

MEN WITHOUT MASTERS:  
MARGINAL SOCIETY DURING  
THE PRE-INDUSTRIAL ERA

The interest shown in marginal groups is explained by a diversity of factors. On the threshold of the modern era appeared an abundant literature devoted to a description of the world of delinquency. More particularly, these were treatises on the mysteries of the forbidden quarters of the cities of the time and on the behavior and way of life of social groups living by swindling or fraud.<sup>1</sup> This being drawn to the exotic and the unusual in society, which was not unrelated to an awakening of ethnological curiosity, was also seen in the flowering of a type of literature which could be called "picaresque." It had already appeared in the last centuries of the Middle Ages, but it came into full bloom only in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Spanish picaresque novel,<sup>2</sup> because of its literary brilliance and its wide

Translated by Jeanne Ferguson.

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Chandler, *The Literature of Roguery*, Boston-New York, 1907; F. Kluge, *Rotwelsch. Quellen und Wortschatz der Gaunersprache und der verwandten Geheimsprachen*, I, Strasbourg, 1901; E. von Kraemer, *Le type du faux mendiant dans les littératures romanes depuis le Moyen Age jusqu'au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Helsinki, 1944; P. Camporesi, *Il libro dei vagabondi*, Turin, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> *La novela picaresca española*, ed. A. Valbuena Prat, Madrid, 1943; *La novela picaresca española*, ed. F. Rico, Barcelona, 1967; *Romans picaresques*

acceptance by the reading public, left in the shade a multitude of similar works coming from other European countries, from the English "rogue pamphlets" to the "rogue" literature of Germany and Holland to the tales of Polish and Czech vagabonds. These literary works are closely related to treatises which claimed to be based on eye-witness accounts or which claimed to report authentic events. In reality, they were all taken from fiction and demand comparison with documentary evidence. But the abundance of this type of literature and the success it enjoyed also indicate an early awareness by modern society of the growing importance of social groups living in contradiction to the norms, manners and customs in force at the time.<sup>3</sup>

Toward the end of the 18th century a new light was shed on the problem of marginal groups. To the lively controversies in European social thought during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries over the attitude to adopt with regard to the poor and over the directions which social assistance should take was added another element: the problem of a new class in modern societies, the industrial proletariat which was being formed. Frederick Morton Eden already went beyond the traditional horizons of philanthropy when he envisaged poverty in relation to work and the situation of the poor as a function of the supply of and demand for manpower.<sup>4</sup> It is precisely this problem with which the following century would have to deal. The lot of the proletariat, its living conditions and primarily, its way of life, were viewed in the same terms as the life of the vagrants and indigents of the preceding centuries. The approach to the problem did not radically change until the advent of Marxism. In the initial phases of its evolution, before the birth of the modern workers' movements, the proletariat, hardly distinguished from the *lumpen-proletariat*, was considered, in a way, to be outside the struc-

*espagnols*, ed. M. Molho and J. F. Réille, Paris, 1968, Bibl. de la Pléiade. For a general outline cf. A. del Monte, *Itinerario del romanzo picaresco spagnolo*, Florence 1957.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the reports presented at the colloquy at Prato in 1974: J. P. Gutton, "Charité et assistance en Europe, XVI<sup>e</sup> - XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles"; B. Geremek, "La réforme de l'assistance publique au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle"; A. W. Coats, "The Relief of Poverty, Attitudes to Labour and Economic Change in England, 1660-1782"; P. Mathias, "Wages, Consumption and Leisure in the Eighteenth Century."

<sup>4</sup> F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, London, 1793.

tures of organized society.<sup>5</sup> The fluidity of the boundaries separating the “working classes” from the “dangerous classes,”<sup>6</sup> the high proportion of criminality in the areas of rapid industrialization, sporadic work habits and delinquency all favored the creation of a stereotype of a workers’ milieu characterized by its fundamental anomy. With the evolution of the capitalistic society and the formation of organization structures in the workers’ movement, the identification of the proletarian condition with marginalism became more rare and tended to disappear, at least on the social plane; in the socio-cultural domain, however, a manifest frustration among the workers and the persistence of a distinct subculture would exist for a long time.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of the 19th century the curiosity which the lower levels of society aroused was already directed less toward miserable working conditions and poverty than it was toward the disparate fauna of urban marginal society, the thieves and ruffians. This curiosity was accompanied by a sympathetic and indulgent attitude, free from the fear and aversion which the duo poverty/crime had excited during the first centuries of the modern era. In the 20th century the image of the outlaw took on a new menacing aspect. Outlaws became a potential instrument of political struggle, a reserve force for totalitarianism. *The Beggars’ Opera*, by John Gay (1728), returned to the London stage in the 1920’s and was warmly received. In 1928 Bertolt Brecht rewrote Gay’s play, bringing it up to date, and his *Dreigroschenoper*, (*Three Penny Opera*) was triumphantly successful in all the theaters of Germany, on the very eve of Hitler’s takeover of power. Brecht’s intention was to put the bourgeoisie on trial by showing that a bandit may quite well be of bourgeois origin, just as a bourgeois may become a bandit. His MacHeath was conceived as a bourgeois called upon to threaten the sympathy

<sup>5</sup> Cf. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men*, London, 1964. Cf. especially essay No. 6.

<sup>6</sup> L. Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses, classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1958.

<sup>7</sup> Along with the pertinent observations of Stefan Czarnowski, “Kultura, szkic Powstawanie nowej kultury” (Culture, the birth of a new culture) in *Dziela* (Works), Vol. I, Warsaw, 1956, p. 75 et seq., should be mentioned a book by E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, 1963.

the bourgeoisie felt towards criminals.<sup>8</sup> The atmosphere of great crisis caused a change in the appeal previously exerted by marginal groups: the public seemed to see in the life of the outlaws a defiance of social order and the norms of collective life and, in the thieves, the bearers of a catastrophic future.

The Polish sociologist Stefan Czarnowski approached the problem of "surplus men" in the perspective of the totalitarian menace. In an excellent study (1935), borrowing the term "marginal society" from American works on criminality and gangsterism, he analyzed its genesis and extent, the characteristics of the groups comprising it and their roles in different periods.<sup>9</sup> He investigated not only their function as instruments "at the services of violence" but also their function within a given culture. After the first wave of research on vagrancy<sup>10</sup> American sociology, faced with the fact that loss of social status was becoming an increasingly widespread phenomenon in the United States, devoted itself to the observation and analysis of anomy in contemporary society, as well as to the factors which engender asocial attitudes.<sup>11</sup> Urbanization and industrialization processes in developing countries also raise, in all its sharpness, the problem of the meaning and role of human groups which do not participate in the production of a capitalistic society. The problem has been confronted by economists and sociologists, but they have likewise been obliged to go back to the past<sup>12</sup> in order to form an appropriate working concept. The development of ethno-historical research is also connected to the idea of marginalism. R. E. Park gave it a very particular meaning by introducing it into the social sciences in his reflections on the role played by marginal groups in the process of cultural advance and social change.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Such were in fact the indications given by Brecht to the actors. Cf. *Dialog*, 1957, No. 4.

<sup>9</sup> S. Czarnowski, "Ludzie zbedni w sluzbie przemocy" (Superfluous Men in the Service of Violence), in *Dziela (Works)*, Vol. II, pp. 186-193.

<sup>10</sup> Especially that by N. Anderson, *The Hobo*, Chicago, 1923.

<sup>11</sup> R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe, 1957 (the article dates from 1939); *Contemporary Social Problems: An Introduction to the Sociology of Deviant Behavior and Social Disorganization*, ed. by R. K. Merton and R. A. Nisbet, New York, 1961.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Revista latino-americana de sociologia*, 1969, No. 2.

<sup>13</sup> R. E. Park, *Race and Culture*, Glencoe, 1950, p. 345 et seq.; B. E. Hoselitz, "Main Concepts in the Analysis of the Social Implications of Technical Change"

Marginalism is still at times understood in its narrow sense which gives foremost importance to the alienation of an individual or group within the surrounding society: for example, the Jews in Europe, the Hindus in Africa and the Chinese in Southeast Asia.

Research on anomy and marginalism has led to an analysis of the different levels of exclusion in ancient societies. Initial studies of selected examples were followed by systematic historical research. A new domain appeared in historiography—the history of criminality, where the problematic of social history held a favored position, after statistics on delinquency and classification of crimes, and the study of the mechanics of breaking with the norms and ties of organized society.<sup>14</sup> In historiographical publications a program of research on the process of marginalism in the past has also appeared.<sup>15</sup>

In Polish historiography this orientation rested on a long tradition and could take advantage of appreciable findings. The reflections of Czarnowski on “surplus men” served as inspiration for a modern approach to the problematic in question. Along with the historico-sociological study by Nina Assodobraj,<sup>16</sup> an entire series of works on this subject may be cited, dealing with floating populations in the countryside and in towns,<sup>17</sup> as well as attempting an approach, synthetically and from both the

in *Industrialization and Society*, ed. by B. F. Hoselitz and W. E. Moore, Paris, 1966, p. 2. This work attributes to Park the origin of the idea of marginal society and the discovery of its significance.

<sup>14</sup> We may cite here the work of a group of historians of Caen, published in the *Annales de Normandie*, as well as the collection of studies, “Crimes et criminalité en France, 17<sup>e</sup>-18<sup>e</sup> siècles,” Paris, 1971 (*Cahiers des Annales*, 33).

<sup>15</sup> We mention as an example *Marginalité et criminalité à l'époque moderne*, a special issue of the *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, XXI, July-September, 1974; H. Asseo, *Marginalité et exclusion: le traitement administratif des Bobémiens*, Paris, 1974; *Délinquance et exclusion sociale*, Mimeographed collection of reports presented at the meeting of modernist French historians in 1973).

<sup>16</sup> N. Assodobraj, *Początki klasy robotniczej. Problem rak roboczych w przemyśle polskim epoki stanisławowskiej* (The beginnings of the working class. The problem of manpower in Polish industry at the time of Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski), Warsaw, 1946; second edition, Warsaw, 1967.

<sup>17</sup> N. Assodobraj treats this subject in the critical outline at the end of the second edition of her book. We may also mention the exhaustive study M. Frančić, *Luźni w osiemnastowiecznym Krakowie* (Men without masters in Kracow in the 18th century), Wrocław, 1967.

sociological and juridical points of view, to the problem of “men without masters” in ancient Polish society.<sup>18</sup>

Socio-psychological and historical research on marginal society holds good as much for the restructuring of research programs in the social sciences as it does for the impact of contemporary events. Whatever terminology was employed in these investigations, the idea of a marginal society succeeded little by little in implanting itself in the working concept; the first attempts at systemization demonstrated that, in the end, analogous processes and phenomena were involved.

The definition of marginal society and its extent poses many difficulties. The sources do not furnish elements which permit precise lines to be drawn. Custom and law make primary use of the idea of delinquency and the delinquent, but they consider condemnable and punishable all ways of life which do not conform to the propriety of social conditions or origin; for example, they condemn the fact that a “plebeian” might shirk labor. At times, all the members of this milieu are designated as “people of ill repute.” The repressive apparatus used this concept to determine the manner in which an accused person should be treated, how he should be “interrogated,” and so on. The author of a French account of the moral doctrine in vigor in the late Middle Ages treated delinquents and protesters as “vraies folz frenetiques”; he puts thieves, looters and criminals of all types into this category, but he also includes gamblers and pimps. They are distinguished not only by their way of life, which could be called asocial, but also by their particular ethic, which causes them to refuse to recognize the right of ownership and to subordinate moral imperatives “à la volonté de leur sensualité.”<sup>20</sup> In the terminology of the time, however, we especially find designations such as “vagrant,” “no fixed domicile,” as well as a whole range of pejoratives emphasizing an asocial way of life. In Polish

<sup>18</sup> S. Grodziski, “Ludzie luźni. Studium z historii państwa i prawa polskiego” (Men without masters: Contribution to the history and law of the Polish State), Kracow, 1961 (*Zeszyty Naukowe UJ Rozprawy i studia*, Vol. XXX.)

<sup>19</sup> Especially A. Vexliard, *Introduction à la sociologie du vagabondage*, Paris, 1956; J. Baechler, *Les phénomènes révolutionnaires*, Paris, 1970.

<sup>20</sup> Bibl. Nationale, Ms. Fr. 1148. In the expression *folz* we see a correspondence with the *Narrenschiff* of Sebastian Brant.

juridical acts, alongside the term vagrant (*rustici vagi, laici vagi, vagabundae, vagantes*) we meet more and more often the Polish expression *luźni*, referring to unemployed peasants and to journeymen.<sup>21</sup> We also find the German term *lose Leute* or *Losleute*, from which the Polish equivalent *luźni* probably derives,<sup>22</sup> and in French, the expression “*gens sans aveu*,” which has the same significance.<sup>23</sup> In the Slavic countries, we come across the word *hultaje*, in Russian *gulašč ije ludi*, with a broader meaning: it designates free peasants, short-term salaried workers and all types of “idlers.”<sup>24</sup>

If, at the judiciary and administrative levels we again find as characteristics of these groups the break with social bonds, itinerancy and idleness, the image given by the literature emphasizes above all the danger which their existence presents to public order, and it points out primarily fraud and criminal actions in characterizing their way of life. Without seeking too much precision in terminology and implicit or explicit definition in the sources relative to the categories which were considered contemptible, to be excluded and repressed, we may nonetheless observe that a simple juxtaposition of the names and terms used reveals the essential elements of a marginal society and the mechanics of its formation. Continuing in this direction, we find it valid to try to define the social contours of the phenomenon under study.

Czarnowski defined marginal society as an ensemble of “outcast individuals having no determined social status, considered as surplus from the point of view of material or intellectual production, and having this same opinion of themselves.”<sup>25</sup> Being outcast and having no social status are as much undeniable characteristics of marginalism as the fact of being considered

<sup>21</sup> S. Grodziski, *op. cit.*, p. 14 and following.

<sup>22</sup> A. Bröckner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* (Etymological dictionary of the Polish language), Warsaw, 1970, p. 304.

<sup>23</sup> C. Paultre, *De la répression de la mendicité et du vagabondage en France sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, 1906.

<sup>24</sup> M. Djakonov, *Očerki iz istorii selskogo naselenija v Moskovskom gosudarstve*, SPb 1898; I. D. Belajev, *Krestjane na Rusi*, Moscow, 1903; A. M. Pankrotova, “Najmity na Rusi v XVII v.” in *Akademiku B. D. Grekovu ko dnju semidesjateljaja*, Moscow, 1952.

<sup>25</sup> S. Czarnowski, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 186.

and considering oneself as superfluous are uncertain criteria. Extending Czarnowski's idea, we should distinguish in marginalism the two planes on which asocial choices are made: first with regard to the prevailing social order, its institutions, its constraints and prohibitions, its system of group ties. Then with regard to the relationship to the dominant hierarchy of values, to the objectives, intentions and interests which this hierarchy represents and which make up the cultural structure of the social order.<sup>26</sup> The two planes may be connected—protest against social order may go hand in hand with the questioning of the cultural order and ideology—they are nevertheless essentially distinct.<sup>27</sup> Where the way of life is clearly asocial, we often meet an extreme conformity with regard to the prevailing cultural norms, indeed a severe rigor in submission to the moral rules and system of values accepted by normal society.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, in certain milieus completely integrated from the social point of view, we may observe a refusal of the fundamental values of the established order.

On both planes the marginal situation may assume either a passive or an active form. The first is seen in the *absence* of a certain type of tie which society considers normal. In traditional societies in the pre-industrial era, participation in social life was conditioned by the submission to certain group ties: first, the family, then the professional corporation, the immediate community, the religious fraternity. Individuals who were outside these relationships, who were expelled from them or had never been admitted to them, appeared socially superfluous or dangerous. But such a situation could also be the result of a *refusal* to participate in social relationships and duties, that is to say, it could be an active attitude. Questioning the value system of the society to which they belonged, protesting individuals and

<sup>26</sup> Cf. R. K. Merton, *op. cit.*, p. 130 ff.

<sup>27</sup> E. Neyman, "Typy marginesowości w społeczeństwach i ich rola w zmianie społecznej" (Types of marginality in society and their role in social change), *Studia Socjologiczne*, 4/23, 1966, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. Labbens, *La condition sous-prolétarienne*, Paris, 1965; H. Mendras, "Pour une sociologie de la contresociété," *Revue Française de Sociologie*, VIII, 1967, p. 73.

<sup>29</sup> R. K. Merton, *op. cit.*, p. 153 ff. The author calls these attitudes "retreatism."



groups lived in the midst of this society without adhering to it;<sup>29</sup> they felt like strangers in it and, more important, they were considered as strangers by it.<sup>30</sup>

Here we are considering marginalism as a particular social situation and not as adhesion to an established group. Since the milieu which is the subject of our research is extremely mobile and variable, it cannot be grasped except in a continual process of loss of social status and reintegration into the social framework. Court archives, which abound in the biographies of people on the fringes of society, clearly suggest the continuation of the anomic existence because the life of an accused man who was brought to justice was unrolled in a series of criminal actions. But we must not forget that only one relatively unimportant part of the people in question was referred to the courts, and that it is an exception when we hear of cases of reintegration of marginal people into normal society, the general tendency being rather to hide a suspect past.

In trying to disengage the determinants of marginalism, in the opinion of society itself, it is advisable to follow the various degrees of social reproval, from simple scorn to a resolute and organized repression. Two fronts may, rather arbitrarily, be distinguished in marginalism, one socio-cultural, the other socio-economic.

Modern society inherited from medieval Christianity a complex work ethic. Work was considered a duty, even while it was deprived of dignity and honor. Gradual and profound changes in mentality accompanied the attribution of a certain dignity to manual labor. We thus see a shrinking in the group of occupations and trades considered dishonorable, as *mercimonia inhonesta*,<sup>31</sup> but manual labor in general long remained the object of a thinly veiled scorn. This is particularly true for many

<sup>30</sup> We recall Znaniecki's definition of strangers: "Strangers, with regard to the individual or community under study, are those, and only those, that the individual or the community consider as such." F. Znaniecki, "Studia nad antagonizmem do obcych" (Study of antagonism toward strangers), *Przeegląd Socjologiczny*, I, p. 173.

<sup>31</sup> J. Le Goff, "Métiers licites et métiers illicites dans l'Occident médiéval," *Annales de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes de Gand*, Etudes Historiques, Tome V, 1963, p. 41 ff.

wearisome and dirty occupations in which qualification played a minor role.

Ignominy became attached to different categories of the population in a more or less durable manner. Distrust of the stranger, xenophobia, sometimes led to viewing as ignominious minorities or migrant ethnic groups with whom it was necessary to coexist and who were distinguished by their culture, their religion or their physical aspect. This was the case of the Jews and the gypsies in the Christian societies of the West. However, we may also find, in a very extenuated form, of course, analogous attitudes with regard to certain regional populations.

In medieval society, ideological difference also became an object of ignominy. The condemnation of heretics sometimes went so far as to exclude them from society; it even happened that they were forced, like other criminals, to wear symbols of their ignominy (the condemned had to wear the inscription "heretic"). Heretical groups themselves—and we see in this case a connection with marginal society and marginal culture—had very pronounced feelings about their isolation in society.<sup>32</sup> The same was true of sorcerers and, in general, of people who devoted themselves to magic and folk medicine. There was wide use of their services, but they themselves were surrounded by an atmosphere of fear and ignominy. Their way of life often had characteristics of marginalism: solitude, living outside the community, itinerancy.<sup>33</sup>

The distrust of the infirm and sick had the same origin, primarily cultural, and it led to exclusion in two cases: the lepers, in the Middle Ages, and the insane, at the beginning of the modern era.<sup>34</sup> This attitude was explained as a defense measure against a dangerous and mysterious illness, but in the decision to isolate or confine sick people we also find the feeling that they are existentially different. This is especially seen in

<sup>32</sup> "Hérésies et sociétés dans l'Europe préindustrielle," presented by J. Le Goff, Paris, 1968.

<sup>33</sup> Among recent works we may cite R. Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1968; A. D. J. Mac Farlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, New York, 1970; K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London, 1971; B. Baranowski, *Kultura ludowa XVII-XVIII w.* (Popular culture in the 17th and 18th centuries), Łódź, 1971, Chapter X.

<sup>34</sup> M. Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Paris, 1961.

the treatment of lepers' children, who were no longer carriers of the disease but were still isolated because of it, and were forbidden to exercise most trades. As for mental illness, after a period of anxious tolerance, the policy of isolation, if not repression, was predominant. We see in this not only a defense reflex against the danger of physical aggression by the insane person, but also the feeling that there is in mental illness a certain refusal, a protest against the established order: is not a man insane in relation to a certain determined society?<sup>35</sup> The way the sick were treated, however, shows a definite class distinction: scorn, ignominy or exclusion applied only to the lower classes, never to the upper classes.

Among the marginal groups suffering exclusion from society should also be placed the banished. Banishment brought with it, of course, very different consequences, according to its scope (duration, the forbidden territory, city, province or state), but the banished person was always treated as an outlaw.<sup>36</sup> The punishment of marginal people thus contributed to the confinement of the condemned within their asocial existence.

Without wishing to go beyond the limits we have set (Europe) we still feel it necessary to mention at this point the groups of outcasts in Asiatic societies, the untouchables of the Far East.<sup>37</sup> There is a very distinct analogy between these groups and the *mercimonia inhonesta* of the Christian West. The origins of both phenomena go back to centuries-old taboos found in ancient societies. In agrarian societies in Europe as well as on other continents we find a marginal society deprived of rights and dignity, namely, slaves (we are thinking particularly of domestic slavery or of social systems where slavery did not play a fundamental role).<sup>38</sup>

Ignominy was also extended to the milieu of prostitution. On this subject, however, the positions were of a different

<sup>35</sup> R. Bastide, *Sociologie des maladies mentales*, Paris, 1965, p. 254: "a man is insane only with regard to a given society."

<sup>36</sup> M. Handelsman, *Prawo karne w statutach Kazimierza Wielkiego* (Criminal law in the statutes of Casmir the Great), Warsaw, 1909, p. 67.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. H. Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," *Monumenta Nipponica*, XI, 1955, p. 27 ff.

<sup>38</sup> G. Sjoberg, *The Preindustrial City*, Glencoe, 1960, p. 133 ff.

complexity. Alongside an abolitionist policy we find, as far back as the Middle Ages, a policy of tolerance, founded on the recognition of the social or moral utility of prostitution.<sup>39</sup> It was primarily the pimps and madams who were prosecuted and punished, while the prostitutes themselves were often only constrained to isolation, having certain quarters of the city reserved to them and being forced to wear a certain symbol or to dress in a certain way. Restrictions proceeded from a significant principle of traditional societies, according to which the dress and exterior appearance of inhabitants must conform to their social status, and the urban area must reflect the difference in their prestige (neighborhoods of people practicing the same trade, groupings of the wealthy and of the poor).<sup>40</sup> The same principle was applied to other marginal categories: Jews in Europe, Moslems in Lhassa. Beggars were also required to wear a distinctive symbol, and although the intention may have been administrative or even charitable, the sign of begging, which became generalized with modern reforms in philanthropy, was none the less still humiliating and restrictive.<sup>41</sup>

With beggars, we pass to the second front of marginalism, that which touches on socio-economic structures. In this domain, beggars made up the most-tolerated category in society: they had their place in the division of labor or rather in the allotment of social functions. The same observation could be made of prostitutes, but differently from these, a certain dignity and moral merit were attributed to beggars, in both Christian and Moslem societies.

Whatever were the accepted doctrinal nuances, the distribution of alms was always considered a praiseworthy act. It offered the faithful the possibility of expiating their sins and the hope of obtaining a reward in the hereafter. Beggars were thus necessary, and their inability to work, due to a lasting infirmity, illness

<sup>39</sup> J. LeGoff, *op. cit.*, p. 52; B. Geremek, *Les Marginaux parisiens aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, 1976, p. 238 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. G. Sjöberg, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>41</sup> The evolution of attitudes with regard to poverty and beggars is the theme of an abundant literature of which a broad coverage may be found in *Etudes sur l'histoire de la pauvreté, Moyen Age - XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, under the direction of M. Mollat, I-II, Paris, 1974; J. P. Gutton, *La société et les pauvres en Europe, XVI<sup>e</sup> - XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, 1974.

or a stroke of bad luck which deprived them of the means to live which was proper to their social condition, seemed to furnish their professional qualifications. The beggars' own feeling that they had their place in society is attested to by the fact that they formed corporations, as prostitutes also did at times. None the less, even though the professional exercise of begging could be lucrative (many cases may be cited in which considerable sums were found in beggars' sacks),<sup>42</sup> this activity deprived a man of his dignity, obliged him to wear rags, to assume a repulsive, not to say inhuman, appearance: these were all means to arouse compassion, but they were also the evident signs of social degradation. In their own opinion, as in that of the public, beggars thus belonged to the dregs of society.

The beginning of the modern era saw a change in the attitude toward beggars. The change was accompanied by doctrinal controversies within the reformed religions as well as in reformed Catholicism. Through plans for restructuring assistance to the poor, in the sense of a centralization of administration of hospitals and charity, there was in reality operating a change of position with regard to beggars and the concept of alms itself.<sup>43</sup> The virtues of a life of poverty became disputable, the social function of the beggar tended to disappear, while he himself became the object of an organized assistance instead of the recipient of individual pity and generosity. Certainly, this came about because of a directive of social policy, of a general tendency, brought to realization very slowly and very incompletely, depending on the region. But this directive and this tendency nonetheless represented an essential phenomenon which touched the social as well as the mental domain: beggars began to be classed with vagrants and were treated according to the general rules of the battle against "idleness."

Vagrancy was not just one of the phenomena of marginal society, it was marginalism par excellence. In the norms and

<sup>42</sup> Cf. J. Pound, *Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England*, London, 1971, p. 31, 100, Doc. 11.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. B. Geremek, "Frycza Modrzewskiego program opieki nad ubogimi i europejskie spory wokół pauperyzmu," *Polska w świecie* (The program of Frycz Modrzewski concerning assistance to the poor and European controversies on poverty) in *Poland in the World*, Warsaw, 1972, p. 207 ff.

practice of the law, the idea of vagrancy, like that of delinquency, was very slow in being precisely defined. Long before Napoleonic legislation stipulated that it was the contents of the purse which provided the criterion according to which an itinerant was or was not considered a vagrant, we find, in the Middle Ages, an analogous practice in Flemish corporative legislation: a minimum of private resources was required for an itinerant journeyman to be hired.<sup>44</sup> In the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the modern era, criteria used to distinguish a vagrant are very vague. The fundamental and most widely accepted factor is the absence of a fixed abode which, in such circumstances, was equivalent to the absence of a defined means of livelihood, of social and family stability. In fact, vagrancy went along with a way of life which was uncertain and, in the end, asocial. A continual mobility was part of the way of life of various categories of the population which no one suspected of leading an asocial existence. This was the case of merchants, artisans, knights: pilgrimage itself was a form of itinerancy. But these migrations took place within the limits of an institutional control and a corporative organization. In the case of vagrancy, it was instead a question of an itinerancy of a particular kind, which, as defined by an Italian theologian, had no purpose and was of no use to the public.<sup>45</sup>

The idea of vagrancy is extremely wide in range. If we accept the definition of a French sociologist according to whom "the vagrant is an individual who exists without making constant use of the functional mechanisms recognized by the society of which he is a part," we must assimilate vagrancy into marginalism in its objective dimension, related to social reality. It was precisely in vagrancy that non-participation or the refusal to participate in the social bonds of a determined system was realized.

Vagrancy was treated as a crime because it transgressed the functional divisions on which social order was based. But the

<sup>44</sup> G. Espinas, *La vie urbaine de Douai au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1913, Vol. II, p. 976.

<sup>45</sup> I. B. Scanarolo, *De Visitatione carceratorum*, Rome, 1675, p. 226.

<sup>46</sup> A. Vexliard, "Vagabondages et structures sociales," *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, XXII, 1957, p. 97.

severity with which it was repressed depended on its nature, its dimensions and, primarily, on the general situation of the labor market.<sup>47</sup> Because vagrancy meant, more than anything else, non-work, non-employment, whether through lack of work or through inadaptability to a given type of work. It was at the same time a menace to public order, not only for the demoralizing example it set for those who did work, but also and especially for the fact that it was—in reality or in the opinion of the property owners—closely linked to crime, to fraud, to theft, to brigandage. Bands of brigands were themselves a product of society since they were recruited among the immigrants from the countryside obliged to lead an asocial life.<sup>48</sup> Under such circumstances marginal society assumed an aggressive character in forming groups organized for the purpose of continual violation of the established order.

In the fight against vagabondage—and more generally in the organization of a repressive system with regard to marginal groups—may be distinguished two situations as different as they are typical. The first is characterized by the defense mechanisms of the social order which considered the outlaws as a public menace. Repression in this case was directed against anonymity, in the name of the inviolability of person and property. Marginal groups were assimilated into delinquent milieus. The line which separated the vagrant without employment and without means from the thief and the brigand became blurred. To these motives were added considerations of public hygiene. Epidemics being a constant threat, all migrants, including merchants and itinerant artisans, were considered possible agents of contamination. In the case of vagabonds and the migrant poor, it was precisely their misery, their filth and their undernourishment which made one more argument in favor of their expulsion

<sup>47</sup> "Report on the legislation against vagrancy" in C. J. Ribton Turner, *A History of Vagrants and Vagrancy and Beggars and Begging*, London, 1887; A. L. Beier, "Vagrants and Social Order in Elizabethan England," *Past and Present*, No. 64, 1974, p. 3, ff. The author sees in the severity of the repression a consequence of the progressive disappearance of traditional paternalism from social conscience.

<sup>48</sup> Research on vagrancy in the 16th and 17th centuries proves that single men dominated it. This increased the fear which they aroused; cf. P. A. Slack, "Vagrants and Vagrancy in England, 1598-1664," *Ec. Hist. Review*, sec. ser. XXVII, 1974, p. 366; A. L. Beier, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

from the community. From the mid-14th century, municipal regulations concerning public hygiene established that vagrants had to leave the city at the first news of a threatened epidemic.

The second type of repression of vagrancy was related to the state of the labor market, the need for manpower. It is a situation characteristic of the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism and of the process of the primitive accumulation of capital. It is true from the very beginnings of the phenomenon.<sup>49</sup> The stratification of the rural community brought about the proletarianization of one part of the peasant population, a process which was accentuated and accelerated under the impact of crises in food supply: hunger had pushed masses of peasants toward the towns in search of momentary relief, but many of them no longer had a reason to return to their villages. Proletarianization, the depriving of the peasant of his means of production, worked equally through the means of extra-economic constraint, through mass expulsion of peasants from the lands they had cultivated up to then. The mass of proletarianized peasants thus appeared on the urban labor market, where it could become a powerful factor in the process of industrialization.<sup>50</sup> It should be observed that these two processes, the influx of "useless" people from the rural areas, and industrialization, did not always coincide, and the periodic considerable difference in the supply of and demand for manpower could persist for a long time. In any case, it was as much in the interest of the capitalist entrepreneurs as it was in that of the large landowners that these masses of unemployed should exist on the labor market. Their pressure, as a reserve work force, permitted low wages and favored the accumulation of capital, as well as increased income for the directing classes. Thus it was that the economic motivation of the modern system of repression adopted with regard to marginal members of society remained as valid in the periods when there was a large demand for manpower as it was in periods when the demand decreased.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. B. Geremek, "La popolazione marginale tra il Medioevo e l'era moderna," in *Agricoltura e sviluppo del capitalismo*, Rome, 1968, p. 201 ff.

<sup>50</sup> W. Kula, "Recherches comparatives sur la formation de la classe ouvrière," in *Première Conférence Internationale de l'Histoire Economique. Contributions*, Paris, 1960, p. 511 ff.



The composition of a marginal society as well as the mechanism of adaptation or repression used with regard to its participating groups varied with circumstances. The scope and essence itself of the idea of marginalism changed radically. Marginal groups took up, in their relations with existing socio-cultural formations, certain useful, indeed indispensable, functions, in spite of the scorn in which these functions were held. The measures of exclusion adopted toward the Jews did not prevent the Western Catholic countries' profiting from their services, in matters of credit, although such practice was not approved by Christian morality. Widespread use was also made of the metallurgical skill of the gypsy artisans who had been wandering across Europe since the 15th century. And shepherds, though they provoked a feeling of fear mixed with contempt and were excluded from village communities as much for the way of life imposed upon them by their particular work as for custom and prejudice, still found their services in demand. Thus it was for all occupations considered in various periods as ignominious, from the executioner to the tanner to the cleaner of sewers. As in the advanced societies of the twentieth century, these occupations were even in the pre-industrial era most often held by people from other countries or regions. The ethno-centric attitudes corresponded very well to the need for a division of social functions, and, in a way, they even favored its realization.

As far as the first front of marginalism is concerned, we observe close analogies among agrarian societies due to the fact that the mechanics of culture and mental attitudes which were in effect there had a long life. Marginal groups in this case played a functional or a non-functional role. Located at the lowest level of the social hierarchy, they participated very little in the life of the society, in its economic functions and in the realization of its ideology, or they had no effect on its structures. Let us reconsider the case of beggars.

Throughout the thousand years of Europe (but also in other epochs and other civilizations) beggars were a constant and enduring phenomenon. The high moral appreciation of the aid given to the poor and the weak was not only because of ethical doctrines and imperatives in the great religions—Hebrew, Christian and Moslem—but also because of the simple human sentiment

of commiseration and the high esteem in which charity was held, an esteem inherited from the most ancient societies. The documents which speak of alms distributed in a permanent manner to known and registered persons present a modest number of beggars. If we depended solely on these documents we would be led to conclude that the number of beggars did not generally surpass one percent of a town's population. However, the data on occasional distributions show the existence of enormous groups of indigents. In Florence in the 14th century the Company of Or San Michele regularly provided for 1,000 people, but in 1330 when the terms of a legacy required that alms be distributed to all beggars with the exception of the "shameful needy" and the poor recovered in hospitals, about 17,000 people presented themselves.<sup>51</sup> In Augsburg in the 15th century nearly 4,000 people benefited from the distribution of alms, but the fiscal documents list only 107 beggars in the city.<sup>52</sup> In Western Europe in the late Middle Ages we discern two categories of beggars: stationary, installed in the towns, and itinerant, going from town to town and village to village, according to the feast days, fairs and distribution of alms by the monasteries. Even though charity was recommended by the Christian religion, beggars were the object of scorn. The Italian and French theatre of the late Middle Ages covers them with ridicule, and they were often feared, being called the "enemies of mankind" and suspected of hatred for the more fortunate.<sup>53</sup>

In a different cultural zone, ancient Russia, we find an analogous situation. The body of law of 1589, in the part which deals with the sums to be paid as damages for an offense, *bezčestije*, reviews the different categories of the poor.<sup>54</sup> It first lists widows and beggars posted near monasteries or churches; then, separately

<sup>51</sup> G. Villani, *Cronaca*, X, 164; C. de Roncière, "Pauvres et Pauvreté à Florence au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle" in *Etudes sur l'histoire de la pauvreté*, Vol. II, p. 669 ff.

<sup>52</sup> E. Maschke, "Die Unterschichten der mittelalterlichen Städte Deutschlands," in *Gesellschaftliche Unterschichten in den südwestdeutschen Städten*, ed. by E. Maschke and J. Sydow, Stuttgart, 1967, p. 56; F. Hartung, "Die augsburger Zuschlagsteuer von 1575," *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft*, 19, 1895, p. 96 ff.

<sup>53</sup> B. Geremek, *Les Marginaux*, p. 208 ff.

<sup>54</sup> *Sudebniki*, XV-XVI vekov, under the direction of B. D. Grekov, Moscow-Leningrad, 1952, p. 384, art. 64-71, p. 472 ff.; cf. also I. Prizov, *Niščije na svjatoj Rusi*, Kazan, 1913.

itinerant beggars, intoning chants and laments, and finally beggars permanently installed in Moscow. To judge by the amount of damages awarded, the list follows an ascending line of hierarchy, the last group thus being considered as the best or most worthy. In all the groups, alongside the beggars, figure bastards, prostitutes and fortune tellers, for whom the amount of damages (equal, in this case, for the three groups) is very low. On the other hand, thieves, brigands, arsonists and all the different types of swindlers had no right at all to reparation. It is significant that, while according very little value to the "dignity" of beggars, the document in question nonetheless distinguishes them from swindlers and puts them above bastards, soothsayers and prostitutes. We thus find in 16th century Russia the characteristic attitude of the West in the Middle Ages, which was to treat beggars as a functional part of society. The time lag is obviously considerable. While Western Europe in the 16th century was beginning to apply a new policy toward beggars, giving them equivalent status with idlers and vagrants and confining them in obligatory workhouses, in Russia the monasteries were advised to continue to protect them.<sup>55</sup>

We observe the same analogy in the exclusion which affected artists in Eastern and Western Europe. The Church treated these "sons of Goliath"<sup>56</sup>—actors, storytellers and jugglers—with a marked hostility: Honorius Augustodunensis called them all "ministers of Satan."<sup>57</sup> It was only with great reticence and extreme slowness that the Church decided to legalize the moral situation of this category of artists, as it perceived the possibility of "taming" their activity by assigning them a role in the propagation of the Faith. This was the beginning of the theatre, born of the representation of religious scenes by amateur players. But the professional actor was long held in hostility and distrust. In Russia, wandering mountebanks, *skomorochi*, were the object of a systematic repression on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities, supported by the State. This situation existed for a

<sup>55</sup> *Sudebniki*, *op. cit.*, p. 174, 1550, p. 407, 1589; on the weekly distribution of alms by the monasteries, *Akty socialno-ekonomičeskoj istorii severo-vostočnoj Rusi*, Vol. II, Moscow, 1958, No. 249, from circa 1480.

<sup>56</sup> E. Faral, *Les jongleurs en France au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1910.

<sup>57</sup> *Patrologia latina*, Vol. 172, col. 1148.

long time; we find examples of it in the 15th and 16th centuries.<sup>58</sup> The *skomorochoi* who led a stable life were shown more tolerance. In the descriptions of villages they figure alongside the peasants.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, in western cities, established musicians and singers were tolerated and sometimes had their own corporations. There again, similar situations differ chronologically. In both cases mountebanks of all types were accused of playing a dissolute role, since they brought a profane gaiety, farces ridiculing public order, a license contrary to the moral order. It is significant that in 15th century Polish the word *skomrośni* (mountebank) was used in its meaning of immodest, indecent.<sup>60</sup>

In seeking to define the general characteristics of the marginality of vagrancy by using comparison, we should note that it arises from the fact that it developed along the frontiers of global society, a concept which we must understand in its double meaning. First the frontier, or boundary, separating inhabited territory from the vast uncultivated areas. Then, the interior boundary, on the disorganized fringe of society.

In Western Europe, the role of the first type of vagrancy was limited to mountainous regions. In the Alps and Pyrenees vagabondage became aggression, groups of vagabonds became bands of brigands.<sup>61</sup> We meet the same type of aggressive vagrancy in the mountainous regions of the Slavic countries, where brigandage was a traditional form of flight from society.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Akty socialno-ekonomičeskoj istorii*, Vol. I, No. 393, 1470, N. 652, 1504; cf. L. V. Cerepnin, *Obrazovanoje russkogo, centralizovannogo gosudarstva*, Moscow, 1960, p. 311 ff.

<sup>59</sup> *Akty socialno-ekonomičeskoj istorii*, Vol. I, No. 649; *Sudebniki*, pp. 384, 472.

<sup>60</sup> A. Brückner, *op. cit.*, p. 494.

<sup>61</sup> On banditry, in addition to the classic work of F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris, 1966, Vol. II, p. 75 ff., cf. also J. Delumeau, *Vie économique et sociale de Rome dans la seconde moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1957, Vol. II, p. 259 ff.; J. Reglà Campistol, *El bandolerismo catalan*, Barcelona, 1962; P. Vilar, *La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne*, Paris, 1962, Vol. I, p. 579 ff.; E. Hobsbawm, *The Bandits*, London.

<sup>62</sup> On brigandage in the Balkans, E. Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*, passim; on that in the Carpathians, W. Ochmański, *Zbójnictwo góralskie* (The mountain brigands), Warsaw, 1950; A. Melicherčík, *Juraj Janošik*, Prague, 1956; Z. Piasecki, *Byli chłopca, byli... Zbójnictwo karpackie - prawda historyczna, folklor i literatura polska* (The brigands of the Carpathians - Polish history, folklore and literature), Kracow, 1973.

However, in Eastern Europe vagabonds and fugitives seeking to escape feudal subjugation or pursuit by the law found their most secure refuge in the vast areas which were still uninhabited or were barely beginning to be inhabited. In these borderlands on the edge of states we see the formation of disparate groups of a very uncertain social stability, and it is there that we witness a specific fusion of territorial marginality and social marginality. The Cossacks in the Ukraine and Southeast Russia are a good illustration. We may also mention the significant fate of the Cossack groups in Poland and Russia, their utilization in war and their absorption into military structures.<sup>63</sup>

We thus come to a larger problem, that of the role played by war in the creation of vagabondage and in its social exploitation. Each war created outlaws. Each demobilization liberated men who, having developed a taste for armed conflict and brigandage, were inclined to continue the same activities outside of organized military units.<sup>64</sup> In time of war, armies were followed by masses of marauders and vagabonds. Military leaders profited from them by incorporating them into their armed forces when the need arose.<sup>65</sup> The marginals and the groups they formed were also used in a more or less open manner by antagonist groups during civil wars, local conflicts and "private" wars.

A historian of 18th-century Spanish-America described the vagabondage which extended over the frontier pasture lands, where wandering became a permanent way of life (as in the Spanish-Moslem frontier zone in the Middle Ages).<sup>66</sup> In these regions of savannas and steppes lived masses of "lost people," as they were called in 1617 by the governor of Buenos Aires, people who lived by hunting or, if necessary, by cattle rustling. Wars would again swell these vagabond groups. In the vicinity of each theatre of hostilities groups of vagabonds would install themselves, living by pillage or on mercenary pay, ready to serve

<sup>63</sup> On the Cossacks cf. especially W. Tomkiewicz, *Kozaczyzna ukrainna* (The Cossacks of the Ukraine) Lvov, 1939; G. Stökl, *Die Entstehung des Kosakentums*, Munich, 1953; Z. Wójcik, *Dziki Pola w ogniu* (Fields on Fire) Warsaw, 1961.

<sup>64</sup> J. P. Gutton, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>65</sup> D. L. Pochilevič, "Plebejskij lud/leznyje/ v dereven Reči Pospolitoj," in *Jeżegodnik po agrarnoj istorii Vostočnoj Jevropy: 1962*, Minsk, 1964, p. 168.

<sup>66</sup> M. Gongora, "Vagabondage et société pastorale en Amérique latine," *Annales E.S.C.*, 21st year, p. 159 ff.

in the war but not hesitating to undertake armed actions on their own account, creating *caudillismos* and causing anarchic wars which recall those of the Cossack rebellions.

This type of vagabondage shows us marginal groups in their aspect as a danger to public order, and it is also the argument used for adopting measures of repression against "interior" vagabondage. But in the latter case the problem of work is interposed, inscribed in the perspective of the creation of an industrial society.

In comparing the situation in Eastern and Western Europe we should take into consideration the divergence in the lines of development of the agrarian system in these two different economic zones. At the close of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th, in the countries east of the Elbe, there was a strong tendency to return to vassalage, a tendency which sought to develop the economy of the nobility founded on forced labor, to limit the personal liberty of the peasants. The prohibition of vagabondage has here another social significance. In the Teutonic state, throughout the first half of the 15th century, there were repeated orders to chase from towns and inns all "masterless" people (*loze volk*). Begging was forbidden to people who were able to work and even the introduction of forced labor was considered.<sup>67</sup> In Poland, among the statutes adopted by the Piotrków assembly, in 1496, and which refer to the limitation of the peasants' freedom of movement as well as to the battle against the flight of peasants, we find that of *De laicis seu mendicis mandicatum euntibus*<sup>68</sup> which enjoins the municipal authorities and country curates to exercise a severe control over the rights of begging, to furnish beggars with a special symbol and to oblige all able-bodied men to perform useful work or to participate in the works of fortification. This law may be compared to the analogous legislation directed against vagrancy in France or in England, but what makes it different is, specifically, the context in which it is found. The law concerning beggars is

<sup>67</sup> B. Geremek, "Problem sily roboczej w Prusach w pierwszej polowie XV w." (The problem of manpower in Prussia, in the first half of the 15th century), *Przegląd Historyczny*, XLVIII, 1957.

<sup>68</sup> *Volumina legum*, Vol. I, p. 267.

accompanied in the statutes of Piotrków by the prohibition of migration for economic reasons from Masowie to Prussia or Silesia, and from village to town.<sup>69</sup> The prohibition primarily concerns, along with the poor peasant class, agricultural journeymen. In the case of migration from farms to towns, the statute specifies that it applies to people not having their own domicile and living on premises rented by the week. In these circumstances, the repression had for its aim the assurance of cheap manpower for the manorial economy.<sup>70</sup> The same objective is found west of the Elbe, but there it is in a quite different perspective of development. In the West, the low cost of manpower became an important factor in the early accumulation of capital, while in the East it was an element of consolidation of the manorial economy. The essential difference is also seen on the social plane. In Western Europe the repression of vagabondage was aimed at creating a pressure on the labor market, so as to increase the supply of manpower. In Eastern Europe it tended primarily to limit the freedom of movement of the peasants. Men without masters were disturbing, even though they were exploited by the nobility. In 17th-century Russia, they were treated as tramps, and it is among them that fugitive peasants were most often found. But the perspective which is most frequently seen in individual biographies of these vagrant journeymen is their incorporation into the system of feudal dependence, which offered them the possibility of a stable livelihood and the foundation of a family.<sup>71</sup>

In Poland<sup>72</sup> and Russia<sup>73</sup> during the 16th and 17th centuries the fundamental motive for repressive measures against men without masters was related to the norms of social order. Men without masters went against the principles of the system of subjugation and dependence of the peasants, they made up a "dangerous" group which was suspected of thievery and banditry.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 267; cf. J. Gierowski, *Kartki z rodowodu biedoty wiejskiej* (A contribution to the genealogy of peasant poverty), Warsaw, 1951, p. 21 ff.

<sup>70</sup> S. Sreniowski, *Zbiegostwo chłopów w dawnej Polsce* (The flight of peasants from ancient Poland), p. 81.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. M. A. Djakonov, *op. cit.*, p. 109 ff.

<sup>72</sup> S. Grodziski, *op. cit.*, p. 63 ff.

<sup>73</sup> B. D. Grekov, *Chłopi na Rusi* (Peasants in Russia), Vol. I, Warsaw, 1955, p. 164.

The *voivode* of Rawa, Anzelm Gostomski, explicitly mentioned the first of these dangers: the “vagabonds must be bound as soon as they appear, because they incite the peasants to abandon the village and fall in with low company.”<sup>74</sup> With the generalization of peasant subjugation, men without masters saw themselves given the same status as fugitive peasants. The measures taken against them by the nobility were very characteristic. First, towns were obliged to close their gates before these men without masters, who liked to pass the winter in town, hiring themselves out, on occasion, for a minimal wage or, simply, food. At the same time the measures endeavored to stabilize them by hiring them for a long period, a procedure which ended in making the hired worker a subject and tying the former vagabond to the soil.<sup>75</sup>

The fact is that the economy of the nobility had great need of these periodic workers. In a system where economic expansion was mainly effected by an increase in manpower, it was necessary to have recourse to the employment of every available man, without thinking too much about his origin. This was also true when it was a question of the expansion into virgin land or the extension of mining and other branches of production. Large groups of *gulaścije*—extremely large, to judge from the number of plague victims in 1692 in the town of Astrakhan alone—were employed on lands situated at the mouth of the Volga.<sup>76</sup> People came there from all corners of Russia, either legally or having fled from their villages, looking for a freer life and a better existence. One could distinguish three categories among the *gulaścije*: men without masters, men having only temporarily left their native villages and fugitive peasants.<sup>77</sup> But there also, most often this type of enfranchisement was only an episode

<sup>74</sup> A. Gostomski, *Gospodarstwo* (Exploitation), prepared by S. Inglot, Wrocław, 1951, p. 24.

<sup>75</sup> *Volumina legum*, Vol. VI, p. 547 (1632); W. Dworzaczek “*Dubrowolne*” *poddánstwo chłpów w Polsce*, (The “voluntary” subjugation of the peasants in Poland), Warsaw, 1952, p. 37.

<sup>76</sup> I. V. Stepanov, “*Gulaścije-rabotnyje ljudi na Povolže v XVII v.*,” *Istoričeskije Zapiski*, 36, 1951, p. 142 ff.; in the mid-eighteenth century the number of *gulaścije* in these territories was estimated at almost one million, including sailors and fishermen.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.



in the life of the people concerned—even if it lasted at times for decades—before their eventual stabilization through engagement in bonds of subjection or servitude.<sup>78</sup>

In the 18th century the situation in this European zone of development radically changed.<sup>79</sup> Legislation now tended to define the types of existence of these categories and the means of their employment, to create also a pressure which would make them function on the labor market. It is in fact an analogous process to that which happened in the Western zone in the first centuries of the modern era. In one case as in the other the genesis of vagrancy was the same. It was created by the decomposition of feudal relationships, the deepening of the social and economic differentiation in the rural areas, the crisis of the artisans. It was the expression and the consequence of the passage of masses of people from the agricultural sector to the non-agricultural sector, a transition in the course of which they lost the direct control of the means of production and were obliged to hire themselves out. In the course of this passage, which was a painful procedure, as much on the individual level as on the collective, migrants lost their social position, the support they received from the traditional ties of the local community. They grouped in mass inside the towns, which were unable to exercise a control over them, or outside the town gates. The towns were unable to give them work, to propose a stable existence which was attractive enough and sufficiently well-paid that the passage from one formation to the other would not bring with it crowds of vagabonds who found their way of life in continual movement from locality to locality.

Traditional crafts were not able to absorb these masses of unqualified people, precisely because their installation in town required from them qualifications or resources. On the other hand, rural industry, fed by a system of *mises de fonds*, the *Verlagsystem*, was able to employ them, thus putting a brake on the exodus of people from the country. In this case, instead

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>79</sup> The best presentation of this change is still that of Nina Assodobraj, *op. cit.*

<sup>80</sup> M. Francić, *op. cit.*, p. 116 ff. This author verifies that at the end of the 18th century they made up half the population of urban Kracow.

of men, it was industry which moved. We see this in England and Holland during the 16th and 17th centuries. Capitalistic manufacture and plants had no qualification barriers; the mass of former producers, proletarianized peasants and artisans, thus constituted a vast reservoir of labor for industry.

The socio-psychological barriers remained. The rhythm of urban life was foreign to the newcomers from the country,<sup>81</sup> the tissue of social ties was completely different, social life was imprinted with anonymity. Industrial labor, if it did not require specific qualifications, nonetheless implied adaptation to a controlled work performed during fixed hours. The assimilation of the former peasants by the medieval town occurred slowly, gradually, through mechanisms of adaptation such as apprenticeship, living with a town family, and so on. Industrialization, which had brought a massive influx of rural population into the cities had not, however, created such mechanisms. At the beginning, they were replaced by measures of constraint;<sup>82</sup> a police discipline in the organization of vast groups of the poor, unadapted to industrial work, was part of the social cost of the birth of capitalism.

Between the European countries on the way to industrialization and the countries of the agricultural zone east of the Elbe, we see, at the beginning of the modern era, a radical divergence in the treatment of marginal socio-economic groups. On one hand, repression struck the vagrant, the idle, the swindler, in the name of the work ethic, for the need of the labor market. On the other, it was a question of keeping intact the subjugation of the peasant as an essential part of the social system, and, consequently, the repression was directed against the fugitive peasant. But if we make allowances, in a comparative analysis, for the differences in time, we find on both sides of the Elbe marked analogies in the social processes accompanying the passage from feudalism to capitalism.

Here could be added a third element of comparison: the social aspects of contemporary industrialization in the developing

<sup>81</sup> Cf. W. E. Moore, *Man, Time and Society*, New York, 1963.

<sup>82</sup> W. E. Moore, *Industrialization and Labour*, Ithaca (New York), 1963.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, passim; *idem*, *The Impact of Industry*, New York, 1965, p. 38 ff.; W. Kula, *op. cit.*, p. 519 ff.

countries of today, also carried out in conditions of a slow decomposition of traditional society. We find a number of well-known phenomena: inadaptability of the migrants from the agrarian communities to industrial labor, formation of a mass of people on the margins of society. But, in these circumstances, the assimilation of this mass by the industrial society runs up against the barrier of qualification,<sup>84</sup> because in the 20th century industrialization operates at the outset at a very elevated technological level. This circumstance has a specific repercussion on the labor market of these countries: its evolution operates at two different levels, that of qualified workers and that of unqualified workers.<sup>85</sup> The marginal mass does not even take on the function of the "reserve army" of capitalistic industry and not finding a possibility to adapt itself to an industrial society, it installs itself outside of it. Thus, this third comparative picture, while showing the similarity of the genesis of certain processes and their socio-psychological mechanisms, also shows the essential difference in the development and situation: time has already modified the basic facts of the problem.

<sup>84</sup> This difference is rediscussed by E. Hobsbawm, "La marginalidad social en la historia de la industrialización europea," *Revista Latino-americana de Sociología*, 1969, No. 2, p. 237 ff.

<sup>85</sup> R. U. Miller, "La théorie de la main-d'oeuvre excédentaire", *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Etudes Sociales*, 8, 1971, p. 241 ff.