. It smashed autocracy, gave land to the peasant, liberated oppressed nationalities, and in addition promised to rid the industrial system of the blemishes of exploitation. In this its heroic age, Soviet socialism was given selfless support by the writers and artists of the West. They steeled their muscles in an epic defence of freedom, democracy and socialism against the pagan upsurge of Teutonic Fascism. Hitler's persecution of Bolsheviki and Jews was in the last resort directed against Christian universalism and its derivatives in the industrial present. His onslaught on traditional values, root and branch, created the modern West. Hence its ascendancy over the civilized world and beyond, to the tribal communities of Inner Asia and tropical Africa, a moral triumph crowned by the victory of the political West, and its ally, the Soviet people, those beggars of yesterday, over the Germanic might. But the raising of the level of economic life in Russia from the ethical indifference of a capitalist market system to the conscious responsibility of a socialist basis did not by itself prevent human degradation. The defeat of fascism was almost reversed by Stalin's crimes. The disillusioned West lost status, stature and self-confidence. A shift in the continental balance of power then evoked the spectre of a third world war. A power vacuum had resulted from the disappearance of German and Japanese hemispheric structures creating enmity between America and Russia - islands of world power in an empty ocean - which inevitably was a permanent menace to peace. The blast of Hiroshima multiplied a thousand fold the threat of that vacuum. By sheer weight of numbers Russia's army overshadowed Eurasia and was a nightmare to Washington. The replacement of Chiang by Mao on the Chinese continent hit America as if it had been defrauded of its heritage. The British felt threatened in the Near East and the Balkans. The West now emerged as a designation for a political power grouping. An atomic attack on Soviet Russia became a possibility. Even a Bertrand Russell advocated preventive war. The thinkers, writers and artists,

deprived of a substance of their own, shut their eyes to reality. The national uprisings in Asia, a link in the chain reaction started by the American, French and Russian revolutions, was misread for a Communist ramp. Propaganda for policies set by government officials, themselves mere cogs in the wheels of history, appeared as the only function to which Western intellectuals now felt confident to aspire. Yet at the root of this lack of creativity there lay a real change in the life conditions of the world as a whole.

As the dust settled the awe-inspiring feature of the moral landscape emerged. Not the cold war, nor the civil wars in Asia stood out. The mushroom was the symbol of unspeakable perils, born from forces responsible for our own origins. And mankind began to grasp the ^{true} nature of the development that held it in its grip.

The Industrial Revolution was a watershed in the history of mankind. Three forces, technology, economic organization and science in this sequence, each from separate and undistinguished parentage, linked up, inconspicuously at first, to form hardly a hundred years ago into a social maelstrom, that is still engulfing new and new millions of people in an irresistible rush. The contraptions were the beginning, a movement towards a deliberate organizing of markets followed, science -- almost a century later, but with an explosive effect -- joined up last. All three then gathered speed: technology and science formed a partnership, economic organization made use of its chance, forcing the efficiency principle in production both by market and planning to vertiginous heights. Western culture is what science, technology and economic organization mutually reinforcing one another, unbridled and unrestrained, are making of man's life. Their subordination (science and technology, as well as economic organization) to our will to a progress that is human and to the fulfillment of a personality that is free has become a necessity of survival. It falls to the West to discipline its children. For the sociologist, nuclear fission,

atom-bomb and Asian revolutions may well seem to fall into unrelated fields: science, technology and politics. Actually they are proximate steps in the growth of an industrial civilization. Progress may be geographical, theoretical, practical. The directions vary, the tendency of advance is the same. For the West they represent one problem: How to find creative answers to responsibilities to which it is committed by its past.

The tasks of the cultural West are interlaced with the rebirth of a continent. Industrialization is for Asia not an absolute; it is accomplished under reservations. What these imply, only time will unfold. The West is held responsible for the industrial, scientific and economic road on which our world has embarked. We are in the dock. Also the leaders of Western thought, entangled in power politics, were the moral victims of the Cold War and its violent perversion of the minds. They lost caste, when democracy was made synonymous with capitalism, in the U.S.A., and national status was identified with colonial possessions, in Britain and France. Western spiritual ascendancy, gained in the long battle against Hitlerism was frittered away in the hopeless support of a decaying past.

But the perspectives in which we grew up have dissolved. Universalism postulated our identification with the wide - world, the oecumene. Its conquest by a technological civilization is unexpectedly producing separate and distinct cultures, all of them industrial, but not only different on the capitalism - socialism axis, but different moreover on other scales some of which are based on incommensurable core values. To penetrate and internalize the position in which the West is placed is the task. A circumscribed, reduced West is both a concentrated and radical West and an adjusted, tolerant West; it is the parent of the industrial society as well as of its derivatives, and the equal member of a family of such societies; it is an offshoot of a universalism of a pre-industrial type and the first representative of a universalism of a post-indus-

trial type; it is a result of early illusions and of late recognitions of a unique sort; it has passed through the liberal utopia of unrestricted freedom and the illiberal utopia of general regulationism; it has probed authoritarianism and libertinism; traditionalism and antitraditionalism; class elite and mob rule; it has passed through the methodological discoveries of general law and historical specificity; of empiricism and phaenomenology; of logical positivism and symbolism; thomism and existentialism. So have other cultures. But none in the same way. Western universalism - this is the Jewish - Christian inheritance - was the claim to a way of life of universal validity. This received a massive topical content when the West became the bearer of an industrial civilization which capitalist or socialist soon comprised almost half of the planet. We were somehow thinking about and for the rest. It was not a conversation, rather a spirited monologue. Since no answer came, we carried on our train of thought ^{vs} unstained, but also uncontradicted. No one was overruled, bossed or made to listen. It was just that we were without a partner.

[Faint handwritten scribbles]

of a third world war. A vacuum had resulted from the disappearance of German and Japanese hemispheric structures with the ~~consequence~~ consequence of enmity between America and Russia - islands of world power in an empty ocean ^{naturally inevitable} which constituted a permanent menace to peace. The blast of Hiroshima fatefully accentuated that vacuum. By sheer weight of numbers Russia's continental divisions ^{which} overshadowed Europe and Asia ^{were a} ~~pressed~~ as a nightmare ^{to} on Washington. The change from Chiang to Mao on the Chinese continent hit America as if it had been defrauded of its heritage. The British felt ~~equally~~ ^{the Near East} threatened in Asia and the Balkans. An atomic attack on Soviet Russia ~~to be~~ ^{once} unleashed by the supporters of preventive war became a possibility. Even a Bertrand Russell ~~advocated~~ ^{advocated} such a course. The West now emerged as a designation for a political power grouping. The thinkers, writers and ~~ambitious~~ artists, denuded of a substance of their own shut their eyes to reality. The series of national uprisings in Asia, a link in the secular chain reaction started by the American, French and Russian revolutions, was misread for a Communist ramp. Propaganda for policies set by such as were themselves mere cogs in the wheels of history, appeared as the only function to which Western intellectuals would feel confident to aspire. Yet at the roots of this lack of creativity there lay a real change in the life conditions of the world as a whole.

~~For~~ ^{As} the dust settled the awe-inspiring feature of the moral landscapes stood out. Not the cold war, nor the civil wars in Asia were the overriding concern. The mushroom was the symbol of unspeakable perils, brought into the world by the very forces responsible for our own origins. Now only ~~the~~ ^{has} mankind grasp the nature of the development that ~~held us~~ ^{holds it} in its grip.

New West

Comments by K. Polanyi on "Industrial Civilization" and "The Triumph of Market Economy", (written 13 Oct. 1961, in connection with work on "For A New West".)

1. Why is technology inherently dangerous?

Answer: The question should be understood as relating to

- a) the true meaning of socialism; and
- b) the conceivable policy lines that follow from (a)

Robert Owen discovered the problem by discovering a) the machine, and b) society. His concept of man was out and out humanistic, but NOT individualistic at all. Both the individual (as a distinct person) and as the atom out of which society is built was foreign to him; even "freedom" was a concept of little relevance to him. Society alone was real, and the individual was what society made out of him.

His intuition re the machine was a stroke of genius. His discrete thoughts on the subject were either incoherent or contradictory. But he indicated that if terrible consequences shall not ensue, we will have to change our economy very much (watch the machine, bridle it, but not turn against it).

Now in my conviction socialism is the hope and promise that a machine society is humanly possible (R. Owen was not a socialist in the XIXth century sense. He knew nothing about market economies, etc., and was in deadly fear of Revolution (French Revolution)).

His fear of the machine was, in my view, prophetic. I.e. we, not he, know about technology, science, and economic organization. If the "West" has four axiomatic faiths (1) science, (2) technology and (3) economic organization, the (4)th being humanism, then the fact is that only the (4)th stands up, while (1), (2) and (3) have turned into a deadly danger to (4). This is the simple formula of our predicament. Socialism undertakes to lead us out of it.

The dangers of technology are popularly universalized today (the Quadrupeds [C. Kerr, Harbison, Dunlop, and Myers]). (Incidentally Jasper's paperbacked book some five years ago - title escapes me - is a very good quiet survey of the "modern dangers". I do not think that I have here any contribution to make which stands out. The paradigms of "progress" for modern man is that represented by "efficiency", and that has its model in technological efficiency. Hence technology is king of our souls.

2. Triumph of Market Economy

- (1) The trade union has been marketized.
- (2) The corporation has domesticated the factors. It has become the home and patria of the worker.
- (3) Affluence has triumphed over the traditional [armies] of the market creating,
 - (a) abject poverty
 - (b) an economic schism in society making men a mere appendage to the commodity "labour"
 - (c) stopping technological progress
 - (d) hopelessly urbanizing man and immobilizing him

The trade union has been forced to make the strike its ultimate ratio (a purely market concept of withholding one's commodity, however anti-social the consequences).

The market has excoriated the concept of freedom and made democracy equal capitalism. Hence the cold war is fought for a market defined ideal of freedom.

The New West is faced with the universalized results of its 1, 2 and 3 ideals of triumph. The West has to produce the antidotes to them and at the same time cure them of their inherent danger to (ii).

I believe that the reality of society is a revelation that can cure us of our absolutist itches.