

To understand the significance which this group took on for those historians writing about them since 1970, we have to look at the British Communist Party Historians' Group and the programme which they developed for themselves between 1946 and 1956, when many of them left the party.<sup>8</sup> Christopher Hill and A. L. Morton were prominent in that group, as were E. P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, Donna Torr and Rodney Hilton. Their two goals were, first, to demonstrate that there existed a long tradition in British history whereby the people sought to make their own history, rather than remaining a passive screen on which dominant social groups left an impress shaping that history, and, secondly, that Britain's high cultural tradition was not separable from these concerns; hence Hill on Milton, Morton on Blake, and Thompson on Morris.

These issues remained to the fore in their work after their split with the party. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Classes* is, in large part, an attempt to demonstrate that the English working classes made themselves; always struggled to control their own destiny and cultural forms. Similarly, Hill's *World Turned Upside Down* is about the attempt to control the flux of the English Revolution from below. Three further influences bore on this work: Gramsci's notion of the hegemony of the dominant classes as being expressed in all available forms, including the internalisation of values by the subordinate classes— notions of place, appropriate role, decency, modesty and so forth; secondly, Herbert Marcuse's idea, and the contribution of the Frankfurt school to seventies revolutionary theory, that there could be no true revolution without the casting aside of all forms of repression. Inverting Lenin, permissiveness was a revolutionary stance. A third influence was the ferment of revolutionary liberation in 1968 in the capitals and on the campuses of the West and in the streets of Prague. The year itself, 1968, came to symbolise revolutionary spontaneity, direct action and authenticity. When it came, the true revolution could come without programmes, almost without ideology.

In this framework, the English Revolution of Hampden, Cromwell and Milton took on new meaning. The groups or classes who came to power in the English Revolution, the men of property brought with them the protestant ethic, a discipline for themselves and a means of disciplining the under classes. Sin and hell internalised control on behalf of the dominant classes; the more successfully they were internalised, drummed into the lower orders, the more marginal could the means of overt physical coercion remain. Sin and hell made a police state and a standing army unnecessary. They made 'civilised' repression possible and saved the propertied taxpayer money.