

VOLUME I

# Everyman in Europe

SECOND EDITION

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THE  
PREINDUSTRIAL  
MILLENNIA  
—

ALLAN  
MITCHELL

ISTVAN  
DEAK

ESSAYS IN SOCIAL HISTORY

— SECOND —  
EDITION

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# EVERYMAN IN EUROPE

ESSAYS IN SOCIAL HISTORY

*Volume 1 — The Preindustrial Millennia*

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## PREFACE

History books ordinarily record major events in a way that we learn not only what happened, and when, but also why. No one would deny that these are important things to know, and few would dispute that it is a necessary and proper function of historians to be concerned with the impact of such events. Yet there has been for some time a realization among professional historians, as well as among students, that history needs to be something more than an analysis of important changes in the conduct of our lives. These changes are brought about by outstanding individuals, by elite groups, or by the faceless masses descending in the streets or marching on the battlefields. If we are really to understand the past, then we ought to know much more about the majority of humankind, about the individuals who make up the faceless masses, about people who endured rather than instigated the events we read about in the books. It is the special concern, then, of this book to learn how most people lived rather than how a few acted.

Most men and women who populate this world have always been poor and uneducated. This is not to say that they have been altogether powerless and inarticulate. What it does mean is that they have tended to express themselves and their interests in social groups, of one sort or another, rather than as individuals. To comprehend their behavior it is therefore more useful to think in terms of social types than of personalities. In the pages that follow, proper names will consequently figure infrequently. As important as they are, it is not Pericles, Julius Caesar, Henry VIII, and Napoleon who stand here in the foreground; rather, it is the peasant, the worker, the woman, and the youth. In short, our chief protagonist is Everyman.

By the careful selection of articles and excerpts we have attempted to trace the changing circumstances and activities of ordinary people from Greek civilization to the present time. Our focus is Europe, and we have attempted to define Europe as broadly as possible, drawing our examples from Ireland to Russia. Too often Europe is conceived largely in terms of what is most familiar to us and to the majority of Western historians: Britain and France. By giving central and eastern Europe their due we hope to redress the balance and to suggest a truer picture of European society.

The attentive reader will quickly perceive that generalizations about Everyman in one area of Europe at a given time are not readily applicable to other areas and other times. Can we nonetheless say that the various social types under consideration have something in common? Is there any constant factor among so many people in such a multitude of times and places? If so, it is certainly *not* that they have been deaf and dumb throughout European history. To the contrary, in their own way they have often and unmistakably expressed enthusiasm, or dissatisfaction, or just indifference. Even the ostensibly most random forms of violence and deviant modes of behavior have sometimes spoken eloquently as to the character of European society. Yet Everyman has hardly been the master of his own fate, and this has perhaps been the salient characteristic of most people all along: they usually take rather than give orders. They do not command; they obey—or at least they are expected to do so.

Is this, then, a history of the oppressed? That is a question that readers must finally answer for themselves. There is certainly much evidence to support an affirmative reply. Still readers cannot remain unaware of the relativity of such a notion as “oppression.” What degree of consciousness of their deprived social status must oppressed people attain before they want to change it? What degree of liberty is required in order to escape oppression? These are not simple issues, and they are not much clarified by dogmatic assertions of whatever political persuasion. The historian is always on the side of complexity; the dogmatist will therefore find little support here for his terrible simplifications.

We have thus kept two objectives in view: to select essays that are adequate to the difficulty of the subject rather than to choose brief and random fragments, and to achieve a sense of variety by drawing on a broad sample of historical techniques. Readers should gain the altogether legitimate impression that social history is far from becoming a monolithic discipline that represents a fixed consensus of opinion or approach. Only a moribund intellectual enterprise might present such uniformity, and social history, we believe, is still in its adolescence.

The notion that European society was transformed in modern times by an “industrial revolution” need not be accepted without reservation. In the first place, the term “revolution” implies a rapid and thorough change, whereas the development of an industrial society in Europe has been slow, uneven, and incomplete. The transformation was, moreover, not exclusively a matter of industry: one must also take into account demographic, agricultural, and technological innovations of considerable magnitude and complexity. To separate cause from effect, or symptom from correlation, is no simple task.

Another preliminary word of caution: we are perhaps unduly conditioned to believe that history consists of winners and losers. Thus, we may be inclined, without a flicker of protest, to accept the assertion that modern times were marked by the “triumph” of the bourgeoisie. Yet we would do well to recall that the results of a protracted social evolution are seldom to be measured by box scores or body counts, as if history were an athletic contest or a formal military engagement. Even if we could derive a precise definition of “bourgeois”—which would hardly hold for the entire European continent—we cannot be quite certain what “to win” really means in social terms. We know only that industrialization has meant an important alteration in the quality of life for most Europeans. A careful study of the essays in this volume should enrich our understanding of that complex phenomenon.

The preparation of this volume, as well as the second one, was greatly facilitated by the superb editorial care of Pieter M. Judson and John S. Micgiel, doctoral candidates in history at Columbia University.

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—PART—

I

COMMON PEOPLE  
IN  
CLASSICAL TIMES

The shores of the Mediterranean formed the crucible of European civilization. Other great cultures had of course existed before that of the Greeks and Romans. We might search back to ancient China or India, to the various societies of Mesopotamia and Palestine, or to Egypt. But it is classical Greece to which we first turn in order to discover those social forms that were to be enduringly significant in the evolution of Europe. Chronologically, what we consider here as the classical age stretches from the Greek poet Homer's time, about 700 B.C., to the sacking of Rome by invading bands of Visigoths just after 400 A.D. Eleven centuries may seem an unimaginably long span of years, and yet the pace of social change, judged by our present standards, was then exceedingly slow.

The Mediterranean world of antiquity possessed several unifying elements: the sea, the moderate climate, the poverty, and consequently the necessity of scratching out a meager living, or tending small herds, or plying some primitive craft. Such was the lot of a society in which only a very few were in any sense wealthy and many remained not only wretchedly poor but enslaved as well. This was true of the tiny city-states of Greece. It continued to characterize the sprawling possessions of the Roman Empire, which eventually ringed the entire Mediterranean and stretched northward into the Continent and to the British Isles.

Rome drew heavily on the intellectual resources of Greece, and for many reasons regarded Athens as the most advanced exemplar of Greek civilization. Much more than rival Sparta, Athens contained a cosmopolitan, urbane, commercial population. Social stratification there was somewhat less rigid than elsewhere at the time, and the Athenian state was more susceptible to social reform. If democracy was a Greek word, however, so was aristocracy. We can think of Athenian society as relatively progressive, but we need not exaggerate the freedom or comfort of the common people. The same was largely true of Rome. The Roman Empire reached new heights of political and military power, but it did not represent any extraordinary advance in what we might call civil rights. As in ancient Greece, for example, slaves were employed by the Romans to perform menial tasks in harvesting olives and grapes or as household servants. They were a substratum of society upon which the entire civilization rested.

Women must also be reckoned among the underprivileged of classical culture. It was, as we shall find, not necessarily an advantage for females to live in a town rather than a village or a rural cottage. Nor was the Roman woman significantly better off than her earlier Greek counterpart. Both in Greece and Rome, men conducted business, fought wars, and controlled politics. Women were thought and kept inferior. Life was organized for the edification, predilection, and competition of males. They met in public, whereas women were usually confined to their quarters or at least to a closely circumscribed existence that left little possibility for self-realization or fulfillment.

We begin, then, with a society in many ways very different from our own. Does that mean that the study of Greece and Rome is without relevance for us? Not, the answer must be, if we realize that what we are is the distant result of the way they were.



## SLAVES AND LABORERS

For those of us now living in the twentieth century it is difficult to imagine the circumstances and attitudes of a society in which slave labor was a commonplace. Yet Greek and Roman civilizations both utilized and accepted slavery as a matter of course. Not that slavery altogether escaped criticism from certain intellectuals and protest from some of the slaves themselves; rather, it was a part of everyday life, and those societies could scarcely have existed without it. The articles that follow illustrate how little the institution of slavery actually changed from the fourth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. They also raise some nagging questions. To what extent can it be said that slavery was "fundamental" to classical civilization? What proportion of the population was regarded and treated as chattel? What social function did the slaves perform? What possibilities existed for their escape from the status of a slave?

*Gustave Glotz* describes the practice of slavery in Greece and attempts to answer some elementary queries. How were slaves recruited? What rights and protection did they have? What roles did they perform? His analysis provides an excellent introduction to the subject.

*Moses I. Finley* writes with a more polemical bite. He argues that Greek society and economy were founded on the institutionalized exploitation of slavery. He examines the fragmentary evidence of the mentality of slaves, both those who willingly submitted and those who attempted to escape. And he suggests why less attention ought to be paid to the alleged political effect of slavery and more to its social function.

Peter A. Brunt confirms that Roman attitudes towards slave labor hardly differed from Greek attitudes. He shows how the practice of slavery was altered only very slowly in a society that remained overwhelmingly agricultural. Unlike Finley, Brunt raises the question of morality and finds it worthwhile to ask whether slavery affected the decline and collapse of classical civilization.

Careful readers will easily note the variation of scholarly opinion on these issues. But more important, they should gain some impression of how deeply rooted in Western society is the notion that some persons are by birth inferior to others, an assumption that has survived in one form or another well into modern times and has not disappeared up to the present day.

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—GUSTAVE GLOTZ—

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## THE GREEK SLAVES

In the eyes of the Greek no healthy, lasting society could dispense with slaves. To devote his forces and intelligence to the city, the citizen must be relieved of domestic occupations and manual labour. Slavery was a necessary institution. That it might be a legal institution there must be creatures made for servitude by a natural inferiority. These born slaves existed; they were the barbarians. So the life of the city necessitated and justified slavery. No one would see, neither philosopher nor common man, that the rights invoked were merely wants.

### 1. THE RECRUITING AND CONDITION OF THE SLAVES

Slavery came from three sources—birth, war, and judicial condemnation.

The slaves “born in the house” were not very numerous. In the deeds of manumission found at Delphi, out of 841 slaves freed there are 217 of this class; and it should be noted that a master was more willing to free servants whom he

From Gustave Glotz, *Ancient Greece at Work: An Economic History of Greece from the Homeric Period to the Roman Conquest*, trans. M. R. Dobie (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1926), pp. 192-94, 195-96, 198-99, 200-208, by permission of the publisher.

had known since their childhood. The reason was that the breeding of human livestock was not a good speculation. Most of the newborn infants were killed or exposed; those who had the most chance of surviving were those who owed their birth to a caprice of the master.

The vast majority of slaves came from war. After a pitched battle those prisoners who could not buy their freedom were sold; after the assault of a city the men were put to the sword and the women and children divided among the victors by lot. To barbarians these laws were applied in all their brutality; after the Eurymedon campaign Cimon threw more than twenty thousand prisoners on the market. Towards Greeks certain scruples were felt, and neutral public opinion made mercy necessary. Furthermore, in barbarian countries slave-raiding was always allowed, and occasionally a little poaching was done on Greek soil. Wherever the power of the State did not make itself felt with energy, in Thessaly, in Ætolia, brigands and pirates acted as purveyors to the dealers in men.

Lastly, private law itself contributed to the recruiting of slaves. Athens caused individual liberty to be respected in almost all circumstances, but elsewhere subordination easily became servitude. Even in philanthropical Athens the father had a right to expose his children, and newborn infants were hardly ever picked up on roads and public places except to be made into slaves. In most cities a father could get rid even of the children whom he had brought up (a horrible temptation in time of need); Athens forbade this abominable traffic, but authorised the sale of a guilty daughter. The insolvent debtor fell into the power of his creditor, with his wife and children; Athens almost alone forbade loans on the person. Everywhere the State, arrogating to itself the right which it allowed to individuals, maintained penal slavery in the code of law; Athens confined this to the Metic who usurped the rank of citizen, but most cities made much use of it, and some made civic degradation or *atimia* an ingenious preliminary to slavery.

In general, most slaves came into their master's house by way of purchase. They were of very varied origins. Few were Greeks; these were often wastrels, criminals sold abroad. In 415 one set of sixteen slaves was composed of five Thracians, three Carians, two Syrians, two Illyrians, one Scythian, one Cholcidian, one Lydian, and one Maltese. To meet the increasing demand the recruiters gradually extended their field of operation, and procured Bastarnæ and Sarmatians, Persians and Arabs, Egyptians and Libyans. In origin the slaves were more or less equally distributed between the rude countries of the North and the more civilized East. In other words, the Greeks had almost as much need of strong arms for the mines and workshops as of pliant natures and quick wits for domestic service and business.

So the slave trade was very busy in Greece. Dealers rushed after the armies or entered into relations with the pirates. They operated chiefly in the neighbourhood of the barbarian lands. Chios, Ephesos, Byzantion, and Thessaly,

these were the great markets of supply. The recruiters sometimes formed a syndicate covering a district. The importers sent almost all the goods to Attica. A monthly fair was held on the Agora of Athens. Part of the cargoes was sent to Sunion for the mines. The surplus of imports was re-embarked for Sicily. So Athens was the centre of this business. The slave-dealers there were very rich; they ordered their bust from the fashionable sculptor, and would one day be sufficiently powerful to give financial backing to a revolution. . . .

The ideas of the Greeks on the necessity and lawfulness of slavery determined the legal status of the slave. He was a living instrument. He belonged to another man, he was his chattel. But this chattel was alive and had a soul. According as the master's right was absolute and uncompromising, or took into account the exceptional nature of this kind of property, there were notable differences in law, and still more in practice; for we can hardly say that slavery had a legal position in the city; it was subject to household law, which the master interpreted according to his own ideas.

On principle the slave had no personality. He had no real name of his own. If two slaves cohabited this union, though tolerated, was not a marriage. Their issue was merely an increase in livestock which belonged to the owner of the woman. Not being a person, the slave had not the free disposal of his body. He might be made over to another or confiscated; he might become immovable property through the use to which he was put. Being property himself, he was incapable of exercising the right of property. He was allowed to save his earnings; sometimes he plied his trade outside and had the use of part of his salary; he might even make a fortune and show off his wealth. But his enjoyment of his property always depended on a permission which might be recalled. In law the master's authority came between the legally disqualified slave and third parties, whether they were private individuals or representatives of the State. The slave could not lodge an accusation without the master. But his responsibility also was very limited. He was covered by the orders which he had received. Since he owned nothing in law, he could not be subjected to pecuniary penalties; for him there was, instead, the whip. If a sentence for damages was given, it fell on the master; he paid the damages, or else gave up the slave altogether by noxal surrender.

The interest of the master was the slave's only safeguard. For Aristotle the slave is an instrument, and "one must take care of the instrument in the measure which the work requires." If a man has a good servant he will be wise to feed and dress him better, to allow him rest, to let him form a family, and to hold out a prospect of the supreme reward, freedom. Plato is hard enough on the "brute" who revolts against a natural inequality; but such a difficult piece of property must be treated well, "for our own advantage rather than for his."

One might suppose that in societies in which the law kept down the slaves with implacable logic, and philosophy sought no alleviation of their lot but in a better utilization of their labour, nothing could lighten the weight of their chains.

Yet the Athenian people had the merit of introducing humane considerations into its law and improving the condition of the slaves. It acted in obedience to economic and political necessities. In a country where there were many slaves, public safety required that they should not be kept in a permanent state of exasperation. But above all the democratic idea had its own special virtue, that thoughtful tenderness for the humble which is designated by the essentially Athenian word "philanthropy." From the citizens this idea went on to shed its blessing on those who had not the right of citizenship, nor any right at all. Aristotle observes contemptuously that "democracy is adapted to the anarchy of slaves"; but, an Athenian retorts, "it was not for the slaves that the lawgiver felt so much concern, . . . he considered that the man who in a democracy does outrage to anybody whomsoever is not fit to take part in civic life." So the slaves had a better time in Athens than in any other city, and it was said that they enjoyed there an amount of freedom which the poor citizens of many an oligarchic State might have envied them. . . .

. . . These features . . . give a picture which is no doubt too idyllic. Beneath the few slaves who were on familiar terms with their masters there were thousands of squalid creatures vegetating, especially in the mines, fed just enough to prevent their strength from diminishing, and resting from work only when they were beaten. We cannot forget that the slaves of the Athenians used to flee to Megara, that the appearance of the Spartans was for the workers of Laurion the signal for desertion in a mass, and that in Attica itself many wretches bore on their forehead the brand of the runaway. But it is something that, in a realistic theatre, we hear slaves uttering praises of their masters.

## 2. SLAVE LABOUR

It would be very interesting to be certain of the number of slaves in the various cities of Greece. We hear of 470,000 slaves in Ægina, of 460,000 in Corinth, of 400,000 in Athens. The exaggeration is obvious. It may at least be taken as a rule that in the commercial and manufacturing cities the slave population was greater than the free. On the other hand, those districts which still lived by agriculture and stock-breeding had few slaves. When in the middle of the fourth century a landowner in Phocis had a thousand there was an outcry. Slavery, then, appears in Greece as a concomitant of trade and industry, varying according to their development. At the same points, once in Ionia, now on the Saronic Gulf, economic life and slave labour were concentrated. . . .

The whole of Greece needed slaves for domestic service. Almost all the work of providing food was done by the women. The maidservants made the bread and did the cooking. For big dinners special dishes were ordered from professional cooks, or else one of these artists was engaged for the day; and one or two great personages had a chef of their own. We hear of the chef of Alcibiades; and

the story goes that the cook of Demetrios of Phaleron made enough in two years to buy three tenement houses. Round about the master cook there was a busy staff of slaves, scullions, bakers, and pastry cooks.

The clothing of the family was also made at home. Under the eye of their mistress the slave girls spun, wove, and embroidered. Their chief occupations were the manufacture of materials and sewing; that is why, once free, they generally lived by the textile industry.

Women in easy circumstances had several slaves in their service, and even the humblest always had one. The speeches of the orators give us some typical examples. Ciron, a landowner with a fortune of more than twenty-thousand drachmas, had three domestics. An honest farmer, whose wife had one single child, kept a cook (a woman), a chambermaid, and a nurse maid. The ordinary middle-class townsman had a serving man and women of two classes, those of the ground floor, who did the house work, and those of the first floor, who made the clothes. Diogenes Laertios takes us into the homes of the philosophers. Plato freed a woman in his will and left four slaves to his heirs. Aristotle, who found that with too many servants it was hard to organise work, nevertheless had nine slaves, not including children. Theophrastos, too, had nine. Straton's will mentioned seven, and Lycon's twelve. In sum, a man of average fortune employed in his house from three to twelve slaves of the two sexes. But three was on the small side. There were families in very difficult circumstances who could not do with less. Stephanos, who lived on his wits with his concubine and three children, placed at the disposal of this household a male slave and two servant women. In the *Plutos* of Aristophanes, when poor old Chremylos groans over his wretched lot he confides his woes in his serving man. People used to point out, as "characters," Diogenes, who did not need any one to keep his tub in order, Hippias, who made his own clothes and shoes, and Chrysippos, who took Odysseus for a model in the art of fending for himself.

The rich were obliged by the progress of luxury to live in great style, with chambermaids, wet-nurses, dry-nurses, housekeepers, lady's maids, valets, footmen, coachmen, grooms, and pedagogues. "Use slaves like the members of the body, one for each purpose." The precept comes from a philosopher. The division of labour which it proclaims produced in very wealthy families an extreme diversity of servile functions. That servants might be well trained they were sent to take lessons at the school of housekeeping or from a certificated master in the culinary art.

In houses with a large domestic staff it was found necessary to place a trustworthy person over them. Pericles had a steward who managed his estates and had charge of the personnel. Big landowners even had a female housekeeper in addition to the steward. Such a post was well suited to slaves; it was easy to get back from them anything which they should take improperly. For this very reason citizens looked down on it. Eutheros, to whom Socrates suggests this means of earning a living, thanks him for nothing. It was an important and