

Editorial Foreword

SOCIAL CONVERGENCE. One of the clearest and most widely accepted propositions to emerge from the general interest in modernization is the theory of convergence, the view that socialist and capitalist societies, despite their differences, are becoming more similar. Such a conversion would be grist for many millers—typologists of modernization, of course, but also Cassandras crying out against technology like Jacques Ellul (discussed by Sklair, 13:2), and Marxists, too. In this issue, however, Reinhard Skinner subjects the idea of convergence to a critique as stinging as modernization itself has recently received. And those who have followed that debate will not be surprised to find the case for convergence also tarred with ethnocentrism. Ramesh Mishra takes a different tack, subjecting the idea of convergence to judicious test in terms of welfare policies in Great Britain and the Soviet Union (Remlinger compared social security programs in the U.S.S.R. and the United States in 4:1). His conclusion gives restrained support to the idea of limited convergence, not so much because the highways of development are destined to merge as because Britain has taken a left turn. Although they begin from very different viewpoints, both authors give ideology a central place in shaping social policy and both consider it a source of divergence. In these articles and their concluding discussion they move to issues quite different from those raised earlier by Bendix (9:3) and Weinberg (11:1).

REVIEW ESSAYS. Three review essays take up distinct but strikingly related questions. For readers of this issue of *CSSH*, problems of convergence will echo through Solomon Levine's discussion of two books on social structure in industrial Japan; and the differences of method he highlights, like the questions of method raised by Marvin Becker in his review of a book on medieval communes in Italy, turn out to be very much the ones in question in Adrian Kuzminski's deft and provocative essay.

PEASANTS AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION. The three articles complete the series introduced in the previous number.