MARXISM AND BUREAUCRACY

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at the
Australian National University
STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis has not already been accepted for any degree. It is the result of my own independent investigation, and all authorities and sources which have been consulted are acknowledged in the bibliography and in the notes.

Signed: [Signature]
Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the career of a concept within a tradition of thought which combines social and political theory and revolutionary ideology. The concept is 'bureaucracy'; the tradition is revolutionary Marxism. The thesis attempts to explore the role and importance of the concept in the writings of several writers who stand at central and strategic points in the development of Marxist reflection on bureaucracy, and to discuss the adequacy and utility of these writers' analyses of what they take 'bureaucracy' to be.

Marxists were not the only thinkers, nor were they the first, to discuss the role of bureaucracy in contemporary and future societies. The thesis has therefore considered the thoughts of a number of pre- and non-Marxists. In particular, the writings of two thinkers who gave special attention to the social and political consequences of administrative imperatives - Henri Saint-Simon and Max Weber - have proved particularly illuminating. Saint-Simon bequeathed to, or at least shared with Marxists, many important ideas and predictions which relate to our theme. Weber was both profoundly influenced by Marxist social theory, and, with regard to bureaucracy, profoundly critical of revolutionary Marxism. In this century the theories and prophecies of both writers, as of Marxists themselves, have been put to test.

The ideas discussed here have been concerned with, and greatly affected and at times challenged by, economic, social and political developments in the past two centuries, and in particular by the course and fate of the first successful Marxist-led revolution, the Russian Revolution of 1917. The thesis has sought to take these developments, and their practical and theoretical consequences, into account.
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This thesis has been as much part of the life of my wife, Jocelyn Krygier, as it has of mine. She has been subjected to every version of every chapter, and has been a sharp but gentle critic of them all. My personal and intellectual debts to her, as to my parents, are too deep and broad to be easily or adequately expressed. It is fortunate for me that accounts have never been kept.

In my three rewarding years as a Research Scholar in the History of Ideas Unit, I learnt a great deal from seminar papers given by staff and visitors in the Research School of Social Sciences, and from extremely generous and useful comments on, and criticism of, papers which I delivered at the Unit's seminars. Among those from whom I learnt, I am particularly grateful to Professor S.N. Eisenstadt, Professor Iring Fetscher, Dr Baruch
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While I was at the A.N.U., Mrs Vibeke Wetselaar and Mrs Dianne Mitchell typed and re-typed draft chapters of this thesis and kept up my occasionally flagging spirits with jokes and coffee. In Sydney these jobs have been willingly taken over, and the final version typed, by Miss Margaret O'Neill and Mrs Mary Stefanidaki.
Preface

This thesis grew out of an interest in problems which the existence and growth of modern bureaucratic structures pose for social and political theory generally, and for Marxism in particular. It seemed to me when I began the thesis, and it still seems to me, that the role in contemporary societies of huge administrative organizations employing millions of trained staff presented special difficulties for those who believed in the possibility of totally transforming and transcending existing administrative arrangements. I was curious to find how revolutionary Marxists regarded such problems and how they coped with them.

There have been many Marxists and I have not sought to deal with them all. Rather, I have concentrated on thinkers who stand at what might be called nodal points in the growth of Marxist reflection on bureaucracy: nodal in the botanical sense of points on a stem from which leaves spring. The ideas of these thinkers, the epochs at which, and the events about which, they wrote, have been of fundamental importance in shaping modern thought about, and attitudes to, bureaucracy. Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and the new class theorists, wrote the works discussed here at three strategic points in the career of 'bureaucracy' within Marxism: before, during and after the first successful revolution led by Marxists. Marx provided later Marxists with an analysis and condemnation of existing society, and with reasons to believe that it would be replaced by one in which 'bureaucracy' would cease to plague men's lives: 'governmental functions' would be 'transformed into simple administrative functions' and functionaries would no longer be 'bureaucrats'. Lenin, who was more responsible than anyone else
for the Bolsheviks' success in seizing state power, had little time after 1917 for prophecy. However, he led a regime in which at first the elimination, and then the control, of bureaucracy were claimed to be of central importance. One of his most immediate and pressing concerns was to try to find the proper staff and forms of organization with which to administer post-revolutionary society. Since 1917, social and political theory, and above all, revolutionary ideology, have had to take the results of the Bolsheviks' momentous experiment into account. For Trotsky and the new class theorists, the consolidation of the Revolution left a huge amount of ideological and theoretical debris in its wake. It threatened both their hopes for proletarian revolution and their understanding of capitalism and its future. Use of the concept of bureaucracy has been one way in which these writers have tried to pick up, reassemble and occasionally replace, pieces of the theoretical structure with which they began. Moreover, quite apart from the importance of the phenomena and events about which they wrote, these men's own writings and activities have profoundly influenced the development of Marxist, and not only of Marxist, thought about bureaucracy and its role in society.

In the course of writing this thesis, I have been struck, on the one hand, by the relatively cavalier way in which pre-revolutionary Marxists dealt with problems associated with bureaucracy, and on the other hand, by the frequently exaggerated prominence given to bureaucracy by more recent writers. In attempting to understand and assess these and other matters, I have enlisted the aid of two social theorists for whom an appreciation of administrative imperatives and their consequences appeared crucial.
to the understanding of contemporary society. These theorists are Henri Saint-Simon and Max Weber. To adapt Oliver Wendell Holmes's famous characterization of natural law, their writings form a kind of 'brooding omnipresence' hovering over the thesis. Saint-Simon is extraordinarily perceptive about many of the consequences of administration in industrial society. His thought exhibits, however, a number of strains, tensions and lacunae which find repeated echoes in the writings I discuss. Weber's analysis of bureaucracy and its role in modern society presents a challenge, in terms of bureaucracy, to some of the deepest hopes of Marxists. I believe that on the whole this has been a successful challenge.

Martin Krygier

Lavender Bay, Sydney,
PART 1

INTRODUCTION
ONE

STATE AND BUREAUCRACY IN EUROPE:
THE GROWTH OF A CONCEPT

Administration as an institutionalized activity has been carried out in all complex societies. However, the ways in which it is carried out, the forms of administrative organization employed, the qualifications required of administrators, their number, and the importance and pervasiveness of administrative agencies have varied greatly from society to society and from one age to another. So too have the amount and kinds of writing about administrative organizations and officials and the extent of public consciousness of their existence, activities and roles.

In all industrially developed societies today, unprecedented numbers of large-scale organizations employ unprecedented numbers of people to deal with an unprecedented range of tasks. As Hans Rosenberg observes,

Everywhere government has developed into a big business because of the growing complexity of social life and the multiplying effect of the extension of the state's regulative functions. Everywhere government engages in service-extracting and service-rendering activities on a large-scale. Everywhere the supreme power to restrain or to aid individuals and groups has become concentrated in huge and vulnerable organizations. For good or for evil, an essential part of the present structure of governance consists of its far-flung system of professionalized administration and its hierarchy of appointed officials upon whom society is thoroughly dependent. Whether we live under the most totalitarian despotism or in the most liberal democracy, we are governed to a considerable extent by a bureaucracy of some kind.

In so-called capitalist societies, state apparatuses have become massive and continue to grow. Government agencies proliferate and spread, and there are no signs that the enormous number of people employed in government offices will diminish. Since the last century, moreover, huge non-state bureaucratic structures have come to assume profound importance in both economic and political affairs. The soi-disant socialist countries are managed and directed by central party and government organizations which employ all those who are employed, to such an extent that many believe that the U.S.S.R. itself is best understood as a large complex bureaucracy.  

'&Bureaucracy' has become one of the most examined phenomena in academic social science: research proliferates on the internal structure of bureaucracies, on what is functional and dysfunctional for efficient bureaucratic performance, on the relationships between different categories of bureaucrats, between bureaucrats and their social, economic and political environment, between bureaucrats and their 'publics', between bureaucracy and socio-economic development. Bureaucrats are studied by psychologists, sociologists and political scientists; bureaucracies are studied individually and comparatively, within and between societies, in government and outside it.


Outside the academy, and often not very far outside, 'bureaucracy' has also had a busy career as a weapon of popular invective. As we shall see, the term may not be conspicuous for its clarity but its force in such expressions as 'bureaucratic red-tape', 'the bureaucratic run-around' or simply a despairing 'bureaucracy;' is commonly understood. In political argument, opposition to bureaucracy creates strange bedfellows. The vehement opposition of the New Left to bureaucratic forms of organization and those who staffed them is fully shared by writers who have little else in common with that movement. Robert Nisbet, for example argues that,

Unhappily, as is now a matter of full record, the bureaucratic instrument has taken command. It is impossible to so much as glance at the thousands of miles of bureaucratic corridors, the millions of file cases, the millions of bureaucratic employees organised in a complexity that gives fresh meaning to Laocoön, as all these become revealed in ordinary human experience, without realizing that once again in history means have conquered end.

But while there has been a massively accelerated growth of large-scale, centralized administrative structures in this century, such structures have a considerable ancestry. Similarly, there is a good deal of continuity between present and past discussion and criticism of administrators and their methods.

1 The Growth of the Administered State

The growth of powerful, hierarchical and centralized administrative institutions in Europe was a crucially important element in the development of the modern European nation-state and in the consolidation of several hundred more or less independent political units in 1500 into twenty-odd states in 1900. On the one hand, huge and centralized administrative structures could not develop in the absence of a powerful centre. On the other, the centre, especially in culturally

heterogeneous communities with specific historical traditions was led to rely on such structures to subdue and replace provincial power-holders, establish central authority, and collect taxes.

Such developments were especially marked in the European absolute monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What particularly distinguished these monarchies from their forebears was the increasing concentration of military and administrative power in centrally directed institutions, a concentration which occurred at the expense of the church, corporations and estates, of local aristocrats and provincial centres of power. Moreover, centrally controlled institutions did not simply supersede these 'intermediate bodies' in the performance of existing functions. They and their successors came to perform a whole range of new and more demanding functions.

Nowhere were these developments more strikingly apparent than in France from the early seventeenth century and in Prussia from the mid-eighteenth. France and Prussia were important because of the degree of central dominance achieved by their rulers and because they served as models for other administratively ambitious rulers. In France, effective, centrally controlled administrative institutions began to develop in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, primarily because of the need for effective collection of taxes. The crucial institution in this development was the provincial intendant. Royal commissaires had existed before the seventeenth century and were known as intendants from the mid-sixteenth century. However, they differed from the seventeenth century intendants appointed by Richelieu and Mazarin in three respects: they were not appointed.

on a permanent basis, but for specific, temporary, purposes; they were not sent throughout France; and they were not administrators but emissaries and inspectors of the activities of local, independent, officier. Between 1634 and 1648, however, intendants were sent to every généralité in France except for two or three outside Paris, they were established as permanent provincial officials, and, most important of all, 'from an inspector-reformer, the provincial intendant [became] an administrator'. By the mid-seventeenth century, the intendants supervised the assessment and collection of royal taxes, the organization of local police or militia, the preservation of order and the conduct of the courts. They were temporarily suppressed after intense opposition from local officials during and after the Fronde, but from 1658 onward they were gradually re-introduced. Louis XIV and Colbert initially tried to limit their powers and the range of their activities, but after France's war with Holland of 1672 the intendants acquired an extraordinarily broad range of responsibilities. Apart from their administrative functions, Colbert's insistence on full and accurate reports had the effect of extending the intendants' function as information officers and led to the development of a hierarchy of subordinate officials - sous-délégués, maires and échevins. At the centre, Louis - 'le roi administrateur' - and Colbert reorganized the administrative apparatus into functional ministries with staffs of assistants and secretaries and links to the intendants, parlements and other officials in the provinces. By the end of Louis XIV's reign, a system of administration had been established which was clearly under the direction of the central authority, and extended over virtually the whole territory of France.

It is important not to exaggerate the efficiency of this burgeoning administrative machine; to say the least, it deviated consid-
erably from Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy, in structure and in performance. The intendants constantly vied with independent officiers, local notables and local traditions. The extent to which the intendants managed effectively to subordinate the latter remains a matter of controversy. Most généralités were large and the intendants' power did not always match the range of their responsibilities. Moreover the intendants themselves were not always easy to control. The situation is well characterized by Franklin Ford:

The structure of French government in the eighteenth century has been variously described by a series of metaphors, all of them designed to convey the impression of a complexity bordering on utter confusion. Behind this situation lay the long process of accretion inherent in the crown's efforts to maintain control of its unavoidable delegations of authority. By the time of Louis XV, that process had produced a bewildering array of governmental organs, many of them fallen into contempt and near uselessness, but each still asserting its claim to control over some portion of the conduct, the personal property, the taxes, the disputes or the physical services of the French population...Moreover, the effects of the long reign just ended were apparent in the tremendously over-expanded bureaucracy, swelled by the thousands of sinecures which the government sold to increase its monetary income....

To these factors there must be added the infinite number of regional variations, deriving from the manner in which the modern French monarchy had been formed...Little wonder that the total effect should have been one of seeming chaos.

Nevertheless, French government did function. Inefficient, to be sure, loaded down with overlapping and conflicting features, it still managed to provide greater power for the king and greater protection for the people than did any of its rivals on the continent, with the possible exception of the new Prussian monarchy. 2

In the years before the French Revolution, central direction of the intendants became far less effective than under Louis XIV and there was a great deal of confusion and turnover among central officials. Moreover, under the ancien régime public and private spheres were inextricably confused, in two senses. First, there was still no clear conception of the state or nation separate from the person of the king;

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1. See below chap. 4.
officials were the king's servant, not the nation's. Second, as a result of the widespread venality of public offices, government posts - though, as Tocqueville emphasizes,¹ not those of the intendant and his subordinates - were quite literally the private property of royal officials. France's finances, for example, were in the hands of:

private businessmen and the Crown could control them only by occasional legal process, not by continuous administrative direction.

.... The aristocratic society of the ancien régime inevitably undermined all general laws and regulations because privileges, grâces, favours and marks of distinction consisted in personal exemptions and exceptions. We know this best, perhaps, in the field of taxation, where any general law merely gave the Crown fresh opportunities for awarding exemptions. But in every other field, too, the personal, the idiosyncratic, or what in America today would be called the 'individualistic' always prevailed over the general law and the general interest.²

The French Revolution changed this situation dramatically, in public consciousness and to a great degree in fact; it was a profoundly significant landmark in what Barker calls the 'disengagement' of the State.³ No longer the King's servants, public officials came to be regarded as servants of the nation, that nation which, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens had proclaimed, was 'essentially the source of all sovereignty; nor can any individual or body of men be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it'. Moreover, as Bosher emphasizes,⁴ French officials began to form a 'bureaucracy' in a modern sense: they became public servants who were paid regular salaries by, and were answerable to, the state.

⁴ J.F. Bosher, op.cit., passim and esp. at pp.276-318.
After the failure of the experiments in local self-govern­
ment initiated by the Revolution, Napoleon radically reorganized, 
recentralized and rationalized the administrative structure. The 
Prefects were the heirs of the intendants. Appointed by Napoleon and 
under absolute central control, the Prefects governed the provinces 
through conseils, sub-prefects and the mayors of communes. On Napol­
eon's fall:

What the Bourbons found to hand in 1814 was a system purged
of frustrations, inhibitions and vested interests that had
clogged the machine before the Revolution and guaranteed its
destruction ...no government could resist the temptation to
exploit this modern instrument of political direction and
control ...

...The prefect had been invented for a system to which
the Restoration was in principle profoundly opposed. Yet
he was retained as an indispensable instrument of political
control, with, of course, certain modifications that reflect­
ed the change of regimes ...

The post-Napoleonic administrative apparatus is the result
of the revolutionary rationalisation of the inconsistent,
irrational, frustrated and inhibited centralism of the old
regime into a juggernaut of modern bureaucracy.2

A second great centre and example of bureaucratic development
was Prussia of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The three
great Prussian rulers of those centuries - the Great Elector (reg.1640-
1688), Frederick William I (reg.1713-1740) and Frederick II (reg.1740-
1786) - bequeathed a remarkably centralized administrative apparatus
to nineteenth century Prussia. In the mid-seventeenth century, the
Great Elector drew together the hitherto independent Prussian Estates
under an 'all-Prussian' central government, with centralized financial
and military administration. In 1722 Frederick William I introduced
a centralized supervisory body, the 'General Directory', and provincial

1 Alan B. Spitzer, 'The Bureaucrat as Proconsul: The Restoration
Prefect and the police generale', Comparative Studies in Society
domains boards, and subordinated local associations - estates, municipal corporations and provincial courts - to central direction. These were all highly significant innovations, though it should be borne in mind that Frederick William's bureaucracy had 'been conceived and constructed by the monarch of a second-rate power whose ambitions were realistic and modest'\(^1\) and that at the end of his reign 'the civil service was small in size and provincial in outlook and its aims were frankly housekeeping or custodial in nature rather than innovative'.\(^2\)

Under Frederick the Great, Prussia became a major European power, and the outlook, role and organization of its administrators changed markedly, though perhaps neither as quickly nor as dramatically as is often suggested. Besides the enormously increased scale of the functions which Frederick asked his officials to perform, there were at least three profoundly important innovations which took place in his reign. First of all, 'the greatest example Prussia gave to Europe during the eighteenth century'\(^3\) was the large-scale institution of specialist training and the regularized recruitment of civil servants. Frederick William I had made some steps in this direction: for example, he set up chairs of Cameralistics at Halle and Frankfurt in 1727. But recruiting practices remained haphazard until well into Frederick's reign. Indeed, though some of the bureaucrats themselves sought regularity in recruitment and training, Frederick II resisted their attempts until the end of the Seven-Years War. Until then, the only major innovation in this field, which served as a model for later reforms, occurred outside the central and traditional bureaucratic structure - in the judicial system.

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2 Ibid. p.30.
The central bureaucracy and the boards lagged behind the courts and indeed were kept behind as a result of the judiciary's control over education.¹ By 1770, however, the General Directory's chief minister von Hagen had persuaded Frederick to support the establishment of a centralized recruiting system for the whole executive corps of the bureaucracy, and in February 1770 a Superior Examination Commission began to operate; 'the professionalization of the Prussian civil service began'.² By the end of the century a merit system applied to all posts; a degree in cameralistics was required for higher posts and was followed by a period of practical training and a further oral and written examination.³

A second innovation under Frederick concerned the mode of organization of administrative structures. Prussian administration had traditionally been organized on a principle quite different from that of both modern and eighteenth-century French organizations. In the modern 'monocratic' form of organization, offices are usually responsible, function-related ministries which are organized hierarchically under a single head of department. In the eighteenth-century Prussian, Austrian, Swedish, Russian, and, for much of the century, British monarchies, organization was 'collegial'. The 'colleges' or boards in Prussia were organized on a territorial rather than functional basis. They comprised several members whose 'seat and voice' determined their importance; all affairs were discussed collectively, and all members of the college were responsible for the actions of the majority. The basic purpose of this inherently slow-moving form of organization, together with supplementary devices such as the royal spy, the Fiscal, was to enable the king to control, and, if necessary,

¹ See Hubert C. Johnson, op.cit., p.115.
² Ibid. p.223.
discipline, his functionaries. It was, as Rosenberg remarks, to protect the king 'against idlers, saboteurs, liars, crooks, and rebels on the royal payroll'.

Under Frederick, collegiality was not abolished in the General Directory and it remained in the seventeen provincial chambers. But, without being overthrown, collegial bodies were being surrounded on all sides, and even subverted from within, by new specialist, functionally based ministries.

Finally, associated with these developments there occurred a profound change in the relations between the king and the proliferating ministries which he had encouraged, set up and supervised. The Prussian officials of the reign of Frederick William I and the early part of that of Frederick II, were regarded as the king's servants, for the fiction was maintained that it was he, quite literally, who ruled. While the situation was far more complicated that that, the king retained an extraordinarily powerful, pivotal, role.

Frederick the Great himself appeared to favour, and contributed to, the 'disengagement' of public officialdom from the King or dynasty; and, in any case, the 'first servant of the state' was finding it increasingly difficult to control the other servants. The various ministries he had set up, independent of, and often in competition with the traditional system had led to a proliferation of ministries at the centre; these were not easily co-ordinated and were beginning to slip beyond even Frederick's control. The leading officials were very keen to replace royal arbitrariness with general rules and with their own

3 See Johnson, op.cit., passim.
dominance, and, as Rosenberg observes, the bureaucracy:

almost automatically ... derived great advantage from the
impersonal basis of its strength; from its huge size as an
organization; from its permanence, functional indispensability,
and monopoly of expert knowledge; from its self consciousness
as an aristocratic status group and power elite; and from
its patient and oblique obstructiveness.*

Finally, Frederick's successors, Frederick William II and III, had
neither the talent nor the inclination to combat the bureaucracy's
increasing self-direction.

The Prussian General Legal Code of 1794, which was drafted
while Frederick was alive, subjected the monarch to binding rules in
matters of personnel administration, curbed his power, placed him under
the law and generally 'depersonalized' government. Erstwhile 'royal
servants' were now called 'servants of the state' and 'professional
officials of the state'. The Code gave them the qualified legal right
to permanent tenure and the unqualified right to due process of law in
regard to questionable conduct. It recognized them 'as a privileged
corporation subject to its own separate jurisdiction, distinct in title
and rank, and exempt from many of the ordinary civil obligations'.  

The decisive change in the form and the role of the bureau­
cracy, however, came only after Prussia's catastrophic defeat by France
at Jena in 1806. Enlightened bureaucrats were given the job of re­
forming the Prussian bureaucracy. Though the Reform Era was short­
lived - it ended effectively in 1812 - its legacy was a remarkably
modernized and rationalized administrative structure. In place of the
'Kabinett=System', a rationalized system of departments was established,
in which each minister was responsible for a separate area of service.
Ministries were reorganized on functional rather than provincial lines,
the jumbled, overlapping collection of central agencies was rationalized,
and the connections between these ministries and the judicial and

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1 Rosenberg, op.cit., p.176
administrative agencies of the provinces were clarified and organized in a hierarchical and relatively efficient manner.

This growth of centralized power wielded by permanent bodies of officials, while more conspicuous and further developed in France and Prussia than elsewhere, was, of course, not confined to them. Marc Raeff has pointed to 'the drive for centralization and uniformity, as well as the excessive mania for regulation that we observe in the absolute monarchies of the later seventeenth century' and Brian Chapman, to 'the general tightening of the administrative structure throughout western Europe' about the middle of the eighteenth century. Nor was only western Europe involved. The Petrine reforms in Russia, for example, were closely modelled on the police ordinances of the German states. In Austria, Maria Theresa, and more dramatically Joseph II, promoted secular education, designed modernized curricula for the training of public servants, professionalized the civil service, introduced recruitment on merit, and maintained surveillance over bureaucrats by police agents modelled on the Prussian Fiscal. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, we witness in the European countries taken as a whole (except for those that ceased to exist, such as Poland) a resurgence of the power of states. Throughout Europe (except for England) - in Russia, Spain, Austria, Naples, Portugal, etc. - there was a tendency to establish a bureaucratic monarchy having a hierarchical nature and patterned on the French model, which thus consisted of both a central government and local governments run by delegates appointed directly by the ruler, who were the equivalent to the intendants sent by Versailles to each generality.

3 Marc Raeff, op. cit. p.1234; see also his Plans for Political Reform in Russian, 1730-1905., (New Jersey, 1966), pp.3-9.
Finally, in the light of the widely-held view that England lagged far behind the absolute states in administrative development, that compared to Frederick William I's Prussia, English civil service was 'barbarian',\(^1\) and that 'the first extensive effort on the part of the British to move toward the bureaucratic state'\(^2\) was the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms of the 1850's, L.J. Hume's dissenting view should be kept in mind:

... Britain's early achievement of legal unity and centralization, the relative unimportance of 'venality' in appointments to office, the relatively early sloughing off of 'farming' in taxation and the relatively effective control of local authorities by the centre brought the country more rapidly towards the modern bureaucratic state than the Continental monarchies. The latter's claims were repeatedly frustrated or falsified by nobles, the Church, provincial courts and estates and recalcitrant officials and financiers whom the state could neither discipline nor do without. The Northcote-Trevelyan reforms were a mopping-up operation, not the start of the campaign.\(^3\)

In the nineteenth century, the Napoleonic model and the Prussian example, especially in education, had a profound impact on the administrative and legal systems of other states. This is partly because, as Chapman remarks, 'administrative arrangements can be copied more easily than political institutions, particularly when they are couched in clear and comprehensive terms'.\(^4\) But ease of emulation is inadequate to explain the similarities between, and massive growth of, European bureaucracies in the nineteenth century. For the European states faced, more or less in common, a strikingly novel order and range of social, political and economic changes and difficulties. Growth in continental European population - from 187 millions in 1800 to 401 millions in 1900, and in roughly similar proportions in every

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3 L.J. Hume, 'The Executive in Eighteenth Century Thought' a chapter in his forthcoming study of Jeremy Bentham's Theory of Government. I am grateful to Dr. Hume for allowing me to make use of this chapter.
4 Chapman, *op.cit.*, p.29.
European country\(^1\) - led to great expansion in the number of officials required to perform traditional tasks; and governments undertook new tasks. Government expanded into areas formerly managed by others, for example the responsibilities of former serf-owners, and there was an equally important growth of tasks hitherto not performed at all, but stimulated by nineteenth century industrial, economic, and technological developments:

In addition to expansion of traditional responsibility for public finance, police, judiciary, the military and foreign affairs - each with its bureaucracy - came functions novel in kind or extraordinary in extent. These functions included responsibility for roads, canals, bridges, harbours, and later, for railways and telegraph and telephone, each requiring a corps of officials with a degree of training. Introduction of military conscription necessitated creation of a civilian bureaucracy to administer details and to provide scientific and technological services for a modern army, and on a smaller scale, for the navy. Education, ecclesiastical affairs, and cultural agencies, with the institutions for commerce, industry and agriculture either entirely new or greatly enlarged, required similar bureaucratic services. Social problems connected with modern industry - factory inspection, legislation for working conditions, poor relief, workers' compensation and insurance, public housing, public health and other services - called for administrative personnel on a large scale, for laws affecting these matters could not be executed entirely by local amateurs, whether elected or voluntary.\(^2\)

Moreover, the Industrial Revolution not only encouraged governments to perform new functions; it made possible the levying of far greater amounts in taxation and the employment of many more officials than ever before.\(^3\) In consequence of such developments, pressures, and new resources, Continental administrative organizations grew enormously

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3 On the importance of taxation to the growth of state power, see Gabriel Ardant, *op. cit.* *passim*. 
in size and in importance and were constantly reorganized and reformed during the nineteenth century.

2 Early Modern Sources of 'Administrative Science'

It would have been extraordinary if these profound changes in the nature, size, organization and role of the state and of its administrative structures, throughout Europe over several centuries, had found no echo in political thought. Indeed these changes were not simply followed, but at times facilitated, by many equally profound changes in the subjects and concerns of writings on politics, the state, and, later, administrative functions and functionaries. Hobbes assumed that the political institution which mattered most was the central, sovereign power; the natural rights theorists who followed him and disagreed with him on so much else, shared this assumption. And while Hobbes and Locke were confident that the most important political activity was legislation, Rousseau believed that this should be the case but doubted that it would be, and Saint-Simon had no doubt that administrators would inherit the earth.

Though Hobbes was primarily concerned with the supreme lawmaker, he does make several remarks in the Leviathan about the role and tasks of public officials. In the eighteenth century, many writers began

1 One striking laggard in this development was Russia. Szamuey writes of an 'inflated, oppressive and predatory bureaucracy' in the seventeenth century and he claims that under Nicholas I '...the chinovnik, the government official became the most characteristic figure of Russian life'. According to Pipes, however, the total staff of the central administrative apparatus at the end of the seventeenth century was around 2000, and until the communist revolution 'Russia's officialdom was relatively small and not very effective'. In the mid-nineteenth century Russia had 11 to 13 officials for 10,000 people, which was 3 to 4 times below the West European ratio. See Tibor Szamuey, The Russian Tradition, (Leiden, 1974), p.55; p.135; Richard Pipes Russia Under the Old Regime, (London, 1974), p.108; p.281.
to discuss administration directly, and one form which such writings took throughout Europe was that of observations, especially by officials, about existing administrative practices and also about proposals for administrative reform. The most sustained tradition of such writings existed among the Prussian and Austrian Cameralists, beginning with Osse and Obrecht in the sixteenth century, but similar observations and proposals also proliferated in eighteenth century England, France and Russia. These writings often discussed problems of administration merely on the way to what were regarded as more important matters, and they rarely put such problems at the centre of political theory (as opposed to administrative advice). Nevertheless, by the end of the century, a substantial body of ideas about the executive had emerged. Nor did these ideas develop in a vacuum. They contributed to, and were influenced by, far broader and more profound movements in attitudes to and expectations of the state; movements which led to increasing demands being made on the state and increasing regard being paid to the state's means of satisfying these demands - its administrative apparatus and its officials.

One profoundly 'modern' attitude to the state sees it as capable of deliberately harnessing its resources to promote social and economic development and change.\(^1\) The *philosophes*, with their 'lust for improvement',\(^2\) clearly exhibited this attitude, but it did not begin with them. The mercantilists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries sought to maximize the state's wealth and especially its power,\(^3\) and seventeenth century Protestant eudaemonists, and especially Pietists,

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insisted that:

... The subjects' welfare and prosperity would increase productivity and foster their creative energies and industriousness, which in turn would rebound to the benefit of the state and the ruler's power and provide the proper framework for a Christian way of life...

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the responsibility for this goal was thrust onto the person (i.e. the ruler) or single secular institution (i.e. the state) through the virtual elimination of all other institutions that the Middle Ages had developed to this same end - the Church, monastic orders, and fraternities. As a result, the traditional mandate of government (i.e. rulership) shifted from the passive duty of preserving justice to the active, dynamic task of fostering the productive energies of society and providing the appropriate institutional framework for it.

Given this dynamic conception of the state's responsibilities, the qualities of its administrative structure gained in importance, whether officials were called upon to establish and encourage industries, gather revenues or supply burgeoning armies. This conception might indeed have been sufficient to stimulate writing about administration, without any other changes in attitudes to the nature or proper role of the state; and among the early Cameralists, king's servants all, it appears to have been. In principle, of course, and to a large extent in practice, this dynamic conception could be seen as serving a variety of 'masters' - the ruler himself, the state, the nation or the people. But many of the most significant writers about administration in the second half of the eighteenth century no longer regarded the government as simply incarnate in the ruler and they shared conceptions of the proper role of government which suggested that the quality of administration was a public concern, that the purposes which officials served were public purposes, and that such purposes must be served diligently and well.

We have seen already that the interests of the 'state' in Prussia and of the 'nation' in France had been 'disengaged' to a significant degree from those of the ruler by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

century; a similar process of disengagement was inaugurated in Russia by the Petrine reforms.¹ This process did not suddenly reduce the ruler to *primus inter pares* but it did change the status of his servants and in particular, of what were perceived to be their responsibilities. The state or the nation, not to mention the 'people', might remain excluded from participation in politics and administration, but administration and tutelage was to be exercised on their behalf.

One claim repeatedly made by writers in the eighteenth century was that rulers held power in *trust* for their people, and must exercise their power in accordance with the terms of that trust. Hobbes might insist that the sovereign owed his subjects nothing but what Oakeshott describes as the 'general duty of being successful'² - which itself need not always be a small matter - but Locke soon held that the 'supream legislative authority' had no right to breach the terms of its trust, and Rousseau, by distinguishing sharply between the *sovereign* people and the mere *government* which the sovereign appoints and might peremptorily dismiss, underlined the obligations of the latter to the former. This conception of government as a trust held on behalf of citizens was triumphantly proclaimed in America in 1776 and in France in 1789, and even authors who rejected all talk of 'natural rights' nonetheless had a similar conception of the obligations of government. Burke was not always consistent on this matter, but at least when he was opposing official policy, he was prepared to invoke this conception in striking terms:

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¹ Marc Raeff, *Plans for Political Reform in Imperial Russia, 1730-1905*, pp. 6-11.
... all political power which is set over men and ... all privilege claimed or exercised in exclusion of them, being wholly artificial and for so much a derogation from the natural equality of mankind at large, ought to be some way or other exercised ultimately for their benefit ... such rights or privileges, or whatever else you choose to call them, are all in the strictest sense a trust: and it is of the very essence of every trust to be rendered accountable - and even totally to cease, when it substantially varies from the purposes for which alone it could have a lawful existence.

Bentham, similarly, called the central government a 'public trust' and argued that

public powers differ no otherwise from private fiduciary powers than in respect of the scale on which they are exercisable: they are the same powers exercisable on a greater scale.

In itself, this conception only suggests to whom duties are owed, not what they entail. It is equally compatible with a 'night watchman' and a 'service' state, with Seckendorff's or even Catherine II's 'cameralistic' sense of responsibility and Bentham's or the philosophes' more adventurous utilitarian claims, with Locke's insistence on rights against the state and Paine's prophetic demand that claims from the state by the aged or poor be regarded 'not as a matter of grace and favour, but of right'. The conception of government as a public trust is important for our theme, however, in two respects. First of all, it was connected with an eighteenth century shift in views of government from what Krieger has called 'an authority of origins' to what he calls 'an authority of ends' or, less happily, 'the telic view of politics'. The governments of European states were beginning to be

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3 *Rights of Man*, (Harmondsworth, 1976) p.265. Paine himself, however, was confident that this demand was compatible with a substantial reduction in the expense and size of government. This combination of beliefs is strongly echoed in Marxist thought.
assessed in terms of success in achieving public goals rather than simply in terms of their genealogical or Divine claims, and this criterion of assessment placed demands on, and turned attention to their machinery for achieving these goals.

Secondly, the idea of government as a trust came increasingly, in the second half of the eighteenth century, to be put to the service of a specific kind of end - the welfare, prosperity and happiness of citizens. That government should advance these goals had, as we have seen, already been suggested in the seventeenth century, but they were still frequently regarded as subsidiary, as instrumental to the greater wealth, power or virtue of the ruler, or as obligations owed solely to God, rather than as obligatory secular goals whose performance might be demanded by a ruler's subjects. For example, the Austrian Cameralist Schröder argued on the one hand that:

\[ \text{the prosperity and welfare of the subjects is the foundation upon which all happiness of a prince as ruler of such subjects is based} \]

but he repeatedly emphasized, on the other hand, that a prince's obligations were a matter purely between him and God:

\[ \text{the right which inheres in the royal office...is conferred upon the prince by God, not by the people...God left the people no freedom by which they were entitled to dispute with kings, or to hamper them with restrictions.} \]

In the eighteenth century, however, there appeared what Raeff has called 'the "enlightenment amendment" ...the transformation of felicity from a mere instrument of a transcendent political goal into an end to be achieved for its own sake'.

2 Ibid.p.140.
According to the Prussian Cameralist, von Justi:

The ultimate aim of each and every republic is ... unquestionably the common happiness ... It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the proposition, therefore, that the subjects do not exist for the sake of the ruler.¹

Justi, who had no intention of attacking absolutism - his book was dedicated to Maria Theresa - clouded the issue on occasion by referring to the interests of the state rather than those of the subjects, but in either formulation the ruler was taken to be serving this-worldly interests other than his own. The Austrian Cameralist Sonnenfels also had no intention of criticising absolutism but he too insisted that the function of administrative 'science' was to increase public welfare.² In France, utilitarian doctrines became popular in the second half of the eighteenth century, and the Physiocrats, who disagreed with the Cameralists on so much else, agreed at least that the goal of society was 'the whole sum of happiness and enjoyments possible for humanity'.³ In England, Bentham, following Priestley, Beccaria, Helvetius and others, enunciated the 'greatest happiness' principle in 1776,⁴ and even in Russia where the interests of the people, the state and the ruler were still far from being sorted out, the influence of Benthamite and French 'enlightened' ideas was considerable. The 'Project for a most graciously granted Charter to the Russian People' which was drawn up by, among others, Count Vorontsov, who later became Chancellor, and Michael Speransky, the most important Russian 'bureaucratic' reformer of the nineteenth century, proposed that the Tsar announce that:

¹ J.H.G. von Justi, Staatswirtschaft ..., in Albion W. Small, The Cameralists, p.319, see also p.413.
For ourselves, we take as a rule the truth that it is not the people who have been made for the Monarchs, but it is the Monarchs who have been established by Divine Providence for the benefit and welfare of the peoples living under their rule.¹

For our purposes, the fact that such declarations are often self-serving or not consistent with government practice is unimportant. What is important is that they begin to occur and increasingly to recur in the writings of a wide range of writers who were also paying an unprecedented amount of attention to the role and deficiencies of administrative structures. Moreover, the attachment of both the Cameralists and the Russian reformers to autocracy was not inconsistent with these affirmations of the public purposes of government; they dovetailed very comfortably. Johnson has argued, for example, that the early Austrian Cameralists and their successors were well aware that 'with each attempt to glorify the power and theoretical authority of the prince the prestige and effective authority of the ambitious bureaucrat also rose',² and the combination of reliance upon the sovereign with an extension of the perceived obligations of government had potent repercussions. Writing of the eighteenth century German supporters of 'enlightened government' - principally the Cameralists - Geraint Parry comments that:

Administrative training for 'enlightened government' derived its importance from the central part which administration played in the political task of welding together a disparate and non-political ruled mass. Whatever unity civil society possessed was not contributed by the atomized mass of non-participating subjects but by the organized administration. Society, Frederick the Great argued, had to be lent the unity of a philosophical system, and this was possible only if the system had its source in one place - the sovereign and his administration. To ensure the achievement of this rationalist ideal of unity and uniformity social behaviour was directed

¹ Marc Raeff, Plans for Political Reform in Russia, 1730-1905, p.77.
towards its single goal of 'happiness' by central planning. The first essential of any wise government was a well-conceived plan, which was to be the guide for all state activities. But though a bold welfare plan was essential to the happiness of a society, it was of no avail without the administration which drew up and implemented the plan. Material resources, size of population or territory were nothing without organization. Administration made the final difference between strength and weakness in a state.

More generally, and even outside the 'enlightened despotisms', the eighteenth century witnessed a novel, often obsessive, concentration on the government's means of fulfilling what had come to be regarded as its duties. This concentration initially was expressed by treating legislation as the central activity of government. The eighteenth century theorists of 'police', of 'economy', and even of 'political economy' all emphasized the role of centrally made and directed laws; and these theorists devoted a great deal of attention to the arrangement, improvement, clarification and organization of bodies of rational laws. Strenuous attempts were made to codify, simplify and make more effective the laws emanating from the sovereign. One implication of this attention to legislation, and to ways of increasing its uniform applicability and effectiveness, became increasingly evident during the eighteenth century: if for Hobbes covenants without swords were but words, it was now becoming obvious that legislation without effective administrative agencies and services was little different. Proposals for governmental reform came increasingly to focus not merely on legislative institutions and reforms, but also on specifically administrative ones. The cast of mind of many of such reformers, of thinkers such as Justi, and Speransky, or indeed of

Frederick the Great and Alexander I, is revealed by Sonnenfels in his Über die Liebe des Vaterlands, if more candidly in the second sentence than in the first:

For forms of government, I say with Pope, let fools contest! Whichever is best administered is best.1

Sonnenfels was a member of what Gay has aptly described as a 'tribe of authoritarian rationalists'2 and kin of this tribe could be found throughout Europe at this time. What Parry observes of the Cameralists is equally true of Bentham and of Alexander I's 'Unofficial Committee':

Political discussion is of solutions and techniques ... The study of politics became the study of organization, of how given ends of government could be attained with the utmost economy of effort. The theorists of 'enlightened government' regarded themselves as scientists of administration entering on a new way in the study of politics ignored hitherto by scholars.3

One of the most favoured metaphors for administrative institutions throughout Europe was that of machinery. Justi, who made frequent use of this metaphor, wrote that:

a properly constituted state must be exactly analogous to a machine, in which all the wheels and gears are precisely adjusted to one another; and the ruler must be the foreman, the main-spring, or the soul - if one may use the expression - which sets everything in motion.4

In France, as a modern scholar puts it,

... the word 'machine' had been increasingly used to describe administrative organizations. By the end of the eighteenth century the machine had become an obsessive image. Anson used it to describe the projected Ministry of the Interior, Camus to describe the entire administration, Marat to represent municipal administrations, and to sum up, the machine image in the writings of Lebrun, Roederer, Laffon de Ladébat and many others seems to show that this generation thought of administrative and political agencies as analogous to machines. The other possible analogy, comparing the organization to the

1 Quoted in Robert A Kann, op.cit.p.170.
2 Peter Gay, op.cit. p.488.
3 Geraint Parry, op.cit., pp.181;184. For the appositeness of these remarks to Alexander I, Speransky and the 'Unofficial Committee' see Marc Raeff, Michael Speransky. Statesman of Imperial Russia 1772-1839, p.44 and passim.
human body as Hobbes for instance had done, seldom appears in the writings of the late eighteenth-century French reformers and revolutionaries.¹

In Russia, the 'Principles of Government Reform', drafted by the 'Unofficial Committee' in 1802 explain that:

Just as radii starting from different points on a circumference converge all at a common centre, so all the parts of the administration are interlocked and must converge to the same goal. If, therefore, the movement of the individual parts is not calculated in terms of this general rule, the general result can only be an incoherence which will hamper their regular performance. To avoid this defect, those who are entrusted with the task of renovating the shapeless edifice of our social contract according to correct principles must know the structure of the whole machine; and by constantly keeping in view its movement, they shall be in a better position to see the defects of its wheels and gears. This will enable them to have a better grasp of what improvements are required...²

The conception of administrative institutions as machinery was particularly apt for rationalist reformers in an 'enlightened' state, for it legitimized both their role and that of their ruler. An administrative machine needs to be tended by qualified mechanics, and it can be designed, redesigned and manipulated according to the technical knowledge which these mechanics monopolise. As a machine, it is indeed essentially manipulable by those with appropriate knowledge and skills; it is not, as conservative critics such as Justus Mös er maintained, an organic growth which could be altered only with caution, patience and restraint. Viewing administrative institutions as machinery allowed many of these thinkers to distinguish and stress the central, guiding role of the ruler, who was not part of the machine but was required to run and oversee its workings. For Justi he was the foreman; for the 'Unofficial Committee', and for Bielfeld who used an almost identical image, he was the centre on which all the administrative 'radii' converged.

² Marc Raeff, *Plans for Political Reform in Russia 1730-1905*, p.89.
Viewing the administration as a machine was also appropriate
to the increasing attention which was directed to its parts - the officials
- to the heightened perception of the importance of their role within it,
and to ensuring that they were good parts, suited to the tasks they had
to perform. Auget de Montyon, one of the earliest and most perceptive
French writers on administrative reform, who insisted that 'we must apply
to the composition of social power the general rules of mechanics',
devoted a chapter of an unpublished manuscript Des agents de l'administra-
tion, to officials,
because, he said, they are such necessary 'administrative
instruments' that good ones can bring success to the weakest
administrator and bad ones can bring to nothing the decisions
of even the most enlightened, or else so overload him with
work that he will lose sight of his true objectives.¹

Montyon was original in France, though not in Europe, in
advocating written examinations in administration, and its development
as a proper discipline to be studied. The Cameralists, of course, had
advocated this long before and constantly attempted to improve the
educational and recruitment practices of the Prussian and Austrian
administrations. Bielfeld in the 1760s, Bentham in his first articles
on administrative themes in the 1770s, and on a number of occasions there-
after, Necker in the 1780s, all emphasized the importance of recruiting
competent officials.²

A parallel and possibly related emphasis on the role and
importance of officials can be seen in the outpourings of sinophiles in
eighteenth century Europe, outpourings which were frequently intended as
thinly-veiled recommendations for reforms at home. Already in the six-
teenth century, European reports about China, such as Mendoza's, dealt

¹ J.F. Bosher, op. cit., p.135.
² See L.J. Hume, op.cit., pp.44-45 and Hume 'Bentham and Bureaucracy'
unpublished paper delivered at History of Ideas Unit Seminar, 1st
with its administrative system and almost invariably drew attention to the effectiveness of Chinese government, to its provision of social services and courier systems, and especially to the importance and character of its officials, trained in state-supported schools and recruited on the basis of written examinations.¹ In the seventeenth century similar observations were made by the Jesuit missionaries who wrote of China, and La Mothe le Vayer, 'the chief precursor of eighteenth-century sinophilism'² in France, and tutor to the young Louis XIV, emphasized and praised the role of the scholar-official in China and alleged that 'il n'y a que les philosophes qui gouvernent'.³ In eighteenth century Europe, fascination with China reached its peak and again attention was drawn to the importance of its officials and to their mode of training and recruitment. Silhouette, for example, who in 1759 spent a year as Controller-General of France, published The Chinese Balance in 1764, which contained a series of letters purportedly written by a Chinese scholar. In the fourth of these letters the scholar wrote that in China government servants were promoted solely on the basis of virtue and talent,⁴ and it was this which attracted many other virtuous and talented writers such as Voltaire, Nicolas Clerc and the abbé de Marsy, to praise the functionaries of the Middle Kingdom. Much of this praise was more prescriptive than descriptive in design.

Along with the increasing attention being paid to the official went a much more definite attention to function, well conveyed in the

³ Quoted in ibid., pp.121-22.
⁴ Lewis Maverick, China a Model for Europe, (Texas, 1946), p.29.
mechanistic terms that prevailed at the end of the eighteenth century. This concept was at the root of discussion of collegial versus individual responsibility and of territorial versus function-based administrative units, and of the moves in most European countries toward the latter. In France it was reflected in terminology used soon after the Revolution:

Whereas the posts of officials during the ancien regime had been *offices*, *charges*, or *places*, they now began to be called *emplois* or *fonctions* and the officials themselves were for the first time described as *fonctionnaires*.

... This utilitarian vocabulary was used to describe organizations with quasi-mechanical virtues ... the idea of function became a principle of quasi-mechanical organization."

Finally, mechanical analogies combined easily with the profoundly influential *legislative* framework on which many of the reformers relied. Legislation was treated as one of the most important means of implementing administrative reforms and administrative institutions were frequently assessed in terms of the criteria traditionally applied to bodies of laws. The European administrative reformers were concerned above all to establish streamlined, simplified, harmonious administrative structures in which all the parts fitted and worked smoothly together. This concern was a central objective of all the schemes of this period, from Bentham to Speransky, and the legislative model was enlisted to this end. Bentham and Speransky exemplified the 'legal rational' approach of all of these writers whose passion was for simplicity, clarity, order, clear assignment of functions and responsibility, effective and clearly identifiable chains of communication and command.

These schemes and proposals contain a great deal which anticipates Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy, both in the elevation of legal-rational authority and in many of the specific organizational measures proposed and goals served. And within these broader concerns

and preoccupations, a welter of specific suggestions and practical measures was advanced for their achievement. Rules were drawn up specifying how departmental functions were to be performed; venality of offices was condemned in post-revolutionary France and elsewhere long before, and payment by salary was often proposed; the use of records, inspection and reporting as instruments of control was almost universally recommended.

The general character of these writings was that of prescriptive, technical advocacy, not of social theory and certainly not of revolutionary ideology; it was advice to, and often by, those charged with carrying out a broad and increasing range of tasks. It was rarely systematic and was frequently embedded in pedantic discussion of detail and in consideration of other matters, but it was not negligible either in quantity or in intelligent appreciation of the problems and difficulties of large-scale and active administration.

3 Nineteenth Century 'Anti-Bureaucratic' Polemic

The administrative thought which began to flourish at the end of the eighteenth century discussed many problems and administrative imperatives which seemed to take twentieth century revolutionaries by surprise. Revolutionaries, however, were well acquainted with, and contributed much to, a quite different kind of writing about administrative institutions and personnel: polemic against 'bureaucracy'.

The coining of a term is, of course, no sure guide to the importance of, or level of concern about, a phenomenon. Eighteenth century critics of 'despotism', for example, argued that a despot's power would be lost to his 'vizier' and that this was not accidental but was a basic tendency of despotic states; they did not, however, show any need for terms such as 'vizier -' or 'bur-''eaurcracy' to express
their belief. Again, in 1791, Wilhelm von Humboldt had no need of
the term to argue against state intervention for the positive
welfare of citizens, on the grounds, inter alia, that:

... it arises that in most states from decade to
decade the number of the public officials and the
extent of registrations increase, while the liberty
of the subject proportionately declines. 1

Moreover, even when a term has come into use, it is not the only
possible vehicle for expressing similar thoughts: Saint-Simon to my
knowledge never wrote of 'bureaucratie' but his complaints about
officials are often indistinguishable from those of people who did.

Neologisms are however, not merely coined; they also need
to be received, and the reception accorded some terms is far wider and
more enthusiastic than that granted to others. 'Bureaucracy' has
had an extraordinary reception since the late eighteenth century
and, as a Marxist might observe, this is 'no accident' in view
of the political, economic, social and administrative developments
to which I have alluded above. The pervasiveness of the word, and
its strong initial associations with France and Prussia, are clearly
related to the concern in Europe, from the eighteenth century
onwards, with the pervasiveness of the things which it was being
used to describe.

Secondly, notwithstanding the various uses of the term,
specific concentration on 'bureaucracy' is interesting for, though
natural enough, it is not an inevitable, nor the only possible, response
to the development of centralized state power. One might be concerned
instead with 'despotism', or liken one's government to an Oriental
Despotism - a leitmotif of many eighteenth century French writings 2

1 Wilhelm von Humboldt, The Limits of State Action, ed. I.W. Burrow
(Cambridge, 1969), p.34.
2 See Richard Koebner, 'Despot and Despotism: Vicissitudes of a
Political Term', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,
- and be basically concerned with the amount of power monopolized by the despot. One could follow Rousseau in lamenting the inevitable process by which 'all the governments of the world, once armed with public force, sooner or later usurp the public authority'. And one could direct one's attack against 'the State', as so many nineteenth century writers did. To direct one's attacks against 'bureaucracy' was to focus on the body of government officials, those who staffed the bureaux, or on the organizations of bureaux themselves.

Finally, there is one specific reason why 'bureaucracy' is of special interest from our point of view. Though the term has, almost from the start, been a vessel into which many different meanings have been poured, etymologically, as Albrow notes, it represents an addition to the Greek classification of governments, suggesting government by a new group of rulers - officials. The word itself, whether used pejoratively or not, elevates the status and potential of officials: they are no longer subordinate 'viziers' who might usurp power from those who should rule, but a social category which might rule in its own right, its own way. The term is often used in quite different senses from this, but this sense has, for example, come to haunt the history of Marxism much as another spectre was once alleged to have haunted Europe.

The term 'bureaucracy' appears to have begun its career with this meaning. The term is usually attributed to Vincent de Gournay, a Physiocrat and mentor of Turgot - he is alleged to have also coined the phrase 'laissez-faire, laissez-passer'. It would be appropriate if both attributions were accurate, for the chief vice of which bureaucracy was initially accused was an inability to leave anything alone.

De Gournay is said to have coined the term in 1745; from the start its use appears to have been pejorative and its focus to have been on government officials. In July 1764, Friedrich Melchior von (or Baron de) Grimm wrote to Diderot advocating the free export of grain. He complained of the multitude of public officials to whom, because they would be robbed of the opportunity to regulate, 'free trade in grain must be an abominable hydra'. France, he wrote, was 'obsessed by the spirit of regulation, and our Masters of Requests do not want to understand that there is an infinity of objects in a great State with which a government ought not concern itself'. One who had so understood was 'the late M. de Gournay ... who ... sometimes used to say: "We have an illness in France that appears likely to ravage us; this illness is called bureamania". Sometimes he used to invent a fourth or fifth form of government, under the title of bureaucracy'.

A year later, Grimm complained in a similar vein that: 'not to over-govern is one of the great principles of government which has never been known in France ... The true spirit of the laws of France is that bureaucracy of which the late M. de Gournay used to complain so much; here the bureaux, clerks, secretaries, inspectors, intendants are not established to benefit the public interest, indeed the public interest appears to have been established so that there might be bureaux'. Here, bureaucracy is seen as a form of government, government by officials, characterized by its tendency to meddle, to exceed its proper functions.

It was in this sense, or in the claim that officials were the real locus of governing power, whatever the superficial form, that

1 Baron de Grimm and Diderot, Correspondance litteraire, philosophique et critique 1753-69, (Paris, 1878 edition), vol.6, p.30.
complaints about bureaucracy began to appear in France in the 1780s. In 1787 one writer complained of the General Control of Finances that:

The clerks do everything and give a twist to everything according to whether they are honest or paid by interested parties. From this, the frightful *Bureaucratie* which exists and which is such that what made seven or eight departments under abbe Terray now makes twenty seven or thirty.

And Mercier explained in 1789 in *Le Tableau de Paris*:

Bureaucracy is a word created in our time to designate in a concise and forceful manner the extensive power of mere clerks who in the various bureaux of the ministry are able to implement a great many projects which they forge themselves or quite often find in the dust of bureaux, or adopt by taste or by whim.

Early uses of the word outside France appear to have been consistent with its French meaning. In Prussia, apart from press reports of the French Revolution, the first recorded use of the word appears to have been by Christian Kraus, a colleague of Kant. 'The Prussian state', he wrote with reason in 1799, 'far from being an unlimited monarchy ... is but a thinly veiled aristocracy ...which blatantly rules the country as a bureaucracy'. An 1813 edition of a German dictionary of foreign expressions defined bureaucracy as:

The authority or power which various government departments and their branches arrogate to themselves over fellow citizens.

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1 Bosher would appear, however, to be clearly mistaken in claiming that 'the word "bureaucracy" first began to appear in the 1780s, with its modern meaning at least', *op.cit.*, p.46. On the other hand, Albrow's claim that 'Balzac was largely responsible for popularising the word in French 'appears to be belied by Mercier's claim in 1789 that the word had been created by the common people, which suggests that it at least had some currency. The word is also said to have been used as a term of abuse by orators of the French Revolution. [Sauvy *La Bureaucratie*, (Paris, 1956), p.20] cites Mirabeau.


4 C. Kraus, *Vermischte Schriften* (Königsberg, 1808), vol.11, p.247.

5 Quoted in Albrow, *op.cit.*, p.17.
Similarly, the earliest English use of the term which I have found (1818) refers to 'the bureaucracy or office tyranny by which Ireland had been so long governed'.

In all of these uses, bureaucracy is seen as rule or arrogation of power by officials. In complaining of the ways in which bureaucracy rules, attention is focused on its relations with and effects on citizens and their activities. Another theme which recurs in many of the early accounts of bureaucracy is concerned with the nature and working style of bureaucrats. Here the focus is not on the relationship between bureaucrats and subjects, but on what kinds of people bureaucrats are, and on bureaucratic predilections. In this usage, 'bureaucracy' is not necessarily confined to a certain kind of government, but, like 'aristocracy', used to characterize a group of people or a life style. In early nineteenth century France, the bureaucrat was frequently the butt of ridicule and satire. For example, Henry Monnier published two volumes of lithographs, the first, Moeurs administratives, dessinées d’après nature in 1828; the other, Scènes de la vie bureaucratique, in 1835. In these volumes Monnier portrayed a day in the life of a bureaucrat: at nine o'clock the employees arrive at the Ministry and warm themselves around an excessively hot stove; at ten they have tea and sharpen their quills; at ten thirty they chat; at one they have lunch; at two they go for walks inside the Ministry. The only time they work is midday, when the head of their division makes his tour of inspection. In his novel, Les Employés, published in 1836, Balzac, too, poured scorn on bureaucracy. He linked his attack with the first

theme by distinguishing bureaucracy from officials and restricting it to the situation where the official was overweeningly powerful in government:

Under the monarchy, the bureaucratic armies did not exist at all. Fewer in number, employees obeyed a minister who was always in communication with the king, and thus they served the king almost directly...Since 1789, the State, *la patrie*, if you prefer, has replaced the Prince.... clerks have become, despite our beautiful ideas of *la patrie*, government employees, and their chiefs float with every breath of a power called the Ministry which never knows one day whether it will exist the next...thus, Bureaucracy, a gigantic power set in motion by dwarves, is born. Possibly Napoleon retarded its influence for a time, for all things and all men were forced to bend to his will...it is definitely organized under constitutional government, the natural friend of mediocrity with a penchant for categorical statements and reports, a government as fussy and meddlesome as the wife of a *petit bourgeois.*

In Germany bureaucracy was also attacked as much for its attitudes, style and characteristic modes of behaviour as for what it did to its subjects. The German picture was different, however, and altogether more solemn. In 1821 Freiherr vom Stein who, of all people, should have known - complained:

We are ruled by salaried, book-taught, disinterested propertiless Bureaulisten ... These four words express the spirit of our own and similar spiritless governmental machines: salaried, therefore they strive after maintenance and increase of their numbers and salaries; book-taught, therefore living in the printed, not the real world; without interests, since they are tied to no class of citizens of any consequence in the State, they are a class for themselves - the clerical caste (*Schreiberkaste*); propertiless, therefore unaffected by any change in property. It may rain or the sun may shine, taxes may rise or fall, ancient rights may be destroyed or left intact, none of this worries them. They receive their salary from the state treasury and write, write in silence, in their *Bureaux* behind specially provided locked doors, unknown, unnoticed, unpraised, and again they cultivate their children for equally useful state machines - I saw one machine (the military) fall on the 14th October, 1806. Perhaps the writing-machine will also have its 14th October! That is the ruin of our dear fatherland: official power [*Beamtengewalt*] and the nullity of its citizens!

In the late 1830s the Prussian government became increasingly unpopular, and, as Gillis notes, 'the target of political agitation in the decade before 1848 was not the monarchy itself but the form that the monarchy had assumed since the late eighteenth century. Bureaucratic absolutism, not royal despotism, was the issue.' In 1844 an anonymous pamphlet, *Bureaupratie und Beamtenthum in Deutschland*, (Bureaucracy and Officialdom in Germany) appeared in Hamburg. The author, who claimed to be an English visitor, endorsed Stein's remarks and agreed with him (and with the young Marx) that bureaucrats formed a caste with purposes of its own, 'a people within the people, a state within the state'. He insisted, as so many other critics have, that bureaucracy was of no productive use but, on the contrary, was 'a powerful cancer (which) feasts voraciously, insatiably, and lives off the marrow and blood of the people'. He emphasized the hierarchical nature of bureaucratic organization, intended to produce craven obedience to anyone who controlled the bureaucracy and unfeeling domination of those under its sway, and he attacked bureaucratic devotion to authority and secrecy:

... Bureaucracy can as well be compared with a military system as with a hierarchy, and is often compared with it. The three are parallels: military, hierarchy, bureaucracy: all rest upon the divine right of despotism, which wills no exception, no leniency, no progress, but only blind devotion and the eternally unchangeable acknowledgment of its infallibility. The three maintain themselves by unconditional obedience; the means by which obedience is maintained is fear; and this is maintained by dependence. The dependence of Prussian Civil Servants is rigidly secured by two devices: secret reports and the strict maintenance of official secrecy. The former reminds officials every moment of their superiors; the latter of the office ...

Like so many opponents of bureaucracy, this author insisted that there was an excessive number of bureaucrats and he arrived at a figure of 700,000 for Prussia. In 1845 Karl Heinzen, the radical friend and later foe of Marx and Engels, published *Die preussische Burokratie*, in which he made the *excessiveness* of bureaucracy, in numbers, authority and activity, his central theme. Heinzen also quoted von Stein's remarks, substituting 'bureaucrat' for 'bureaulist'. He contrasted bureaucracy with popular sovereignty, and claimed that it had developed out of Prussian absolutism and that it had reached its apogee under Frederick William III, who 'had allowed bureaucracy to become a system'.

The essence of bureaucracy, Heinzen explained, was:

... what has generally come to be understood as bureaucracy; the excess of officials and their activity, the abuses and evils of domination by officials and bureaus. The word bureaucracy is one of those words of invective which, like, for example, despotism, canaille, etc., cannot be properly translated into our mother tongue.

It should be evident already that, beyond its usual pejorative core and its focus on officials, 'bureaucracy' is a peculiarly malleable and adaptable word, and this was clear to Robert von Mohl who in 1846 made the first academic analysis of the concept. Mohl noted that 'since a relatively short time ago, in every place and on the most varied occasions, talk has been about "bureaucracy" but, besides being about

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1 Darmstadt, 1845.
2 Ibid. p.15.
3 Ibid. p.13.
5 Ibid. p.99.
'a social power or a system of rule', the content of this talk varied greatly within and between social groups. Nobles complained about denial of their privileges and the inconsiderateness of officials; industrialists complained 'on the one hand about indolence and apathy and on the other about unnecessary and harmful overgoverning'. Some of them alleged 'ignorance of life and of industry' while others complained of 'clumsiness and pedantry in administration'; churches complained that the bureaucracy interfered with a 'free and autonomous religious life'; artisans of useless paperwork; scholars of bureaucrats' ingorance; municipalities of interference; and statesmen of delay and obstructionism. Notwithstanding this bewildering variety, Mohl insists that 'bureaucracy' does refer to something real and that what it really means is:

> the false conception of the tasks of the state accomplished through an organism of numerous professional officials, in part composed of very mediocre members satisfied with purely formal conduct and liable to much personal incivility.

Typically Mohl is more successful in distinguishing between existing conceptions of bureaucracy than in devising a satisfactory and inclusive definition which links them.

Criticisms of both the nature and characteristics of bureaucracy and its effects on citizens were prominent in early English accounts. As Albrow has noted, they were joined by a peculiarly British theme - bureaucracy was foreign. De Gournay's and Balzac's assessment of French government was endorsed with special fervour by English writers.

1 Ibid. p.100.
2 Ibid. p.103.
3 Ibid. p.104.
4 Ibid. p.104.
5 Ibid. p.108.
Throughout the century 'bureaucracy' was referred to as the unfortunate 'Continental' (usually meaning Prussian or French) way of doing things, which the English were wise to avoid. An article on French education published in 1836, suggests some of the manifold evils of bureaucracy. Bureaucrats are omnipresent, and in universities, 'the obscure power of the bureacratie, that is, of the menials of the university is felt in all appointments except the very highest'. They are the instruments of French centralizers whose doctrines Englishmen abhor 'because they know that by them is formed the most complete, the most rigorous, and most complicated, system of despotism the world has ever known'. On the other hand, the bureaucracy is inefficient, but to the French, 'if the machinery is found to be inefficient the remedy is add more machinery. It never occurs to Frenchmen, who have a lead in this matter, that the plan is inefficient, simply because it is machinery, as far as men can be changed into tools'. Finally the author explains that in large governmental organizations men 'having no other original esprit du corps than what their salaries and officers excite ...will not sink into but will never rise out of the character of a bureaucratie'.

Similar points were made about Prussian bureaucracy in an unrelieved attack on 'Prussia and the Prussian System' which appeared in 1842. Again, the bureaucracy is seen as all-powerful and everywhere: 'the King of Prussia through his hundred armed bureaucracy literally manufactures everything in his dominions'; 'as there is no church even now better organized externally than the Romish, so there is no government

2 Ibid., p.583.
3 Ibid., p.583.
4 Ibid., p.583.
6 Ibid. pp.144-145.
which, by virtue of an all insinuating bureaucracy, is more complete in its machinery and more strong physically in its frame-work than the Prussian'. The effects of the bureaucracy are insidious: 'for this grand privilege of being governed by a scientific bureaucracy the Prussians make a sad sacrifice; they sacrifice the independence, the energy, the enterprise, of the great mass of the people. The governors govern well, but the governed, by overmuch cherishing, are made weak; they are mere clods; political nullities; children certainly in every sense'. Finally, much of the bureaucracy's work is simply self-generated: 'The principle being ...that the people shall be allowed to do nothing for themselves, it follows as a necessary consequence that a vast multitude of men must be paid at the public expense for doing that which in other countries nature is allowed to do spontaneously, as the rain falls and the wind blows'.

British opponents of centralization frequently linked its sins with those of bureaucracy: Joshua Toulmin-Smith, the leading member of the Anti-Centralization Union founded in 1854, attacked centralization as 'the system of Functionarism and Bureaucratic control', and the Union's objects were:

to resist the adoption, renewal or extended powers, of Boards or Functionaries for controlling local or independent action; to oppose Bureaucracy as a Government system; and to promote practical measures for developing and extending municipal and parochial self-government, guaranteed by and responsible to unevadible and certain law.

Hostility to bureaucracy ran deep, even among those who saw an important role for the State. Thomas Carlyle, in a series of articles

1 Ibid. p.159.
2 Ibid. p.161.
3 Ibid. p.163.
published in 1850,\(^1\) exhorts government to be more intelligent and intelligently active. He insists that 'the State is a reality and not a dramaturgy; it exists here to render existence possible, existence desirable and noble, for the State's subjects',\(^2\) and he strenuously attacks 'the notion that any Government is or can be a No-Government without the deadliest peril to all noble interests of the Commonwealth'.\(^3\) Nevertheless, whatever the new and active government he hopes for will be, it will not involve bureaucracy: 'Of the Continental nuisance called "Bureaucracy", - if this should alarm any reader, - I can see no risk or possibility in England. Democracy is hot enough here, fierce enough; it is perennial, universal, clearly invincible among us henceforth. No danger it should let itself be flung in chains by sham-secretaries of the Pedant species, and accept their vile Age of Pinchbeck for its Golden Age!'\(^4\)

The themes I have outlined recur constantly in the nineteenth century, but they are also joined by more specialized, discriminating uses of the term. 'Bureaucracy' maintained the pejorative connotations I have described. Indeed, these connotations could be called on when required; just as in contemporary polemics, an attack on 'bureaucracy' appears to have more force than the same attack directed at 'officials'. But conceptions do emerge which recognise that there are differences other than those of power and size between groups of officials and modes of organization.

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One of the most important of these conceptions transfers attention from officials as a social group, to the mode of organization of the institutions in which they serve. This use of 'bureaucracy' is important as a forerunner of the widespread twentieth century habit of applying the terms 'bureaucracies' or 'bureaucratic' to institutions, rather than to the officials employed in them; these latter are thus called bureaucrats as much because they work in the institutions as because they are members of a social group. In Germany especially, the transformation of the civil service from collegial to monocratic organization led to the use of 'bureaucracy' by many writers to refer to the monocratic organization into bureaux as distinct from collegial administration. Heinzen accepted that bureaucracy arose in organizations of this form, though he quickly added that he was more interested in its essence than its form. In 1846, Mohl suggested wrongly that this sense had historical priority over the pejorative, less discriminating uses of the term. Even in 1873 the French *Dictionnaire Générale de la Politique*, explained to Frenchmen that this was the German use of the term.1 By the nineteenth century it was generally agreed that monocratic ministries were more efficient and potentially more powerful than colleges; defining bureaucracy as a form of organization could therefore easily slide into polemic against bureaucracy as rule by officials. The link between the two conceptions is clearly brought out in a passage which Albrow quotes from the Brockhaus encyclopedia of 1819:

The modern form of public administration executes with the pen everything which previously would have been done by word of mouth. Hence many pens are set into motion. In every branch of administration bureaux or offices have multiplied, and have been accorded so great a power

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over citizens that in many countries a veritable bureaucracy, rule by offices, has developed. This bureaucracy becomes increasingly dangerous as the previous custom of conducting business through collegia falls into disuse. The directors of a bureau, in addition to their authority over its personnel, have acquired an often inordinate amount of power over citizens at large.1

Albrow suggests that 'the identification of the bureau system and bureaucracy made an extremely useful polemical point'2 for opponents of the German state, who could begin with an apparently neutral definition of bureaucracy as monocratic administration, and then ascribe to it all the negative connotations of bureaucracy as government by officials.

A similar leap from analysis of a form of administrative organization to exploitation of the many polemical advantages of 'bureaucracy' was taken in 1864 by the French sociologist, Frédéric Le Play, whose La Réforme sociale en France contained a long chapter condemning what he called bureaucracy in European government.3 He apologised for introducing into social science 'this hybrid word created by a light literature', but nonetheless used it. Rather than choose the common approach of defining bureaucracy as the cause of sundry ills, le Play identified it with the ills themselves, with what in Soviet discussion is often called 'bureaucratism'. He regarded bureaucracy as a 'vice', an 'illness' which occurred when actual power in government was wielded by anonymous middle- and lower- level functionaries who were accountable to no-one. It could only be avoided by making heads of bureaux actually responsible for what was done within them, as happened, le Play claimed, in England. From this relatively modest

1 Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie oder Conversationslexicon (Leipzig, 1819), vol.2, p.158, Albrow, op.cit.,p.28.
2 Albrow, op.cit., p.28.
3 (Paris, 1887), pp.344-91.
beginning, le Play goes on to attribute most conceivable dangers of government, and some not so conceivable, to this diseased form of administration. Bureaucrats are not only inefficient, arrogant, irresponsible and lazy, but they indirectly encourage revolution by weakening respect for authority; they erode the role of parents, especially by their proliferation of complex examinations for which special training is necessary; they encourage communism; they destroy individual initiative and keep subjects as children - a common nineteenth century criticism; and because of their power lust they are in fact the cause of excessive centralization.

This looseness, not to say wantonness, of the term was as common in nineteenth century uses of 'bureaucracy' as it is today. Nevertheless, a writer's response to the growth or increased importance of state power did not have to be expressed as a response to 'bureaucracy' or have much to do with what he understood by that word. This is especially true of a greater and more rigorous thinker than we have yet discussed, John Stuart Mill.

Though he contrasted England favourably with the 'bureaucracy-ridden nations of the continent', Mill was less interested than his contemporaries in drawing facile polemical contrasts between England and Europe. While he used the concept 'bureaucracy' and used it suggestively, he did not use it simply as a blanket characterization of continental over-governmental but as a specific, almost technical description of one way of governing. According to Mill, this way of governing occurs where 'the work of government has been in the hands of governors by profession; which is the essence and meaning of bureaucracy.'

2 Ibid. p.245.
For Mill, 'bureaucracy' has to do with expertise and professionalism. He has often been taken to be saying far more about bureaucracy than he actually is, however, because this has been ignored. For example, in the *Principles of Political Economy* Mill advances a number of arguments against the growth of governmental functions and powers, and J. M. Robson says of these that they include 'almost every consideration advanced by opponents of bureaucratic growth'. This may be true of later and (earlier) writers, but only one of the six arguments Mill advances has to do with what he calls bureaucracy. The other arguments are directed against the growth of governmental activity *in general* and have nothing specifically to do with 'bureaucracy' or bureaucratic government. Nor does Mill suggest that they do. In the *Principles* only one sort of problem is raised which, while not necessarily confined to bureaucracies, is necessarily faced by them. Mill considers this problem of central importance, and raises it first of all as his final argument for *laissez-faire*, and several pages later, he repeats it to deal with a supposed exception to the principle, and uses the word 'bureaucracy' for the first time in these pages. Anticipating James Burnham, Mill concedes that where individuals manage concerns only 'by delegated agency' as in joint stock companies, the interested persons (the share-holders) are no closer to the power exercised by directors than individuals would be to enterprises managed by public officers. Nevertheless, Mill rehearses the arguments against government intervention, and pre-eminent among them is 'the [still greater] inexpediency of concentrating in a dominant bureaucracy, all the skill and experience in the management of large interests, and all the power of organized action, existing in the community; a practice which keeps the citizens in a relation to the government like that of children to their guardians, and is a main cause of the inferior capacity


2. These words were omitted after the 1848 and 1849 editions of the *Principles*. 
for political life which has hitherto characterised the over-governed countries of the Continent, whether with or without the forms of representative government'.

In the light of Mill's definition of bureaucracy it is not hard to see why excessive concentration of talent and initiative was regarded as a likely consequence of it. But while over-government of any kind presented dangers for Mill, not every kind of over-government was bureaucratic and not every kind of danger was a bureaucratic danger. Some writers have considered it significant that in On Liberty (1859), 'the dangers of bureaucracy were singled out for the peroration of that immensely influential essay'. But Mill himself says, 'I have reserved for the last place a large class of questions respecting the limits of government interference, which, though closely connected with the subject of this essay, do not, in strictness belong to it. These are cases in which the reasons against interference do not turn upon the principle of liberty'. And Mill is again talking generally about the limits of governmental rather than bureaucratic intervention. Within this discussion what Mill held to be the 'third and most important reason for objecting to government interference' was not the danger of bureaucracy but the dangers, already referred to in the Principles, involved in adding unnecessarily to governmental power. This is a general problem. What is true is that powerful governments become particularly dangerous if they are staffed in the most efficient way by the ablest men in society. For in those special circumstances, a specific and important

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2 Martin Albrow, op.cit.p.22.
4 Ibid. p.165.
problem would arise: 'all the enlarged culture and practised intelligence in the country, except the purely speculative, would be concentrated in a numerous bureaucracy, to whom alone the rest of the community would look for all things'.\(^1\) It would become the focus of all ambition, and the people outside the bureaucracy would fail to be 'accustomed to transact their own business...for...where everything is done through the bureaucracy, nothing to which the bureaucracy is really adverse can be done at all.'\(^2\) Part of one of the arguments in *On Liberty*, then has to do with bureaucracy, and it is clear that it is important to Mill. But he is dealing with much besides bureaucracy when he discusses the limits of government intervention, and it is a distortion of his view both of the dangers of such intervention and of the specific problems associated with bureaucracies, to run the discussions together.

Moreover, despite Schaffer's claim that Mill's 'opposition to bureaucracy was unambiguous',\(^3\) the truth is that his attitude to bureaucracy is quite ambiguous. Mill moved, I believe, between at least three uses of 'bureaucracy', and while none of these is ruled out by his definition he comes to reject claims for bureaucracy in two of the uses while advocating its cultivation in the third sense. Crudely stated, the distinction is between bureaucracy as a *form* of government, to be contrasted with democracy, oligarchy, etc.; as the real locus of governing power, whatever the form; and as an *instrument* of government, to be contrasted with non-professional administration. Since Mill does not bother to make these distinctions explicit, the sense in which 'bureaucracy' is used must be gleaned from the context in which it appears.

   Mill clearly used 'bureaucracy' to refer to a form of government. The definition I have quoted occurs in the context of a discussion of

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the claims of rivals to representative government as the 'ideally best polity', and Mill concludes that 'the comparison as to the intellectual attributes of a government, has to be made between a representative democracy and a bureaucracy; all other governments may be left out of account'. But though bureaucracies are expert, operate by 'well-tried and well-considered traditional maxims' and are staffed by people trained in the practical requirements of their tasks, 'the disease which afflicts bureaucratic governments, and which they usually die of, is routine. They perish by the immutability of their maxims; and, still more, by the universal law that whatever becomes a routine loses its vital principle, and having no longer a mind acting within it, goes on revolving mechanically though the work it is intended to do remains undone'.

Bureaucracies need elements of free opposition, for otherwise they will become stultified over time.

The same defects will exist where the bureaucracy is powerful enough to be the real governing power. We have already seen the effects of a dominant bureaucracy on citizens' capacities for self-reliance, but the point is also made, in On Liberty and elsewhere, that an over-powerful bureaucracy will of necessity do its own job badly. Unless a governing body can receive informed criticism from outside itself, it will occasionally be entranced by 'some half-examined crudity which has struck the fancy of some leading member of the corps', but usually it will simply be trapped by routine.

However, in the third sense in which the concept is used, bureaucracy is a prerequisite to good government. While Mill argues that the bureaucracy must not absorb all available talent, it is this absorption which is dangerous, rather than the mere existence of a

1 Representative Government, op.cit., p.246.
2 Ibid.
bureaucracy itself. Indeed, in this third sense, bureaucracy is the thing endangered, for 'if we would possess permanently a skilful and efficient body of functionaries...if we would not have our bureaucracy degenerate into a pedantocracy, this body must not engross all the occupations which form and cultivate the faculties required for the government of mankind'.

One of the central dilemmas for Mill was to reconcile the need for freedom with the need for skilled government. He valued both and indeed thought that neither was attainable without the other; 'to secure as much of the advantages of centralized power and intelligence as can be had without turning into governmental channels too great a proportion of the general activity - is one of the most difficult and complicated questions in the art of government.' In the 'ideally best polity', governments would be selected, watched and 'when needful' controlled by their constituents; the actual business of governing, however, had to be done, or at the very least, closely supervised, by the skilled - skilled legislators and bureaucrats.

Mill's respect for expertise and professionalism was, of course, not particularly exceptional in the nineteenth century. Given the contrast between the highly professionalized Prussian bureaucrat, with whom the word was in any case associated, and the English civil servant, for whose training schemes were only beginning to be devised, the association of bureaucracy with professionalism was not rare. But Mill was less concerned than many of his contemporaries to fill the word with purely polemical ballast. He also paid attention to distinctions between circumstances in which bureaucracy might be useful and circumstances in which it might do harm. Unfortunately, making distinctions has not always been the strong suit of writers on bureaucracy.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Bagehot also made this association but he was far more suspicious of purely 'expert' bodies than Mill was. See Bagehot, The English Constitution (reprinted London, 1966), esp. pp. 195-99.
PART TWO

BUREAUCRACY AND THEORIES OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION
SAINT-SIMON AND THE NEW SOCIETY:
FROM GOVERNMENT TO ADMINISTRATION

Marxism, as one of its recent exponents has observed, 'claims to be both a science and a guide to socialist action' and in its combination of analysis and explanation with prediction and advice, it was scarcely alone or even unusual in the nineteenth century. Proudhonists, Fourierists, anarchists, socialists and visionaries of all kinds shared this determination both to explain how the world, or more particularly 'society', worked and to demonstrate that it could and would work very differently and very much better than it had hitherto. More particularly these and many other nineteenth century thinkers shared a number of profoundly influential beliefs in the context of which their analyses of and speculations about society and politics proceeded. Europe in the nineteenth century was crowded with theorists and ideologues who agreed that 'society', rather than politics, was fundamental in human affairs, that societies evolved and changed greatly over time, and that therefore, political arrangements had to be adjusted to such changes. Moreover, these writers, and especially the revolutionaries among them, were extraordinarily confident that they knew the direction of historical change and the stage which had been reached: they shared a profound faith in progress and a belief that the goal of

progress - a transition from existing society to a new and in every way better society - was very near.

1 Politics in the Old Society

In their critiques of existing political and administrative arrangements, nineteenth century revolutionary social theorists contributed a good deal to anti-bureaucratic polemic, but their conviction that a totally new society was attainable, indeed inevitable, and that political forms were malleable derivatives of society, frequently resulted in the dissolution of many conventional problems of political organization and leadership. Common to much revolutionary social theory and to much nineteenth century sociology was the belief that politics as commonly understood would be irrelevant to and transcended in the new society, the birth of which they were witnessing. As Wolin observes:

In the nineteenth century the anti-political impulses nurtured by classical liberalism took on a depth and pervasiveness unmatched in previous centuries. 'The irksome situation' of today, Proudhon declared, was due to 'une certaine maladie de l'opinion...qu'Aristote...a normé POLITIQUE. The abolition of the political was proclaimed by almost every important thinker, and most projects for a future society excluded political activity from the routine of daily life.¹

The thought of the French social theorist and visionary, Claude Henri de Rouvroy Comte de Saint-Simon, is striking in that he shared his contemporaries' order of priorities, their faith in progress and contempt for the political, and yet did not allow his vision of a new society simply to dissolve all of the problems that had so preoccupied earlier writers on politics and administration. Instead, he took seriously, and devoted considerable attention to, the kind of central administrative organization appropriate to the coming society. Saint-Simon is exceptional, too, in the amount of attention he pays to the

administrative imperatives of modern society, the need for co-ordination of a 'non-political' kind and its characteristics, the permeation of government by industrial concerns and requirements, and the necessity for the State to utilize managers, scientists, technicians, engineers.

Saint-Simon is not a consistent thinker, or even, at times, a particularly coherent one. His works are full of bad history, bad philosophy and bad applied science. Yet they have the effect of a kind of intellectual Catherine wheel. Again and again one is startled by bright and sometimes astonishingly prescient aperçus, which often appear fleetingly and disappear again, undeveloped or even contradicted by their author. Saint-Simon's work embodies many of the themes and preoccupations, strengths and weaknesses, ambivalences and tensions which recur in later revolutionary social theory. But more than much of the latter, it points to central and pervasive characteristics of the modern world.

Saint-Simon believed that the society in which he lived was undergoing, and also approaching the end of, a profound crisis, a crisis, he wrote, in which 'society today presents this extraordinary phenomenon: a nation which is essentially industrial, yet whose government is essentially feudal'. In putting forward that paradox, he was making two implicit claims - one about the general relationship between societies and the institutions which exist within them, and another about the specific incompatibility between feudalism and industrialism.

Saint-Simon's general claim - later, in revised and sharpened form, made even more familiar by Marx - is that political institutions cannot endure or even operate effectively unless they mesh closely with the state of 'social forces' in their epoch. The particular predicament of Western society stemmed, for Saint-Simon, from the co-
existence and competition of two quite different kinds of forces - feudal and industrial. Even after the French Revolution (which he considered a failure for this reason) feudal institutions and elites still persisted, if falteringedly, and sought to retain their dominance. The ostensible temporal and spiritual leaders of society were feudal left-overs, relics. But the 'real', 'positive' forces were not feudal, they were industrial; 'it is in industry ... that, in the last analysis, the real forces of society reside'.

One difference between feudal and industrial societies lay in the goals they served. Feudal society was devoted to military conquest. Military government, dominated by men of the sword (sabreurs) organized for war and conquest and ruling by authoritarian command backed by force, was therefore appropriate to it. Such government is quite inappropriate to the goal of industrial society, which is production. Industrial society is essentially pacific; its development is impeded by precisely those activities that are most characteristic of the military way of working.

A second difference between feudal and industrial forces could be seen in the classes associated with each, and one of the clearest indices of the current crisis was the absolute uselessness of the feudal, and ostensibly ruling, class. For classes are of quite fundamental importance in Saint-Simon's theory, as they were to be in Marx's. Class position is determined by social function, and carries with it characteristic ways of acting, values, competence and beliefs. Except for one mention of individual anomalies such as Saint-Simon himself, whom the 'hazards of birth' had placed in the class of nobles,

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1 OC vol. 19, p.18 .
3 OC. vol.23 p.28.
there is no discussion in Saint-Simon's work of people betraying their
class, or of sources of individual action that stem from something other
than class position. There is throughout the unruffled assumption
that all one needs to know of a person's worth and usefulness can be got
from knowing his class. In one of his most famous sallies, and the
first, if for perverse reasons, to gain him notoriety, since it led
to his prosecution for sedition, Saint-Simon wrote:

Let us suppose that France were suddenly to lose her fifty best
physicists, chemists, physiologists, mathematicians, poets,
painters, sculptors, musicians, writers; her fifty best
mechanical engineers, civil engineers, artillery experts,
architects, doctors, surgeons, pharmacists, seamen, clock-
makers; her fifty best bankers; her two hundred best merchants;
her six hundred best farmers ...[he lists a wide array of
artisans]... and one hundred other persons of unspecified
occupations, the most capable in the sciences, fine arts, arts
and professions, making in all the three thousand leading
scholars, artists and artisans of France.

Since these men are the Frenchmen who are the most essential,
those who direct the enterprises most useful to the nation,
and those who render it productive in the sciences, fine
arts, arts and professions, they are really the flower of
French society; they are of all Frenchmen the most useful
to their country, they gain for it the greatest glory, they
hasten most its civilization and its prosperity. The nation
would become a body without a soul as soon as it lost them
... France would require at least a whole generation to repair
this misfortune, for men who distinguish themselves in works
of positive utility are real anomalies and nature is not
prodigal of anomalies, especially those of this kind.

Let us pass to another assumption. Suppose that France
preserves all the men of genius that she possesses in the
sciences, fine arts, arts and professions but has the misfort-
une to lose in the same day M. the King's brother, M. le
duc d'Angoulême ... [etc.]

Suppose that France loses at the same time all the great
officers of the crown, all the ministers (with or without
departments), all the councillors of State, all the Maitres
des requêtes, marshals, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, vicars-
genral and canons, all the prefects and sub-prefects, all the
government employees, all the judges, and in addition the
ten thousand richest proprietors of those who live as nobles.

This accident would certainly distress the French, because they
are good people ... But this loss of thirty thousand individuals,
reputed to be the most important in the State, would only grieve
them for purely sentimental reasons, for no political harm to
the State would result from it.¹

The simple test of political institutions and political people for Saint-Simon is whether they are useful to industry. None of the second group was, and consequently none was of any use to France. And since men of industry were in fact subordinated to princes and other dominateurs and routiniers, one obviously had a monde renversé. Moreover, feudal officials were not simply the least useful of men, while the industriels were the most useful; the carriers of feudalism did actual harm. So far as I know, Saint-Simon never called them 'bureaucrates' nor derided them collectively for being a 'bureaucratie'. But he did complain that these government officials treated their positions as theirs by right and not as sources of duties, that they governed in their own interests instead of those of the governed, that they therefore sought high pay for themselves and exacted high taxes from the people.²

They were not merely idlers (fainéants, oisifs) but were an immense, growing, and expensive crowd of incompetent parasites. Since they had the same needs and desires as producers, but produced nothing themselves, 'these people necessarily live on the work of others, either they are given or they take; in a word, they are idlers, that is to say, thieves. (The idlers who are not thieves make themselves beggars; this latter class is scarcely less contemptible or dangerous than the former).³

Contemptible and pernicious though they be, however, it was not really their fault. For socio-historical determinism pervades Saint-Simon's writing. He was very careful not to appear to be arguing that the forces of industry were real because he liked them; they were real as a result of ineluctable historical developments which stretched, he took

¹ OC. vol.20, pp.17-21.
² cf. OC vol. 39, p.144.
³ OC. vol. 18, p.130.
pains to show, over several centuries. Similarly, he recognized that it is difficult to blame someone who is being dumped by the wave of history or, as Trotsky might put it, being thrown into its rubbish bin. It was 'absolutely false' to claim, as the Encyclopédistes had, that public officials had always been a harmful, parasitic presence retarding 'the progress of the human spirit'\(^1\) - the very fact that feudal institutions and classes had existed for so long and had had great strength proved that they had given 'long and important services to the majority of the nation.'\(^2\) Again, he stressed that he was not impugning the motives of these parasites. He did not believe that 'each of those who has a part in this grand enterprise of pillage senses the radical immorality of the state of affairs from which he profits. I am, on the contrary, persuaded that almost all are well intentioned, and that they fancy themselves in all good faith very useful, and even absolutely indispensable to the producers. Such an illusion is natural. But the force of their situation draws them irresistibly, without their realising it, and in spite of their intentions, in the direction which I have indicated. The result is absolutely the same for the producers, as if the governors had been led by the purest machiavellianism.'\(^3\)

In any event, for Saint-Simon, the fault did not lie primarily with the members of the feudal classes as individuals, but in the institutions and activities of pre-industrial government itself. In a society devoted to production, the needs of industry and commerce are of pivotal importance. But control or regulation by government is inherently and absolutely inimical to those needs, and to attempt, as feudal government does, 'to control everything, to submit everything to rules, to calculat-

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1 OC. vol. 21, p.182.
2 OC. vol. 21, pp.167-168.
3 OC vol. 22, p.173.
ions, is the greatest of human follies'. For, as 'l'immortel' Adam Smith had shown, industry develops spontaneously by an 'interior force', and to meddle with this development from outside is to destroy it. In his earlier writings Saint-Simon was prepared to allow government a slightly greater role than in his later works, but at all times, if government is necessary, it is only a 'necessary evil' to prevent anarchy.

In industrial society, then, the proper role of government is to be an agent not a principal, the 'chargé d'affaires of society' and not in any sense its directing power. Government functions should be extremely circumscribed - all that it is appropriate for government to do is to protect workers from the unproductive activities of idlers and to maintain order, security and freedom in production. Even this policing function, Saint-Simon suggests, may become, with the development of industrial society, 'almost totally the collective responsibility of all the citizens'. Government at such time will merely prevent disorder, and since disorder will be rare, the task will not be onerous.

2 Administration in the New Society

Saint-Simon is not merely a critic of existing institutions. He is an ideologist with a vision of the good society, certain that it is attainable. His critique of contemporary society forms only the backdrop for his portrayal of the inevitable future course of history and for his demonstration that what is presently inappropriate will become non-existent.

It can do an ideologist's confidence no harm to have History (and in Saint-Simon's case, God also) on his side, in order to provide the otherwise elusive link between what ought to happen and what will

1 OC vol.18, p.77.
2 OC vol.19, p.36.
happen and Saint-Simon was quite aware of this advantage. In the seventh letter of *L'Organisateur* he explained that his arguments for the system of social organization he proposed were 'in general of two types: those of one type will consist in establishing the advantages of this system; those of the other will aim to prove that, apart from all its advantages, it is, with respect to its principal provisions, a forced result of the course which civilization has followed for seven to eight centuries; from which results the proof that it is not at all a utopia. This second class of arguments is the more important, for it is certain that one cannot resist at all the course of civilization.'\(^1\) It is not, then, startling to discover that these arguments demonstrate that 'the industrial system is that towards which the human species has always tended; this system will be the final system; all the other political systems which have existed must only be considered as preparatory systems.'\(^2\)

Some of the characteristics of this final system will not surprise anyone familiar with the prophecies of European ideologists, or for that matter, of Melanesian cargo cultists. When industrial society is fully developed, the whole basis and rationale of governmental domination will have disappeared. For industrial society is a co-operative activity of producers, all of whom play some productive role and all of whom have worth by virtue of their active participation. In the words of *L'Organisateur*, the leaders of this industrial co-operation do not need to regiment or command subjects, they combine with and give direction to partners (*associés, sociétaires*) and *collaborators*. The only commands exercised by the new leaders will be those strictly necessary 'to maintain good order in work, that is to say very few. Industrial capacity

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2 OC, vol.21, p.166.
of its nature loaths to exercise arbitrariness as much as to support it ... besides, in a society of workers, everything tends naturally to order, disorder comes always, in the last analysis, from idlers'.

National hatreds will disappear, since 'this spirit of discord and of hatred is essentially contrary to the industrial spirit; it is nothing but the result of feudal influence'. Industry, he explained in another passage, 'is one, all its members are united by the general interests of production, by the needs that they all have for security in work and freedom of trade.'

Notwithstanding this idyllic vision, Saint-Simon does turn his attention to the problem so many of his contemporaries ignore or merely hint at. For Saint-Simon never suggests that the coming decline in the role of government implies or is likely to lead to any decline in the need for organization and co-ordination of the extremely complex and interconnected affairs of industrial society. Government, he frequently says, will give way to administration, and in his scheme of things administration is no small affair. Industrial society must be well administered by those most talented to do so, for otherwise it will fall into anarchy, and this is a fate even worse than that of being governed. Administrative capacity, then, is the 'first capacity in politics'; once a nation is well administered, the form of government is of little moment. Saint-Simon does not refer to Pope's often-quoted couplet:

1 OC vol.20, pp.151-52.
3 OC vol.19, p.47.
4 OC vol.19, p.201.
5 cf. OC Vol.20, p.191.
For forms of government let fools contest;
Whiche'er is best administered is best.

but he quotes one of his mentors, Jean-Baptiste Say, to identical
effect\(^1\), and his own view is hardly more dismissive of government
or less of administration.

To what extent is Saint-Simon's aphoristic contrast between
government and administration a mere verbal sleight of hand, and to what
extent does it represent distinct ways of conducting public affairs?
A large part of what Saint-Simon has in mind is suggested by his famous
prediction that in industrial society the government of men will be re-
placed by the administration of things.\(^2\) The contrast here appears
to be that between military government or command of men by the explicit
or implicit use of coercion and the activity of, say, an artisan who is
directly related through his work to his raw materials and his product.

But there must be a good deal more to the story than this, for
Saint-Simon's schemes are riddled with men instructing, exhorting, manag­
ing and organizing other men. *Savants*, for instance, are responsible
for educating everyone, and in one scheme they are to devise and organize
the teaching of a national catechism in which every Frenchman must pass
an examination before being admitted to citizenship. Artists are re-
quired to explain the benefits of the new system and the horrors of the
old; businessmen must manage large numbers of people in factories and
on farms. Those key figures responsible for the *haute administration* of
society have, in one way or another, to run the whole national enter-
prise. The men administering things, in other words, have themselves
to be administered. And what is this if not government?

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1 OC vol. 18, p.183.
Elements of Saint-Simon's answer are scattered through his writings. He allowed 'administration' of men where it was 'secondary' and 'co-operates in the exercise of a greater action on nature'\(^1\)

Industrial management is an example of this sort of activity. The cohesive, harmonious, nature of industrial society eliminates in large part the need for force; and it is force, above all, which for Saint-Simon characterizes the activities of government.

A third difference between the new and the old is of central importance in Saint-Simon's argument. Once more it can be approached through a Saint-Simonian aphorism. 'In the old system', Saint-Simon writes, 'society was essentially governed by men; in the new it is governed by nothing but principles.'\(^2\) Here the technocratic strain in Saint-Simon emerges particularly clearly. The goal of industrial society is given - it is to increase production and prosperity through utilization of the sciences, fine arts, arts and professions. For Saint-Simon there is no room for dispute about the goal: it is clear and unambiguous and capable of generating open and precise criteria for the judgment of performance. What is required of the people is that they cultivate the talents best suited to such judgment. There is no need and indeed no place for blind obedience to a ruler; there is only a place for deference to tested and acknowledged expertise. It is in this context that Auguste Comte's prophetic insight into the role of the engineer in industrial society occurs, and it is in the same context that he writes, as Saint-Simon's secretary in Saint-Simon's name: 'I do not say a new power rises beside each of the two old powers [temporal and spiritual], but a capacity rises beside a power.'\(^3\)

1. OC vol. 20, p.192.
2. OC vol.20, p.197.
3. OC Vol. 20, p.86.
Given the goal, all that remains to be done is to adjust the means available for attaining it, and this is a purely technical matter, a matter of reasoning, of expertise, not of will or of power. 'The action of governing', Saint-Simon himself writes, 'is then at nought or next to nought, in so far as it signifies the action of commanding. All the questions which ought to suggest themselves in such a political system ...are eminently positive and judgeable; decisions can only be the result of scientific demonstrations, absolutely independent of all human will, and susceptible of discussion by all those who have the degree of instruction sufficient to understand them'. Politics, in other words, gives way to technique.

Saint-Simon is not, however, prepared to leave it at that. For production and the application of technique must be organized and co-ordinated in the most useful way by the class of people best suited to this task. And it is therefore of crucial importance to determine what is the best form of organization and who is best fitted for it. It is in his thoughts on how best to organize the application of technique that the industrial focus of Saint-Simon's thought is most apparent. For what Saint-Simon does is take completely seriously his claim that the nation is industry. When he says that 'France has become a great factory and the French Nation a great workshop', he is not merely indulging in metaphor, nor is he simply saying that the nation is absolutely dependent on industry, though he certainly believes this. He is also pointing, as Max Weber later pointed, to the tremendous similarities in the operations and management of State and non-State enterprises. If the State really is thought of as a factory, then it

1 OC. vol. 20, pp.198-99.
2 OC vol. 23, p.91.
becomes more plausible to argue that the problems to be coped with by a State will have a lot in common with those facing industry, that therefore the skills involved in coping with the latter will be required to cope with the former, and that if some men have these skills and others do not, this fact should be socially recognised.

Saint-Simon frequently says that government by the désoeuvrés will be replaced by administration by the industriels, but this latter concept is somewhat rough around the edges. Especially in his earlier writings, 'industry' is used in a very broad sense to include 'every kind of useful work, theory as well as application, works of the mind as well as those of the hand'. Elsewhere, and particularly later, it suffers an unannounced narrowing to include only the works of practical men as distinct from those of artists and scientists. All are useful but not all are industriels. Other distinctions and imprecisions muddy the picture further, and in any case, whatever precision can be given the term, it is clear that Saint-Simon does not intend the leaders of industrial society to be co-extensive with it. For the idea of a proper industrial hierarchy pervades Saint-Simon's work. As with so many words used by him, the 'equality' he favours must be understood in a quite special sense: it is apparent that in industrial society some industriels will be more equal than others. Industrial society, Saint-Simon writes, allows 'the greatest degree of equality possible.' But what is possible, and Comte adds, desirable, is not l'égalité turque, 'the equal admissibility to the exercise of arbitrary power' but its 'contrary ... true equality ...industrial equality which consists in each deriving benefits from society exactly proportionate to his social contribution, that is to say to his positive capacity, to the useful employ-

1 OC vol.18, p.165.
3 OC. vol. 37, p.35.
ment he makes of his means... The meritocratic judgment implicit in this definition is consistent both with his attack on privileges of birth and with his constant appeals to and praise for 'the most important', 'the most capable', 'the most positive' industriels, those who should direct 'the general interests of society....[since their] capacities are of the most general and most positive utility to society'.

To grant status on grounds of birth is, on Saint-Simon's theory, quite irrational since the criterion is irrelevant to one's productive potential. But those performing important roles deserved their high status, and were the only persons who did. 'There are today', he wrote, 'no other notables in France, with the exception of savants and artists, than the heads of works of agriculture, of manufacture and of commerce'. He goes on to explain:

(I understand here by heads [chefs] of different works, all the industriels who are not purely workmen [ouvriers], that is to say executants, and who take a more or less major part in the direction of works). It is exclusively with them that the power to act on the people is found, because it is to them that the people is habitually subordinated in its day-to-day relations.

Saint-Simon stresses the importance of educating the masses and increasing their capacity for choice and self-reliance, and there is good reason to think that he would welcome upward mobility among the men of industry. But the national enterprise will be run by the most talented, selected by a process left opaque. And while a worker might somehow rise to leadership, the distinction at any point of time between leaders and led will be clear.

However, it is far from clear how much 'administration' these talented leaders will be required to do. Saint-Simon speaks, as it

1. OC vol. 22, p.17.
2. OC vol. 39, p.3-4.
were, with two voices. One voice constantly explains the cheapness and efficiency of having national affairs managed by *industriels*. Essentially their function is reduced to preparing the budget of industrial administration. One is reminded again and again of 'the fundamental truth in finance: *that the budget should be made by those who are interested in economy and in the good employment of public monies*, and there is never any doubt that Saint-Simon is referring to the leaders of industry. Beyond their particular skills within a branch of industry 'there is a capacity which is common to all of them; it is the administrative capacity; it is the capacity necessary to make a good budget, and they are the only ones who possess this capacity; they were its creators'. They alone 'make a permanent application of it, and at their personal risks. Thus when the temporal power is entrusted to them, the only impulse of their habits, eminently economical, will lead them to reduce the costs of management and administration to the lowest rate possible'.

Saint-Simon has variously been seen as the precursor of fascism, socialism, and of what the contemporary Israeli historian Jacob Talmon calls 'totalitarian technocracy'. It is therefore important to keep in mind the *modesty* of central administration as he characterizes it. When asked whether the *industriels* will lose their all-important talents if they devote themselves to national administration, he explains that the public functions of the heads of industry can be discharged on a part-time basis and need not interfere with their private industrial

1. OC vol.21, p.142.
2. OC vol.21, p.137.
3. OC vol.22, p.178.
enterprises. This, he points out, is the way in which they already participate in chambers of commerce and manufacture.\(^1\) Anyway, 'in all times those who have directed public affairs, are those who have the fewest occupations ...[in] all Europe ... [it is] the supreme directors of public affairs who hunt the most, give the most festivals, balls, grand repasts, who frequent the most spectacles etc ...'.\(^2\) Elsewhere he explains that the most important *industriels* will prepare the budget free of charge, and therefore 'this function will only be weakly desired'; in the interests of economy functionaries will be paid only moderately, and thus government places will not be much sought after and their number will diminish considerably. Finally, an order will be established in which a great number of places will be exercised free of charge 'because the rich *oisifs* will find no other means of procuring consideration for themselves'.\(^3\)

But this is not Saint-Simon's only way of speaking. He has another, insistent, voice which rings particularly loud in some of the detailed descriptions he gives of the central authorities of the new society, and of some of the functions they are to perform. The detail of each scheme is deceptive, since it is never the same from scheme to scheme. But there is enough here to bother Adam Smith. In one scheme, admittedly the most detailed, we find that projects of public works are to be drawn up 'to increase the wealth of France and ameliorate the lot of its inhabitants under every heading of utility and amenity',\(^4\) and these will be carried out by a chamber of execution staffed solely

\(^1\) OC vol.21., p.148.  
\(^2\) OC vol.21, p.149.  
\(^3\) OC.vol.37, p.10.  
\(^4\) OC.vol.20, p.51.
from among the 'principal heads of industrial houses'. The most important activities will be drainage, clearing, cutting of roads, and opening of canals. By the roads and canals will be parks with museums of natural products and industrial products of surrounding countries, facilities for artists who wish to stop, and always there will be musicians inflaming the inhabitants' passion 'for the greatest good of the nation'. There is absolutely no textual warrant for Stark's claim that Saint-Simon, as a faithful disciple of Smith, 'thought only ... of' useful projects which were not profitable enough to otherwise be undertaken by private industry. Saint-Simon makes no mention of this limitation, and I see no evidence that he had it in mind. Rather, these schemes are part of a general programme of redistribution of luxury. Hitherto 'luxury was concentrated in the palaces of kings, the residences of princes, in the mansions and chateaux of a few powerful men ... The present circumstances are favourable to rendering luxury national. Luxury will become useful and moral when it is the entire nation which enjoys it.

In what Saint-Simon calls the spiritual sphere - science, education and morality - the amount of work to be done and the amount of control to be exercised is also considerable. This is the sphere of the savants and in later works the moralists of the New Christianity, and it includes, among other things complete responsibility for education. These leaders will ensure the observance of ordinances such as the following:

Considering that the strongest link which can unite the members of a society consists in the similarity of their principles and of their knowledge and that this similarity

1. OC. vol.20. p.52.
3. OC. vol. 20, pp.52-53.
can only exist as a result of the uniformity of the instruction given to all the citizens, we have directed what follows:

ARTICLE I  The Institute will be responsible for the surveillance of public instruction; nothing will be taught in the schools contrary to the principles established in the national catechism.

ARTICLE II  The ministers of different cults will be submitted, for their preaching as well as for their teaching of children, to the surveillance of the Institute.1

Elsewhere Saint-Simon explains that the *industriels* will need an army and courts, and that existing proprietors will not be forced to put their capital into industry. But the *industriels*, not they, will lead, and what the leaders are to do is suggestive:

the most important *industriels* will take on *gratis* the direction of administration of the public fortune; they will fix the rank which the other classes will occupy; they will accord to each of them an importance proportionate to the services which each of them renders to industry ... when this result is obtained, tranquility will be completely assured, public prosperity will march with all possible rapidity, and society will enjoy all the individual and collective happiness which human nature could claim.2

There is in all this a rather hefty work-load for part-time volunteers.

Even leaving out of the account the various propaganda activities of the artists and the new moralists, the activities of the leaders of industrial society lend a *busyness* to the central authority which Saint-Simon's first voice does not suggest at all. How is this to be explained? How is it that Saint-Simon could use *both* voices so frequently, apparently with equal conviction? I have no confident answers, only a few tentative suggestions. One is that there may be no real problem at all: to hold someone of Saint-Simon's scattiness of mind responsible for inconsistencies among his desires might be to ask for too much. This may be all that one can say, but if so it should be

2. OC vol. 37, p.42.
kept as a last resort, failing more adequate explanation. A second possibility is that Saint-Simon has sufficient faith in the natural harmony of industrial society, the natural deference within it to its leaders, and the obviousness of the principles on which decisions are made, to believe that decisions once taken will not need to be implemented by the central authority, that they will simply be implemented by the populace. Saint-Simon does not say this, but it is, at least, consistent with much that he does say. Third, and most important, there is a striking lacuna in Saint-Simon's work: Saint-Simon, the ideologist of organization and administration and the withering critic of existing bureaucracies, had no conception of the role and consequences of administrative structures and officials in the new society. There are extraordinarily few references to functionaries in the new society: on one occasion, he explains that industriels will not scramble after government places because, inter alia, they 'will feel themselves less appropriate to exercise government than those who have become accustomed to this kind of work'. But if the functionaries are not the old fainéants, who are they? Elsewhere, as we have seen, he explains that they will be moderately paid and that therefore their numbers will diminish. What is completely lacking in Saint-Simon is a sense of the pressures which the tasks of the State will exert on its central apparatus, and of the possibility that these tasks will distort the nature of this apparatus beyond recognition. It is an insufficiently remarked upon lapse by this otherwise most modern of men. Yet, the paying of scant attention to the role of functionaries and function-performing institutions in the new society, combined with eagerness that such functions be performed better than ever before, was destined to be far more than a specifically Saint-Simonian idiosyncracy.

1 OC. vol. 21, p.134.
There are many fundamental differences between the thought of Saint-Simon and that of Marx. Saint-Simon, for example, paid little attention to conflicts between industrial employers and employees; Marx put such conflicts at the centre of his analysis of modern society. Saint-Simon hoped for a society dominated by industrial managers; Marx, as the world knows, did not. Nevertheless, Marx and later Marxists absorbed, or at least duplicated, to a striking extent central elements of Saint-Simon's thought. In the Marxist tradition, as in Saint-Simon, we repeatedly find Manichaean dichotomies between the old society and the new; command and co-operation; conflict and harmony; government and administration; parasitism and production. Marx and Saint-Simon shared the belief that existing forms of government and of political organization were totally inappropriate to the new society, and they shared the faith that they could readily be dispensed with there. In his hopes for, and understanding of, the role of government in the new society, Marx retained many of the ambivalences and tensions which pervaded Saint-Simon's thought. Marx is a far more profound thinker than Saint-Simon but his thoughts on the role of bureaucracy both in contemporary society and in the good society to come, are not free of the stereotypes and lacunae which characterized the writings of his predecessor.

The Theoretical Context of Marx's Discussions of Bureaucracy

(i) The Analysis of Class Societies.

Social theorists may use or examine the same concepts - capitalism and socialism, class and property, bureaucracy and the state, for example - and yet have different things to say about them and with them. They may use or define such concepts in different ways; they may also differ greatly in the amount of weight which they place on specific concepts, and in the centrality and pervasiveness of these concepts within the structure of their thought. Marx wrote about bureaucracy frequently, and at times devoted serious attention to it. But neither bureaucrats nor the activities in which they were involved stood at the centre of Marx's concerns: they were, almost invariably, overshadowed by more important actors and activities. The reasons for this are not obscure: the most important activity in every society, according to Marx, is not administration but direct economic production, and the fundamental social groupings are not the bearers of administrative forms or skills, but of productive relations, not bureaucracies but, in all but the ' Asiatic mode of production', social classes.

It is unnecessary to rely on Marx's pamphleteering summaries of his doctrines, which find so little favour among many contemporary Marxists, to discover the fundamental importance which he attaches to production. Within economic activities, he explains in the introduction to the Grundrisse, production, distribution, exchange and consumption ' all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity' and each sphere, including production, is affected by every other sphere. But not every sphere has the same importance, for:

... Production predominates not only over itself, in the antithetical definition of production, but over the other moments as well. The process always returns to production to begin anew. That exchange and consumption cannot be predominant is self-evident. Likewise, distribution as distribution of products; while as distribution of the agents of production it is itself a moment of production. A definite production thus determines a definite consumption, distribution and exchange as well as definite relations between these different moments ...

Moreover, production gains its importance not simply from its predominance over other spheres of economic activity, but also from the fundamental significance of economics for every other aspect of social life. Marx is far from consistent in his analysis of the relationships between the economic 'base' and political, ideological, legal, intellectual and other 'superstructures', but even his least 'mechanical' characterizations of these relationships make it clear that forms of economic production need to be the prime objects of study, for an understanding of social formations. In the first volume of Capital, for example, Marx replied to a critic of the Critique of Political Economy who had argued that, while in the modern world:

the method by which the material necessities of life were produced, determined the general characteristics of social, political, and intellectual life ... this did not apply to the Middle Ages, where Catholicism held sway; and it did not apply to ancient Greece and ancient Rome, where political considerations were dominant ...

Marx was less concerned to challenge his critic's factual claims than to show that, even if they were true, they represented no challenge to Marxism, for:

... This much, at any rate, is certain, that the Middle Ages could not live upon Catholicism nor yet classical antiquity on

1. Ibid. See also pp.88-89.
2. For a succinct and intelligent discussion of Marx's indiscriminate movement between terms such as 'correspond', 'condition' and 'determine', see Michael Evans, Karl Marx, (London, 1975) pp.64ff.
politics. On the contrary, the way in which, during classical antiquity and the Middle Ages (respectively), people gained a livelihood explained why, in the former case politics, and in the latter case Catholicism, played the leading role. Moreover, (to concentrate attention on a specific instance) a very little knowledge of the history of the Roman republic suffices to acquaint us with the fact that the secret core of its history is formed by the history of its system of landed proprietorship. On the other hand, it is centuries since Don Quixote had to pay for the mistake of believing that knight errantry was equally compatible with all the economic forms of society.¹

Each mode of production, according to Marx, is composed of productive forces and relations of production of a sort and in a combination which are uniquely characteristic of that mode. The 'bearers' of relations of production are social classes, and their conflicts are the motor of historical change; 'the history of all hitherto-existing society is the history of class struggles'.² In each mode of production a fundamentally important distinction exists between that class which owns the means of production and that which does not; these two classes are the fundamental actors in each society and their relationship and conflict are at the root of the definition and capacity for change of the society. As Marx explained in the third volume of Capital, relying on though not explicitly invoking the concept of class:

The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers - a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity - which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of state.³

¹. Ibid. p.57.
². Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' in Selected Works (SW), vol. 1. (Moscow, 1951), p. 33
Marx does not maintain that relationship to the means of production is sufficient to define and distinguish between classes; indeed his scattered and unsystematic comments on class suggest a complex and not always consistent set of criteria. But Marx does believe that ownership of the means of production is a necessary condition for a social group to form an exploiting class, and, conversely, that exploited classes do not own such means. Secondly, though Marx's detailed analyses of contemporary events, such as The Class Struggles in France and The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, make clear that he recognised the existence of far more than two classes and of important subdivisions within classes in existing societies, his insistence on the fundamental importance of two classes in each society is not inconsistent with this recognition. Poulantzas has made this point with uncharacteristic clarity, by means of his distinction between a mode of production and a social formation:

... If we confine ourselves to modes of production alone, we find that each of them involves two classes present in their full economic, political and ideological determination - the exploiting class, which is politically and ideologically dominant, and the exploited class, which is politically and ideologically dominated ... But a concrete society (a social formation) involves more than two classes, in so far as it is composed of various modes and forms of production. No social formation involves only two classes, but the two fundamental classes of any social formation are those of the dominant mode of production in that formation.2

The capitalist mode of production is dominant in contemporary class society and the two classes whose mutual dependence and conflict are therefore of most importance are capitalists and proletarians.

1. For an interesting attempt to 'complete' the unfinished chapter on classes in Capital, see Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society, (London, 1976), pp.9-18. For an analysis which emphasises the inherent complexity of 'class' in Marx's work, see Bertell Ollman, 'Marx's Use of "Class"; American Journal of Sociology, vol. 73, 1967-68, pp.573-77.

2. Nicos Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism (London, 1975), p.22. Giddens makes a similar distinction between Marx's abstract or "pure" model of class domination which applies to all types of class system; and more concrete descriptions of the specific characteristics of classes in particular societies', The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies, (London, 1974), p.27.
And these classes are destined to be pre-eminent in a more direct way than any classes in earlier societies, for a unique feature of the capitalist mode of production is that it has a continuous, dynamic tendency to simplify the class structure:

...Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. 1

Capitalists and proletarians, then, are not merely the most important classes in modern society; they are destined to become the only such classes.

In this theoretical context, neither bureaucratic activity nor bureaucrats as a social category were or needed to be central foci of attention. Moreover, so far as I can discover, the only times when Marx wrote at any length about a bureaucracy were when it seemed to him to be, or to appear to be, independent of social classes. When Marx portrayed the state as obviously subaltern, he had little to say about its bureaucracy; he was far more interested in its commanders and in the activities in which they were involved.

(ii) A Missed Opportunity: The Asiatic Mode of Production

There remains, however, one anomaly in Marx's thought which is not satisfactorily explained in this way, and which, I suspect, defies satisfactory explanation. This is the problem of the 'Asiatic mode of production'. On a number of occasions after 1853 Marx and Engels discussed a fourth 'historical' mode of production beside the ancient, feudal and capitalist modes. This was the Asiatic mode of production, in which, uniquely, private property owning classes had never developed, and where the direct producers were:

1. SW, vol.1, pp.33-34.
... under direct subordination to a state which stands over them as their landlord and simultaneously as sovereign ... The state is then the supreme lord. Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale. But, on the other hand, no private ownership of land exists, although there is both private and common possession and use of land.¹

In these circumstances, the role of the state is quite different from that exercised by any other state, for in the Orient the state is a crucial element of the economic base as well as of the political superstructure:

Climate and territorial conditions ... constituted artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks the basis of Oriental agriculture ... This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water, which, in the Occident drove private enterprise to voluntary association ... necessitated in the Orient where civilisation was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of Government. Hence an economical function devolved upon all Asiatic Governments, the function of providing public works.²

It is clear which group Marx believed was exploited in 'Asiatic' society - the peasantry; indeed, he and Engels believed that 'in a peasant country the peasant exists only to be exploited'.³ But if this is the case, it is legitimate to ask, as Wittfogel has done relentlessly,⁴ who the exploiters are. On this question, his critics and supporters agree, Marx is uncharacteristically terse and vague. He speaks of 'the state', 'the government', 'the ruler', 'the sovereign', but he does not explain who in the state or government, or why alone in Asia an individual, has power. Endless speculation as to why Marx has

little to say about this problem is possible, and a good deal of it has occurred. Wittfogel believes that Marx refused to acknowledge that the state bureaucracy was actually the ruling class in Oriental society, because he feared the implications which anarchists were eager to draw, about the ruling class under 'state socialism'. Lichtheim in an extremely balanced and judicious account of Marx's writings on Oriental Despotism argues that in relation to Asiatic society:

...Marx for some reason shirked the problem of bureaucracy. Yet the latter's role is frequently alluded to in his other writings, notably in his diatribes against Bonapartism. His failure to make more of it in connection with the 'Asiatic Mode' remains an oddity. Perhaps the fact that he thought of it as a 'caste' as distinct from a 'class' of society lessened his interest in the subject; but though a possible explanation this is hardly an adequate defense. Tucker rejects Wittfogel's interpretation on the grounds that Marx was only interested in systematic analysis of \textit{bourgeois} society;\textsuperscript{2} this is, of course, true but it does little to explain why he wrote a considerable amount about other aspects of Oriental societies, but remarkably little about those who had ruled these societies over millenia and about how they had managed to do so. Marxists such as Melotti and Sawer concede that Marx had little to say about these issues, and Melotti is particularly embarrassed because he wishes to call 'Oriental' bureaucracy a ruling class.\textsuperscript{3} He rejects Wittfogel's interpretation but admits that:

\textsuperscript{1} 'Oriental Despotism' in \textit{The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays}, (New York, 1967), p.90. 
\textsuperscript{3} Hal Draper, who also maintains that Oriental bureaucracy is a class, is nevertheless emphatically unembarrassed by Marx's silence on this issue. In a work of unrelieved scorn for other Marx-exegetes and particularly Wittfogel, Draper explains: It is certainly true that it never occurred to Marx to reassure future marxologists about a question no one was yet asking, since his unsophisticated era knew no special inhibition about the concept of a bureaucratic ruling power ... The fact is that Marx took it for granted that everyone and his or her mother knew who ruled under Oriental despotism and similar regimes. It was an easy question, not a difficulty ... (\textit{Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution.\textit{I : State and Bureaucracy,}} New York, 1977), p.561). Such an explanation of gaps in a writer's work does indeed make problems 'easy'.  

... it cannot really be said that the class structure of Asiatic society emerges with full clarity from Marx's analysis... What remains fairly obscure is who made up the exploiting class... Since Marx is usually very aware of the problem of bureaucracy, it must be admitted that in this case there may have been some resistance on his part to openly recognising the class nature of bureaucracy in a State that was not based on the private ownership of the means of production - or at least, to use his words, a certain 'judicial blindness' on his part.*

Melotti is content to explain Marx's 'blindness' in terms of the latter's aphorism that 'the anatomy of man is a key to the anatomy of the ape': Marx, unlike Melotti, could not draw on 'the historical experience and the dawning of self-criticism in the Russian and Chinese bureaucratic collectives, which were founded largely on the remains of the old Asiatic society'. 2 This deficiency, Melotti appears confident, has now been rectified.

Finally, and most recently, Sawer denies that Marx regarded, or should have regarded, Oriental bureaucracy as a ruling class, for Marx, regarded Oriental society as being antithetical to the real development of the private ownership of the means of production, on which his definition of class rested. Although military and civil officials might be benefited their tenure remained precarious and the state was always 'the real landlord'. 3

Unfortunately, Wittfogel's question whether Marx's continued talk of 'the state' without analysis of the social groups involved was, in Marx's terms, 'fetishism' remains unaffected by this passage.

There is no way of conclusively verifying these speculations concerning Marx's lack of discussion of the nature and role of Oriental bureaucracies; it remains true that, for whatever reason, Marx did not undertake such a discussion. This is particularly unfortunate, not simply for an elucidation of the nature of Oriental society, but also because such a discussion might have provided an opening for interesting Marxist analyses of the nature and functions of bureaucracies.

2. Ibid. p.62.
On one occasion Engels claimed that in the East, 'the orginal servant gradually changed into the master...the individual rulers ultimately united into a ruling class'\(^1\), and elsewhere he wrote of 'the large army of bureaucrats which overflows Russia, robs the country and forms a real class'\(^2\). However, as Wittfogel\(^3\) and Sawyer\(^4\) have pointed out, Engels comes to these conclusions as a result of confusion - though I believe suggestive confusion - rather than clear argument. Like Marx, Engels traces the power of these erstwhile servants to the social functions they perform, and their independence from society to the 'indispensability' of these functions; unlike Marx, however, he claims that the performers of such functions constitute a class. As Sawyer remarks, Engels:

made no attempt to reconcile such a function-based definition of class with the Marxist definition of class in terms of ownership of the means of production.\(^5\)

In *Anti-Dühring* Engels simply separated the sources of class-power geographically: private property in the West, 'indispensable' social function in the East. In *Origin of the Family, Private Property and State*\(^6\) the dilemma was resolved, and Oriental despotism and the source of Oriental bureaucracies' class power were not mentioned at all.

Marx's reticence on these matters and Engels' confusions are early intimations of difficulties which later Marxists have encountered in coming to terms, within Marxist social theory, with the role of extremely powerful bureaucracies; all the more striking intimations given that they were rarely mentioned and often not read by many of these

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4. *op.cit.*, pp.70-75.
6. (Moscow, 1968).
Marxists. As we have seen, however, Marx's attention was chiefly focussed elsewhere; not only was he far more interested in European than Asiatic society, but he also believed that the capitalist mode of production was, unlike any earlier mode, to become dominant throughout the world:

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production; by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation ... It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

Marx's thought should be judged primarily on the basis of the social order which he thought to be of most importance, rather than of those which he believed to be doomed. And, notwithstanding that bureaucracy is not Marx's central preoccupation, it becomes, as we shall see, one of increasing importance in his writings and also one which came increasingly to dominate his thoughts about the society which was to abolish and succeed the capitalist mode of production.

2 Bureaucracy in Contemporary Society

Marx wrote his earliest and most extended critiques of bureaucracy in 1843, when he still held the Hegelian conception of a true, rational, state as the goal of history and as the standard by which existing arrangements were to be judged. Bureaucracy was, therefore, appraised in terms of its effect on the ability of existing states to become rational states and Marx's appraisal was consistently hostile. When Marx wrote of 'bureaucracy' he used the word in the pejorative sense familiar to his contemporaries and to ours: it is probably significant that in his unpublished critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx

1. SW vol. I, pp.36-37.
explicitly substitutes the word Bürokratie for Hegel's Regierungsgesalt and Staatsbeamten.¹ The pejorative connotations of the word made it a suitable vehicle for Marx's attitude to the institution. In his first explicit attack on bureaucracy, in 1843, Marx complained of the 'presumptuous officiousness;'² of government officials, and 'the contradiction between the real nature of the world and that ascribed to it in Büros;'³ The individual official, according to Marx, is convinced that 'whether the administrative principles and institutions are good or not is a question that lies outside his sphere, for that can only be judged in higher quarters where a wider and deeper knowledge of the official nature of things, that is, of their connection with the state as a whole, prevails.'⁴ Senior officials, on the other hand, 'are bound to have more confidence in their officials than in the persons administered, who cannot be presumed to possess the same official understanding.'⁵ The result in the Mosel district is that the administration, ...

... has everywhere, alongside the actual reality, a bureaucratic reality, which retains its authority however much the times may change. In addition, the two circumstances, namely, the law of the office hierarchy and the principle that there are two categories of citizens, the active, knowledgeable citizens in the administration, and the passive, uninformed citizens who are the object of administration - these two circumstances are mutually complementary...

...The administration ... owing to its bureaucratic nature, is capable of perceiving the reasons for the distress not in the sphere administered, but only in the sphere of nature and the private citizen which lies outside the sphere administered.⁷

1. See Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, Collected Works [CW] (London, 1975) vol.3 pp.44ff. In his first use of the word in the Critique, Marx writes, 'As Hegel has already assigned the "police" and the "judiciary" to the sphere of civil society, the executive is nothing more than the administration, which he expounds as bureaucracy', ibid., p.44.
2. Werke (Berlin, 1964) vol.1., p.185.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p.186.
7. Ibid., p.348
Marx repeats and expands all of these points in his first critique of the Philosophy of Right, where he develops his most extended characterization of bureaucracy and of what Maoists have called the bureaucratic working style, and of what Marx calls the bureaucratic mentality (Gesinnung). Although Hegel did not use the word bureaucracy, he described the institution in strikingly Weberian terms, and argued that it played a unique and necessary co-ordinating role between the particularity of civil society - 'the battle-field where everyone's individual private interest meets everyone else's' - and the universality of the state, which represented the common, universal interests of all citizens. The bureaucracy is a 'universal estate' which, though itself an estate within civil society, sees to 'the maintenance of the state's universal interest, and of legality'. Its uniqueness as an estate lies in its function - not to serve the interests of its members but those of society as a whole. Moreover, this function shapes the consciousness of bureaucrats, whose motivations and orientations to the world are dominated by it.

Like Hegel, the young Marx believed that the rational state must represent the universal interests of the community, but he insisted that the existing state did not do so, and that the prominence of the bureaucracy within it was one of the major reasons why it could not do so. Marx did not quibble with Hegel's description of the structure of bureaucracy. In this respect he, too, was a Weberian. Indeed, he thought that the description, and Hegel's characterization of the civil service, were quite unoriginal: most of the paragraphs, he wrote with some justice, could have been taken verbatim from the Prussian Civil Code.

2. Hegel's account, like his new (after 1813) approval of the Prussian state, is clearly influenced by the Stein/Hardenberg administrative reforms after 1806. See above, pp.13-14.
3. Hegel, op.cit.art. 289,p.189.
4. Ibid.
All Hegel had done was give 'an empirical description of the bureaucracy, partly as it is in actual fact, and partly as it is on its own estimation.' But Marx insisted that Hegel, and therefore the bureaucracy, too, completely distorted its nature, self-conception and modes of behaviour. Far from being a universal estate, bureaucracy is 'a particular, closed society within the state,' and the only interests it serves are its own:

The actual purpose of the state ... appears to the bureaucracy as an objective hostile to the state ... The bureaucracy takes itself to be the ultimate purpose of the state ... State objectives are transformed into objectives of the department, and department objectives into objectives of the state. ... The bureaucracy has the state, the spiritual essence of society, in its possession, as its private property ... In the bureaucracy the identity of state interest and particular private aim is established in such a way that the state interest becomes a particular private aim over against other private aims.

Moreover, hierarchy, the central organizing principle of bureaucracy, is not, as Hegel claimed, protection against abuse, but a powerful source of it. It encourages subordinates to rely only on their superiors for rules and policy, superiors to trust only their officials and both to present a united and impassable barrier against outsiders. According to Marx, Hegel argued:

...As if the hierarchy were not the chief abuse, and the few personal sins of the officials not at all to be compared with their inevitable hierarchical sins. The hierarchy punishes the official if he sins against the hierarchy or commits a sin unnecessary from the viewpoint of the hierarchy. But it takes him into its protection whenever the hierarchy sins in him; moreover, the hierarchy is not easily convinced of the sins of its members ...

If we ask Hegel, then, what protection civil society has against the bureaucracy, his answer is:

1. CW vol.3, p.45.
2. Ibid., pp.45-46.
3. Ibid., p.46.
4. Ibid., p.47.
5. CW. vol.3, p.48.
1) 'Hierarchy' of the bureaucracy; control. It is the fact that the adversary himself is bound hand and foot, and that if he is a hammer to those below, he is an anvil to those above. Where, then, is the protection against the 'hierarchy'? The lesser evil is indeed abolished by the greater insofar as it vanishes by comparison ...1

Within the bureaucracy, the official simply viewed 'the state objective' as his 'private objective'...a chasing after higher posts, the making of a career;2 and, long before Marx explained that being determines consciousness, he made clear that the bureaucrat had little choice in the matter:

... actual life is material for the bureaucrat himself, i.e., it becomes an object of bureaucratic manipulation; for his spirit is prescribed for him, his aim lies beyond him, and his existence is the existence of the department.3

The bureaucracy shrouds all of its actions in secrecy, preserved internally by hierarchy and against the community by its closed, corporate nature. And when it does interact with the world, the relationship is essentially, not accidentally, manipulative. The world is clay to be moulded, resistance to be overcome, and it must be treated thus, for the bureaucracy

... wants to do everything ... by making the will the causa prima. For it is purely an active form of existence and receives its content from without and can prove its existence, therefore, only by shaping and restricting this content. For the bureaucrat the world is a mere object to be manipulated by him.4

Despite the harshness of these remarks, it is clear that, in his Hegel critique, bureaucracy is not Marx's first interest. Already in 1843, well before the materialist interpretation of society had crystallized, Marx argued that the 'bureaucracy' which he attacked grew not from any functional imperative or from pressures generated by or within bureaucracies, but primarily as a result of external, and pathological, social divisions. Marx's primary concerns at this stage

1. Ibid., p.53.
2. Ibid., p.47.
3. Ibid.
were with the form of the rational state and the reasons for the actual state's deviation from this form, and his fundamental objection is to that *separation* between the state and civil society, characteristic of the modern state, which the bureaucracy expresses and to which it contributes. The monumental inadequacy of the *Philosophy of Right* was, for Marx, less that Hegel got his facts wrong than that he had no idea of what they meant. According to Marx, Hegel had rightly identified the fundamental cleavage between modern man's civil and political life. Hegel was also correct in describing man's civil life as one of egoism, hostility and distance from other men. But this is not a *rational* state of affairs; it only occurs because man is alienated from his essentially co-operative nature. He projects his co-operative truly human essence onto the political state, while withdrawing into egoism in civil society. And the existence of a self-contained caste of bureaucrats is an expression of this division:

Civil society and state are separated. Hence the citizen of the state is also separated from the citizen as the member of civil society. He must therefore effect a *fundamental division* within himself. As an *actual citizen* he finds himself in a two-fold organization: the *bureaucratic* organization, which is an external, formal feature of the distant state, the executive, which does not touch him or his independent reality, and the *social* organization, the organization of civil society...

According to Marx, such a cleavage is not necessary - Hegel 'has not proved that the executive power is more than one function, one attribute of state citizens as such' - but pathological. Whereas Hegel argues that recruitment by public examination is a guarantee that every citizen has the opportunity to serve the general interest, Marx replies

1. *CW.*, vol.3. p.77
that such recruitment simply reveals how far the state is from true universality. It makes manifest that in his actual sphere of life the ordinary citizen has no opportunity to serve universal ends:

In the genuine state it is not a question of the opportunity of every citizen to devote himself to the general estate as one particular estate, but the capacity of the general estate to be really general - that is, to be the estate of every citizen... The examination ...is nothing but the bureaucratic baptism of knowledge, the official recognition of the transubstantiation of profane into sacred knowledge...

Moreover, Marx insists, that however independent it appears, bureaucracy depends on existing divisions within society. First of all, it depends directly on the separation between civil society and the state, without which it would have no raison d'être. Secondly, it rests on the existence of divisions within civil society, of corporations, each concerned with its particular interests. But this second relationship, as Marx explains it, is a more complicated one. On the one hand, the bureaucracy considered other corporations as rivals and fought against them. On the other hand, it presupposed the existence of corporations or at least 'the spirit of corporations' for like them, it sought simply to serve its particular interests; it tried, therefore, to defeat them, but could not do without them:

Whenever the 'bureaucracy' is a new principle, whenever the general state interest begins to become something 'distinctive and separate' and thus a 'real' interest, the bureaucracy fights against the corporations, as every consequence fights against the existence of its premises...[however] the same spirit which creates the corporations in society creates bureaucracy in the state... if earlier the bureaucracy combated the existence of the corporations in order to make room for its own existence, so now it tries forcibly to keep them in existence in order to preserve the spirit of corporations, which is its own spirit.

1. Ibid., pp.50-51.
2. Ibid., p.45.
3. Ibid.
In his famous preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, published in 1859, Marx recalled that his early work on the critique of Hegel had convinced him that law and state were neither autonomous nor emanations from 'the human mind', but stemmed from 'the material conditions of life', civil society, which in turn had to be analysed in terms of political economy. There is, in fact, no evidence of political economy yet in the 1843 Hegel critique, but there are hints of Marx's later analysis of Bonapartism in his suggestion that the bureaucracy might suppress but still depends on the fundamental groupings in society, that, in a convoluted way, it serves and must serve the groups it oppresses. However, the parallels should not be pressed too far, for in 1843, with his historical materialism not fully developed, Marx allowed the bureaucracy more autonomy than he was later prepared to concede. For, while the bureaucracy discussed in 1843 can be said to be serving the corporations in a weak sense, by preserving their existence, Marx does not make the stronger claim that it merely serves their interests. The objection to its control over the state is not that other estates thereby control the bureaucracy, but that the bureaucracy is itself a particular interest and that no particular interest should have such control over a State supposed to represent the whole of society.

A few months before the Hegel critique, Marx had insisted that it was completely objectionable and abnormal for a state to be in the service of private interests, and he argued that

1. SW. vol. 1, p.328.
2. 'led to the result that...' 
3. Such evidence does appear in the 'Introduction to A contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', written in Paris between 1843 and 1844 and published in the Deutsch Französische Jahrbücher. In recalling in 1859 his 'critical review of the Hegelian philosophy of right, a work, the introduction to which appeared in 1844, Marx appears to have had both the earlier unpublished critique and the introduction in mind.
4. In Giddens' brief account of Marx's analysis of bureaucracy, this is completely obscured. Reading the critique as though it had been written after 1845, Giddens writes that, for Marx, 'the state bureaucracy is... the administrative organ through which the sectional power of the dominant class is institutionalized', *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, (Cambridge, 1971), p.237.
Every modern state, however little it corresponds to its concept, will be compelled to exclaim at the first practical attempt at... legislative power [by a body representing private interests]: Your ways are not my ways, your thoughts are not my thoughts!¹

The objection to bureaucrats controlling the state, then, is the same sort of objection as that to estates having such control; the former is not a mere function of the latter.

By 1845, however, the doctrine usually taken to characterize 'traditional' marxism had been developed. In The Holy Family, Marx argued that Napoleon I, who 'still regarded the state as an end in itself' represented 'the last battle of revolutionary terror against the bourgeois society' which had been proclaimed by this same Revolution², but even he had appreciated and protected 'the essence of the modern state...the unhampered development of bourgeois society'.³ By 1830, the bourgeoisie had matured,

...its political enlightenment was now completed... it no longer considered the constitutional representative state as a means for achieving the ideal of the state, the welfare of the world and universal human aims but, on the contrary, had acknowledged it as the official expression of its own exclusive power and the political recognition of its own special interests.⁴

In the German Ideology of 1846, the argument is extended. Marx and Engels claim that the state in bourgeois society is simply 'the form of organization which the bourgeoisie are compelled to adopt... for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests.'⁵ The independent state, they insist, is an anomalous and pre-bourgeois phenomenon which only remains where estates have declined but classes are still not fully

1. CW. vol.1, p.241.
2. CW. vol.4, p.123.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p.124.
developed, and where no one group has the power to overcome the rest.\(^1\)

Marx and Engels are here speaking specifically of Germany, which for them, stands, as it were, between Europe's past and its present. No longer feudal and not yet bourgeois, neither ruled by the estates, nor yet by a ruling class, the German state had become 'an apparently independent force, and this position, which in other countries was only transitory - a transitional stage - it has maintained in Germany until the present day'.\(^2\) In America, on the other hand, Marx and Engels saw Europe's future:

> The most perfect example of the modern state is North America. The modern French, English and American writers all express the opinion that the state exists only for the sake of private property...\(^3\)

This tidy and uncomplicated formula dominated Marx's writing about the modern state until 1851, and while it did so, Marx had very little to say about bureaucracy. But neither the relationship of bureaucracy to economic classes, nor Marx's appraisal of it, remained so unproblematic. In particular, Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* of 2 December, 1851, led to a fundamental shift in Marx's thought and to a deepening of his analysis of the relationship between a heavily bureaucratized state and the class structure.

The success of the *coup*, the eclipse of bourgeois representatives, and later, the stability in power of Louis Napoleon, would appear to sit uncomfortably with the view of the modern state expressed in *The German Ideology*, and clearly the phenomenon of Bonapartism caused Marx some difficulty. Though Marx wrote in *The 18th Brumaire* that 'if ever an event has, well in advance of its coming, cast its shadow before,

\(^1\) Ibid., p.99; p.211, cf F. Engels, 'Der Status quo in Deutschland', *Werke*, vol.4, pp.40-57.


\(^3\) Ibid., p.99.
it was Bonaparte's coup d'etat,¹ he had written to Engels a week after the coup itself, 'Quite bewildered by these tragi-comic events in Paris, I have kept you waiting for an answer'.² Repeatedly, within The 18th Brumaire Marx presents the coup as a puzzle, a whirl of bewildering and misleading appearances which must be sorted out and their essence carefully exposed. Marx recognized that the result of the coup appeared to be a triumph of Napoleon and the bureaucracy over society, a triumph of the executive over social classes. France, he wrote, seemed 'to have escaped the despotism of a class only to fall back beneath the despotism of an individual ...The struggle seems to be settled in such a way that all classes, equally impotent and equally mute, fall on their knees before the rifle butt.'³ But Marx refused to rest with these appearances, and the theoretical burden of The 18th Brumaire is to reconcile the materialist conception of history and its emphasis on classes with the apparent omnipotence of a dictator with a bureaucratic machine.

Marx clearly believed that, in France, political power was in the hands of the bureaucratic state. It is equally clear that Marx's attitude to bureaucracy had not mellowed since 1842. In The 18th Brumaire he complained of:

This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organisation, with its ingenious state machinery, embracing wide strata, with a host of officials numbering half a million, this appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores... Every common interest was straightway severed from society, counterposed to it as a higher, general interest, snatched from the activity of society's members themselves and made an object of government activity...⁴

Given the strength, massive size, spread and intrusion of such a bureaucracy, Marx argues that a loss of ministerial power will

1. SW. vol.1, p. 293.
2. Werke, vol.27, p.383
3. SW. vol. 1, p.300
4. SW. vol.1, p.301
inevitably result in loss of 'all real influence' unless administration is simplified, the number of soldiers and bureaucrats reduced and 'civil society and public opinion' are allowed to set up their own organs independent of the government. But the French bourgeoisie could do none of these things. Its economic interests depended directly on a huge bureaucracy, for it offloaded its surplus population there and received in salaries 'what it cannot pocket in the form of profit, interest, rents and honorariums.' Politically, and therefore indirectly economically, the bourgeoisie was compelled to build up the power of the state, in order to defeat the classes which it oppressed economically. But the sword it had honed was obviously two-edged; the stronger the executive became, the more precarious was the bourgeoisie's hold on it, and the more threatening would be its capture by anyone else.

Just at this point, where Marx had advanced powerful grounds for belief in the possibility of an autonomous bureaucracy, he reasserted a somewhat modified form of historical materialism and its class analysis. Marx had already suggested that where the bourgeoisie was weak it might prefer less rather than more political power, because of the camouflage which diluted control could afford. It was thus that he explained the attacks by bourgeois royalists on the bourgeois republic. Though the republic was 'the unlimited despotism of one class over other classes' the royalists yearned 'for the former, more incomplete, more undeveloped and precisely on that account less dangerous forms of this rule.' Bonapartism represents a more extreme example of weakness being, as it were, a source of strength. Where the class struggle

1. Ibid., p.257-258.
2. Ibid., p.258.
3. Ibid., p.232.
4. Ibid., p.248.
is severe, the bourgeoisie's economic position must be secured by a strong state, notwithstanding that the bourgeoisie is too weak to control this state. Materialism is thus vindicated by the phenomenon which most appears to threaten its validity:

...the bourgeoisie confesses that its own interests dictate that it should be delivered from the danger of its own rule; that, in order to restore tranquillity in the country, its bourgeois parliament must, first of all, be given its quietus; that in order to preserve its social power intact, its political power must be broken, that the private bourgeois can continue to exploit the other classes and enjoy undisturbed property, family, religion and order only on condition that their class be condemned along with the other classes to like political nullity; that in order to save its purse, it must forfeit the crown, and the sword that is to safeguard it must at the same time be hung over its own head as a sword of Damocles.¹

In the Bonapartist state, then, a class may rule economically without ruling politically; indeed, its lack of political power is, in these circumstances, a condition of its economic dominance.

But Marx is not satisfied simply to portray Bonaparte as a somewhat erratic bourgeois lieutenant. There was, first, a theoretical need to explain Bonaparte's position, to ground this individual's apparent independence in a material base. But there was also a very practical need to explain Louis Napoleon's extraordinary and repeated electoral and plebiscitary successes. The material base which Marx chose, the small-holding peasantry, required little ingenuity, for it was the most populous class in France. But Marx's explanation of their choice is ingenious. Marx argues that the small-holding peasants were a class of a special sort, a vast mass of people living under similar economic conditions but isolated from each other and lacking the internal connections or sense of community which would enable them to organize to protect their class interests. They require to be led and dominated:

¹ Ibid., p.261.
They are ...incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name... They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the small-holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power subordinating society to itself.

Marx argues further that a dispersed peasantry forms the ideal soil for the growth, not merely of a dictator, but of bureaucracy. In a passage which contains striking but, in regard to bureaucracy totally undeveloped, parallels to Marx's later analysis of Oriental Despotism, and which, with the substitution of 'democracy' for 'small holding property', might have come from Tocqueville or Weber, Marx explains:

By its very nature, small-holding property forms a suitable basis for an all-powerful and innumerable bureaucracy. It creates a uniform level of relationships and persons over the whole surface of the land. Hence it also permits of uniform action from a supreme centre on all points of this uniform mass. It annihilates the aristocratic intermediate grades between the mass of the people and the state power. On all sides, therefore, it calls forth the direct interference of this state power and the interposition of its immediate organs. Finally, it produces an unemployed surplus population for which there is no place either on the land or in the towns, and which accordingly reaches out for state offices as a sort of respectable alms, and provokes the creation of state posts.

French Bonapartism, then, is a regime which, in times of bourgeois weakness and fierce class struggle, serves the bourgeoisie's economic interests without being in their control. Moreover, it is not an example of a truly autonomous state or bureaucracy but it precisely a response to the special nature of its class base.

This is Marx's most extended attempt to account for the apparent independence of a modern bureaucratic dictatorship. It is there-

1. Ibid. p.303.
2. Ibid. p.306.
fore not suprising that it should figure prominently in attempts by contemporary Marxists to account for the modern bureaucratic state, and in particular, for dictatorships such as those of Hitler and Stalin. ¹

Recently, indeed, a number of writers have gone further to argue that Bonapartism is the central model for Marx's analysis of the relationship between classes and the modern state in general. Poulantzas, perhaps the most extreme proponent of this view, contends that:

...Marx and Engels systematically conceive Bonapartism not simply as a concrete form of the capitalist state, but as a constitutive theoretical characteristic of the very type of capitalist state...in Marx's own 1869 Preface to The 18th Brumaire...he opposes Bonapartism as the political form of the modern class struggle in general to the political forms of formations dominated by modes of production other than the capitalist mode.

Evans argues similarly, though far less extravagantly, that:

as the nineteenth century wore on, Marx himself became more aware that the class situation depicted in his pamphlet was more of a normal than a transitional form. The state as the instrument of the dominant class was seen more as the exception rather than the rule...the perspective of the Manifesto which sees the state as purely the instrument of a ruling class tends to recede into the background, to be brought out and austed down for special occasions of political polemic. ²

I believe that both of these authors are mistaken here for reasons which bear directly on Marx's views of the role and possibilities of autonomy of bureaucracy in modern society. They are both simply wrong in maintaining that Marx saw Bonapartism as 'more a normal than a transitional form'. ³ For Marx continually emphasized that Bonapartism

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1. The model of Bonapartism plays a central role in dissident Marxists' discussions of the Soviet Union in the 1920's and 1930's. Trotsky applied it to Germany immediately before Hitler's victory; then to Hitler and finally to Stalin. See also R. Miliband, op. cit., p.94 & M. Rubel, Karl Marx devant le bonapartisme, Paris, 1960, p.68 & p.157.
was inherently a transitional response to crisis. In *The 18th Brumaire* itself, Marx argued that, as the archaic small-holdings were inevitably undermined, the bureaucracy which was based on them would collapse.  

Again, as Rubel points out, in his journalism throughout the Second Empire, Marx 'seems at every moment only to see the symptoms of crisis, and he does not weary of predicting the imminent [prochain] collapse of the regime'.  

It is true that Marx described 'Imperialism' as 'the only possible' state form, in the second draft of *The Civil War in France*, and 'the ultimate' form in the published version, but he was, after all, celebrating the Empire's collapse. Bonapartism may be 'ultimate' in the sense that the state reaches its ultimate bureaucratic consummation, and it is the bourgeoisie's 'ultimate' weapon. It may even be normal in certain historical epochs, without ceasing to be transitional. Indeed, it would seem much closer to what Marx is saying in *The Civil War in France* to call Bonapartism a normal, transitional form. On Marx's account it signifies the last, humiliating defence of a decadent bourgeoisie,

the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation.  

Bonapartism is in no way a general characteristic of all capitalist states: it is a specific stage through which such states pass on the way to their doom.

In any event as Poulantzas certainly recognises but Evans leaves unclear, to argue that Bonapartism is normal is not necessarily to deny that the bureaucratic state serves the dominant class. Engels made this plain when, well before he wrote of 'determination in the last

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1. *SW*, vol.1. p.308  
2. *op. cit.*, p.149.  
...the real religion of the bourgeoisie. It is becoming ever clearer to me that the bourgeoisie has not the stuff in it for ruling directly itself, and that therefore where there is no oligarchy, as there is here in England, to take over, for good pay, the management of state and society in the interests of the bourgeoisie, a Bonapartist semi-dictatorship is the normal form. It upholds the big material interests of the bourgeoisie - i.e. even against the will of the bourgeoisie, but allows the bourgeoisie no share in the power of government. The dictatorship in its turn is forced against its will to adopt these material interests of the bourgeoisie as its own.

 Except for the sweep of Engels' remarks, there is nothing inconsistent with *The 18th Brumaire* in them. And Marx comes very near to complete endorsement of them in *The Civil War in France*. In the second draft, Marx claims of Imperialism that, although:

at first view, apparently, the usurpatory dictatorship of the governmental body over society itself, rising alike above and humbling alike all classes, it has in fact, on the European continent at least, become the only possible state form from which the appropriating class can continue to sway it over the producing class.\(^2\)

Indeed, Marx suggests in this draft that, in periods of intense class struggle, the state must 'more and more develop its character as the instrument of class-despotism'.\(^3\) There is, then, no necessary link between regarding Bonapartism as 'normal' and abandoning the conception of the state as the agent of the economically ruling class.

But, Poulantzas insists throughout his work, Bonapartism is a form of agency of a very special, 'relatively autonomous' kind, and so it is. Marx's early epigrammatic statements about the function of the capitalist state, had nothing to say about the actual way in which the interests of the dominant classes were served, and they are open to at least two interpretations. One simple, and in principle falsifiable,

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1. *Selected Correspondence*, (Moscow, 1965), [SC] p.177.
claim which Marx might be making is that the state simply does the bidding of the dominant classes, that it is simply an organ of the latter, or an instrument in their hands. It is not at all obvious to me, as it appears to be to Miliband and Poulantzas, that this 'vulgar' interpretation is alien to Marx's thought - even in 1871, as we saw above, Marx described the state as an 'instrument of class-despotism' - but it is not the only interpretation which is possible. For a subtler interpretation can be made, which has the twin advantage, for Marxists, of surviving the refutation of the above claim, while itself being very difficult to falsify. On this interpretation the state serves the interests of the dominant classes, but it does so without being their tool, indeed without necessarily being subservient to them at all, at least until 'the last analysis'. An appropriate analogy here might be that of the relationship between a doctor and a patient: a doctor does not simply do what he is told by a patient but ministers to his 'interests' with a potentially great amount of independence from the patient's immediate desires. Indeed the sicker a patient becomes, the more 'powerful' and less controllable the doctor will be. In certain circumstances also, the doctor may be required to administer quite drastic treatment, often causing great pain, but allegedly in the patient's interests. For Marx, Bonapartism is specialist treatment meted out to a very ill bourgeoisie. It is precisely at this point, however, that the medical analogy breaks down. For, if a patient dies after proper treatment, the doctor survives and is free to continue treating new patients. Marx was convinced or at least determined, on the contrary,

1. 'Poulantzas and the Capitalist State', op. cit., p.85
that capitalism would be Bonapartism's last patient; with the death of the former would come necessarily the demise of the latter, and the bureaucratic apparatus which it employed.

Marx's analysis of Bonapartism, however, is central to his political thought in another sense. It is linked with Marx's much greater concern with bureaucracy after 1851 and with his new insistence that the victorious proletariat must not try to enlist the services of existing state organizations and personnel, but must do away with them.

There is no evidence that, before 1851, Marx saw bureaucracy as a profound threat to the revolution. In the Communist Manifesto, for example, he advocated a number of measures of centralization for the victorious proletariat to undertake, and he gave no hint that such measures, which appeared to involve taking over and centralizing a large number of existing institutions, might lead to bureaucratization on an unprecedented, or even a worrying, scale. While he may have been naive here, he was not inconsistent. For he did not avoid the problem of bureaucracy only when he came to write of proletarian class rule; he had little to say about it when he wrote of direct bourgeois class rule. In The 18th Brumaire, however, Marx suggested that, rather than wrest control of the bureaucracy from its possessors, as previous revolutions had done, the proletariat must smash the institution. In The Civil War in France in 1871, Marx's attack on the state is pre-eminently an attack on bureaucracy, and his espousal of the Paris Commune concentrates upon, and occasionally invents, its anti-bureaucratic measures. In the first draft, Marx claimed that previous revolutions had 'only perfected the state machinery instead of throwing off this deadening incubus';

1. *SW* vol.1, p.301
by contrast, 'the true antithesis to the Empire itself - that is to
the state power, the centralized executive of which the Second Empire
was only the exhausted formula - was the Commune.'\(^1\) In the other two
versions, Marx emphasized similarly that 'the working class cannot
simply lay hold on the ready-made state machinery and wield it for their
own purpose',\(^2\) and in the second draft this passage continued, 'The
political instrument of their enslavement cannot serve as the political
instrument of their emancipation.'\(^3\) In a letter to Kugelmann in 1871,
and in a speech to the Hague Congress in 1872, Marx again stressed that,
in the bureaucratized countries of Europe, the task of the revolution
'will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic military
machine from one hand to another, but to smash it.'\(^4\) Finally, in the
1872 preface to the German edition of the Communist Manifesto, Marx and
Engels explained that 'no special stress is laid on the revolutionary
measures proposed' in the Manifesto and they added that 'one thing
especially was proved by the Commune, viz., "the working class cannot
simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its
own purposes..".'\(^5\)

3 Bureaucracy and the Proletarian Revolution

For Marx, as for Saint-Simon, then, there is a sharp break bet­
wee the bureaucratic arrangements of the old society and the administrat­
ive arrangements of the new. But what will these new arrangements be?

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1. Ibid., p.165.
2. Ibid., p.228.
3. Ibid., p.228.
4. Selected Correspondence, p.262.
How will the society born of the proletarian revolution do without the bureaucracy which this revolution smashed? It is not possible to give a precise answer to these questions both because Marx never did so and because his thought displayed an unresolved ambivalence between an extreme étatisme and an extreme revulsion against the state. Both tendencies exist in Marx's writings, each has appealed to many of his followers, and it is difficult to conceive of institutional arrangements which could successfully satisfy them together.

In 1883, the Sydney Liberal published the following obituary:

Karl Marx, the ablest of all the Communistic writers is dead. His great work, On Capital [sic] is a masterpiece. While, however, agreeing with most of its critical portions, we are not in accord with his remedies. He was a State Socialist and advocated State control of all industries of all kinds whatever.

Though the Liberal is not usually cited as an authority in these matters, it helps to show how widespread the belief that Marx was an étatist socialist was, even in his own time. There is much in Marx's writings to lend support to this view. The only thing for which Marx praised bureaucracy, and the thing for which he consistently praised it, was its role in centralizing nations. In Marx's and Engels' 1850 address to the Communist League, Germans were told that they 'must not only strive for a single and indivisible German republic, but also within this republic for the most determined centralization of power in the hands of the state authority ... As in France in 1793 so today in Germany it is the task of the really revolutionary party to carry through the strictest centralization.'


Marx's endorsement of centralization is not confined to the achievement of *bourgeois* revolutions. In the *Communist Manifesto*, as we have seen, proletarian centralization was regarded as an unqualified good. In *The 18th Brumaire* Marx wrote, in the context of proletarian revolution, of 'the centralization of the state that modern society requires'.\(^1\) In 1870 Marx commented ironically (to Engels) on the 'Proudhonised Stirnerism' of 'the representatives of "Young France" (non-workers) ... Everything is to be dissolved into small "groups" or "communes", which in turn are to form an "association", but no state.'\(^2\) Even in *The Civil War in France*, Marx emphasized that the communards did not intend to break the unity of the nation and he warned that, though it had been, the Commune should not be 'mistaken for an exaggerated form of the ancient struggle against overcentralization'.\(^3\)

Moreover, as Evans points out,\(^4\) the state in the transition period would have an essentially *aggressive role*. This arises partly from the *specific* tasks involved in clearing the way for socialism and partly because, as Marx explained in another context, 'every provisional state set-up after a revolution requires a dictatorship, and an energetic dictatorship at that.'\(^5\)

Finally, we have Marx's acknowledgments that, even in the higher stage of socialism, direction and planning will be required, at least in economic production. In *The Civil War in France* Marx refers to a 'national delegation' which was to have been established by the Commune, and 'nowhere does he imply that this new body should ultimately disappear'.\(^6\)

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2. *SC.* p.179
4. Michael Evans, *Karl Marx*, p.149
6. Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, (Cambridge, 1970), p.202, where Avineri comments that 'it is only natural that such statements [by Marx] have caused some consternation.'
Nevertheless, Marx's vision of the truly human society was a profoundly anarchist one. The new society was to eliminate specialization and division of labour, and was to be essentially productive and harmonious, no longer racked by the contradictions which scarred existing societies, nor held in thrall by a massive state machine of oppression. But how, given his étatisme, and how, in any case, did Marx imagine that bureaucracy would cease to be a threat to the citizens of the new society? A few clues exist.

There is a strongly Saint-Simonian strain in Marx's attitude to existing bureaucracies and to their fate. First of all, like Saint-Simon, Marx frequently suggested that coercion and repression were central to the role of existing bureaucracies. Both thinkers' confidence that the future society would be harmonious and co-operative led them to argue that this central bureaucratic function would become otiose. Neither Saint-Simon nor Marx is concerned to deny the necessity of public affairs but solely that of public coercive power in the new society. And with the end of the state as policeman comes a reduction in the number of functions and a complete change in the nature of functions carried out by the public power. After the abolition of classes, 'there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society.' Similarly, there will be no need for masses of haughty, brutal, repressive bureaucrats:

As soon as the goal of the proletarian movement, the abolition of classes, shall have been reached, the power of the state, whose function is to keep the great majority of producers beneath the yoke of a small minority of exploiters, will disappear and governmental functions will be transformed into simple administrative functions.

But since the state's functions are not all coercive, will a need remain for bureaucracy to accomplish those that are not? Marx's conviction that there is no such need is again very Saint-Simonian. Both writers shared a second image of bureaucracy, that of a huge and dangerous, but eminently dispensable, *parasite*. Bureaucracy was parasitic, both for Marx and Saint-Simon, because its historical role had been played and it was inappropriate to the new society. Now it did nothing productive but merely extorted incomes generated by real producers. Therefore,

the demolition of the state machine will not endanger centralization. Bureaucracy is only the low and brutal form of a centralization that is still afflicted with its opposite, with feudalism.

But neither Saint-Simon nor Marx wished to argue that administration *per se* is unproductive; it is legitimate, therefore, to ask them in what ways the organization of future *administrators* will differ from those of contemporary *bureaucrats*. I have already argued that Saint-Simon has nothing interesting to say about this question, indeed virtually nothing at all. Saint-Simon says a lot about the *elites* of industrial society and about its need for *organization*, but almost nothing about its *bureaucrats*. For most of his life, Marx said even less. There is no evidence that Marx had given the matter close attention, nor that communal decentralization had appealed to him, before 1871, but in the Paris Commune he saw powerful intimations of the way in which a society could be organized without bureaucracy. And in Marx's discussions of the Commune, his thought moves from strongly Saint-Simonian assumptions in a profoundly *un*Saint-Simonian direction; not toward a hierarchy of talent but to a free association of equals.

1. *SW*, vol. 1, p.308.
Marx did not regard the Paris Commune as socialist; it was merely 'the political form of the social emancipation' and in its measures there was 'nothing socialist...except their tendency...'. Nevertheless, Marx clearly regarded the anti-bureaucratic measures which he saw as its core, as relevant to socialism and not merely to the transitional regime. In *Statism and Anarchy*, Bakunin asked, 'The Germans number around forty million. Will, for example, all forty million be members of the government?' and Marx replied, 'Certainly! Since the whole thing begins with the self-government of the commune.' The Commune was 'the people acting for itself by itself'; it was this achievement which the communist society would emulate. In the transitional and the socialist societies the *character* and role of public functionaries would be transformed because they would be really and completely under the control of the producers, that is, at first the proletariat and then the whole people.

And the institutional means to such control were to be communal. All public functions would be executed by communal agents rather than by agents of a central government, and this would apply even to the 'few, but important functions which still would remain for a central government.'

In the second draft, Marx explained that

> It is one of the absurdities to say, that the Central functions, not of governmental authority over the people, but necessitated by the general and common wants of the country, would become impossible. These functions would exist, but the functionaries themselves could not, as in the old governmental machinery, raise themselves over real society, because the functions were to be executed by communal agents, and, therefore, always under real control. The public functions will cease to be a private property bestowed by a central government upon its tools.

Moreover, the appointments of all functionaries, including magistrates and judges, were to be revocable at any time, as is done, Marx quaintly notes, by companies and individuals 'in matters of real business.' The bureaucrats were not to be members of a privileged caste but were to be paid workmen's wages and the appointing and paying body, the commune, would comprise workers or their representatives who would be elected by universal suffrage and be 'responsible and revocable at short terms'. This body would combine legislative and executive functions.

Marx was confident that such measures would shatter the bureaucratic mystique, which he had already condemned in his first critique of Hegel. It would destroy

The delusion as if administration and political governing were mysteries, transcendent functions only to be trusted to the hands of a trained caste - state parasites, richly paid sycophants and sinecurists... Doing away with the state hierarchy altogether and replacing the haughty masters of the people with always removable servants, a mock responsibility by a real responsibility as they act continuously under public supervision.

The Civil War in France is Marx's most explicit and detailed account of the institutional arrangements which will replace bureaucracy, and this account can be supplemented to some extent from several of Marx's other writings. The following characteristics emerge:

1. Administrative functions will exist and will be important in the new society, but they will be merely 'simple administrative functions';

2. The need for administrative functionaries will also survive the transition to socialism. However they will be paid less and their

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tenure will be less secure;

3. Because functionaries will be paid less and because the standing army and 'state functionarism' will be eliminated, administrative costs will be less than before, and, in particular, 'the general costs of all administration not directly appertaining to production ... will, from the outset, be very significantly limited in comparison with the present society. [They] will diminish commensurately with the development of the new society';

4. Administrative functions will be divided in an unspecified way between central and communal institutions, though all will be under the communes' control.

Nevertheless, as Marx unconsciously implies in his remarks on Bakunin, all these safeguards may be worthless. Bakunin alleges that the Marxist people's state is simply the government of the people by a small number of elected leaders, and Marx retorts,

Asine! This democratic twaddle, political drivel! Election is a political form present in the smallest Russian commune and artel. The character of the election does not depend on this name, but on the economic foundation, the economic situation of the voters, and as soon as the functions have ceased to be political ones, there exists 1) no government function, 2) the distribution of the general function has become a business matter, that gives no one domination, 3) election has nothing of its present political character.

This is quite a tangle. Taken literally, it implies that if the economic foundation is not adequately developed, then the institutional safeguards Marx advocates cannot succeed during the transition period, when functions are still 'political ones'. This version would satisfy the Mensheviks, but not Lenin or Trotsky. But if the economic foundation

1. Ibid., p.345.
2. Ibid., p.336.
is adequate, then there is no need for transitional proletarian dicta-
torship. In this case the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks, and Marx, were
wrong.

4  The Organization of Labour

As we have seen, Marx's primary interest, at least after 1845,
was not the political 'superstructure' but the economic base, and in
particular the workings and fate of the capitalist mode of production.
What importance, then, did Marx attach to bureaucratic organization
within that mode, and within its successor? Marx's comments on large
scale capitalist production are studded with political metaphors. He
writes, for example, of the 'despotism' and the 'autocracy' of capital;
he compares the power of capitalist to that of 'Asiatic or Egyptian kings
or of Etruscan theocrats and the like.' So far as I know, he does not
describe the factory as a bureaucracy but he does use military metaphors
which themselves are frequently used of bureaucracies. In modern
industry,

Masses of labourers, crowded into the factory, are
organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial
army they are placed under the command of a perfect
hierarchy of officers and sergeants.

Elsewhere Marx writes of the factory's

barrack-like discipline, which is elaborated into a
complete factory system, involving a full development
of the... work of supervision - this meaning the division
of the workers into operatives and overlookers, into the
private soldiers and the non-commissioned officers of an
industrial army.

Marx considered this form of productive organization abhorrent
and doomed. But what was to replace it? Notwithstanding Marx's
occasional flights of Arcadian and pre-industrial imagery, it is clear.

that he did not envisage any reversion to small-scale production.
On the contrary, 'only with large scale industry does the abolition
of private property become possible'.\(^1\) And if part of Marx's political
vision was anarchist, no part of his economic vision was. Modern
production required cooperation and cooperation required coordination,
management and supervision.\(^2\) There must be a 'commanding will' wherever
production is a cooperative and not an independent effort, ie in
all capitalist and post-capitalist societies. Engels makes the point
with a disarming bluntness. In *On Authority*, his reply to anarchist
criticisms, Engels argues that

...whoever mentions combined action speaks of organization; now, is it possible to have organization without authority?... wanting to abolish authority in large-scale industry is tantamount to wanting to abolish industry itself... Why do the anti-authoritarians not confine themselves to crying out against political authority, the state?\(^3\)

Similarly in a letter attacking Bakunin's views of the future society, Engels writes:

In this [anarchist] society there will above all be no authority, for authority = state = absolute evil. (How these people propose to run a factory, operate a railway or steer a ship without a will that decides in the last resort, without single management, they of course do not tell us).\(^4\)

There seems to me to be nothing in these passages with which Marx disagreed, though as was often the case, some of the subtleties of his thought were lost in Engels' translation. For Marx argued that the authority exercised in modern factories was composed of two elements: one was the authority required in all forms of cooperation, the other was only required when the owner of the means of production needed to dominate the producer and extract surplus value from his labour.\(^5\)

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1. *The German Ideology*, p.72
2. See the chapter XI, on 'Cooperation' in *Capital*, vol.1, pp.336-52.
4. SC, p.274
5. See *Capital* vol.1 pp.348-349; *Capital* vol.111, pp.382ff.
In communist society there would indeed be planning and coordination, and rather more of it than hitherto; but since it was based on the willing cooperation of the direct producers rather than that imposed by capitalists, the 'commanding will' would resemble that of an orchestra conductor rather than that of a field commander. Moreover the specialized cripple who is equipped only to perform one routine function will be replaced by

the perfect adaptability of the individual human being to the changing demands for different kinds of labour; so that the detail-worker who has nothing more to perform than a partial social function, shall be superseded by an individual with an all-round development, one for whom various social functions are alternative modes of activity.²

It is obviously useful to Marx's argument to be able to demonstrate how this new form of cooperation and authority is to come about, and Marx attempted to do so. In his attempt he largely anticipated part of Burnham's managerial thesis which was claimed by its author to have superseded Marx. Marx seeks in vol.III of Capital to show that capitalism is dissolving from within and his demonstration focusses largely on the role of the manager. Even in the ordinary capitalist firm, according to Marx, the capitalist quo capitalist is ceasing to have a function. The function of the money-capitalist who lends his money has nothing to do with production per se; it is simply a transaction between capitalists and is increasingly being taken over by banks.³ The productive role of the industrial capitalist who borrows money and runs the factory or firm, on the other hand, has nothing to do with the chance that he does or does not have capital of his own, but is simply made up of his supervisory or managerial work:

the process of production, separated from capital is simply a labour-process. Therefore, the industrial capitalist as distinct from the owner of capital, does not appear as operating capital, but rather as a functionary irrespective of capital, or, as a simple agent of the labour-process in general, as a labourer, and indeed as a wage-labourer ...

He creates surplus-value not because he works as a capitalist, but because he also works, regardless of his capacity as capitalist.1

But if this is the case, the capitalist becomes redundant in the productive process and can be replaced by a manager, who, Marx quotes approvingly, has been called "the soul of our industrial system."2 And he is not only redundant, but he has been recognized as such by co-operative factories, where 'the antagonistic nature of the labour of supervision disappears, because the manager is paid by the labourers instead of representing capital counterposed to them'3, and by joint-stock companies. Marx sees the latter as quintessential evidence of the dissolution of capital from within, for the owners of capital have nothing to do with running of the enterprise and the managers of the enterprise do not own capital. This dissociation of the labour process from privately owned capital, Marx insists, is 'a necessary transitional phase towards the reconversion of capital into ... the property of associated producers, as outright social property'.4 It is

the abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production itself, and hence a self-dissolving contradiction which prima facie represents a mere phase of transition to a new form of production.5

1. Ibid., p.382.
2. Ibid., p.386.
3. Ibid., p.387.
4. Ibid., p.437.
By now it should be obvious that Lichtheim's claim, that while Marx noticed 'the commanding position of the state bureaucracy in Continental Europe, [he] did not accord it more than passing attention' is false. Nor did Marx ignore threats that bureaucracy might pose to the achievement of socialism, or the existence of 'bureaucratic' relationships within industry. However, the legacy which Marx left to those of his followers concerned with bureaucracy had two distinctive and restrictive elements. First, as we have seen, in his mature writings, Marx always treated bureaucrats as subordinate in importance to social classes, even where, as in Bonapartism, the bureaucracy was strong and the economically dominant classes admitted to be weak. The possibility that beyond short-lived situations of crisis or class balance, a bureaucracy might rule a society in its own interests, was not entertained.

Secondly, like Saint-Simon, Marx reveals striking and tantalizing gaps in his account of the future society. Like Saint-Simon, Marx had very little to say about questions of administrative and organizational imperatives which might lead to bureaucratic growth in any complex industrial society. Both in his discussions of the administration of the future society and of the organization of factory labour, Marx passes by functional organizational difficulties and constraints with barely a pause. However, the problems with which administrative theorists have grappled are not all, or at least not obviously, amenable to solutions drawn from the Paris Commune, where, as Marx and Engels proudly note, 'the proletariat for the first time held political power for two whole months.'

These gaps are not simply due to Marx's refusal to draw up blueprints for the future, for he writes a good deal about future possibilities. But repeatedly, when a serious consideration of organizational const-

2. SW, vol. 1, p.22.
raints is required, Marx's solutions and enthusiasms offer little but bathos. When Bakunin suggests that workers who gain representative positions under socialism might 'cease to be workers', Marx considers it enough to reply, 'As little as a factory owner today ceases to be a capitalist if he becomes a municipal councillor'.\(^1\) When he writes warmly of the 'individual with an all round development' who will replace the crippled specialist in the factory, the only 'factors of this metamorphosis' which he refers to are polytechnic and agricultural schools, and schools of craft training.\(^2\) After a lyrical evocation of 'that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom', Marx concludes 'The shortening of the working day is its basic prerequisite.'\(^3\)

These two problems - the relationship of bureaucracies to social classes and the effects of organizational and administrative imperatives on the form and role of administrative institutions in the new society - both came to present major difficulties for later Marxists. Historically they arose for consideration in reverse order: in 1917, the Bolsheviks began their attempt to construct a new society and Lenin was immediately faced with the problems of administering and ruling it; after the consolidation of the revolutionary regime, Marxists were forced to consider again the relationships between powerful bureaucracies and social classes.

PART THREE

BUREAUCRACY AND REVOLUTION
Neither Saint-Simon nor Marx lived to witness the social revolutions which they predicted; for Max Weber and above all for Lenin, the nature of organization and the role of 'bureaucracy' in the new society became matters of real and immediate concern. Weber and Lenin both regarded the post-revolutionary fate of bureaucracy as one of the central problems facing revolutionaries - Weber on the basis of theoretical analysis of the nature and development of modern societies; Lenin on the basis of more hurried and unsystematic reflections on problems involved in ruling the first Communist state. Weber and Lenin are usually, and in many respects correctly, considered as polar opposites. In fact, however, their thought ultimately came to bear striking and important similarities, similarities which we will explore in this chapter, concerned with Weber, and in the next, concerned with Lenin.

1 Domination and the Importance of Administrative Organizations

Weber's most extended and systematic discussion of administration occurs within his sociology of domination, which, as Roth has observed, is the core of Economy and Society. Unlike Saint-Simon and Marx, Weber insisted that conflict and the struggle for power are ineradicable elements of the human condition, though

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1. Economy and Society (EaS), (New York, 1968), p.lxxxii
the forms they take differ greatly between societies. Moreover, Weber argued that domination (*Herrschaft*)\(^1\), 'a special case of power',\(^2\), though not important in every case of social action, was one of the 'most important elements'\(^3\) of such action; 'without exception every sphere of social action is profoundly influenced by structures of dominancy'.\(^4\)

Structures of political domination, Weber points out, have often decisively influenced linguistic integration within and differentiation between communities\(^5\); the nature of religion in the Middle East\(^6\) and in China\(^7\) was greatly influenced by structures of dominancy; education 'and with it the modes of status group formation' have been heavily dependent on the character and outcome of struggles between chiefs and their administrative staffs\(^8\), and on the criteria

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1 The difficulties of translating the term 'Herrschaft' which Weber uses have received a good deal of attention and have been coped with in a variety of ways. Parsons originally preferred 'imperative control' 'for the most general purposes' (Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. T. Parsons, (New York, 1964), p.152), but later he chose 'leadership'; he usually translated *legitime Herrschaft* as 'authority' (T. Parsons, review of Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 25, 1960, p.752). Roth and Wittich use 'domination', 'authority', 'rule', depending on context. I have followed Aron, Mommsen and Runciman in using 'domination' throughout, though I have left *Beamtenherrschaft* in the original because Weber uses it in a specifically limited sense to suggest rule by officials, which he opposes, in contrast to *Herrschaft der Beamten*, which he considers inevitable and in principle consistent with rule by politicians. I have attempted in exposition to suggest more precisely than a rough English equivalent can, what Weber meant by *Herrschaft*.

2 *EaS*, vol. 3, p.941.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.


7 Ibid, p.25.

8 *EaS*, vol. 1, p.265.
by which such staffs are recruited; and, of particular importance to modern society,

In a great number of cases the emergence of rational association [Vergesellschaftung] from amorphous social action has been due to domination and the way in which it has been exercised. Even where this is not the case, the structure of dominancy and its unfolding is decisive in determining the form of social action and its orientation toward a 'goal'. Indeed, domination has played the decisive role particularly in the economically most important social structures of the past and present, *viz.*, the manor on the one hand, and the large-scale capitalistic enterprise on the other.1

The significance of administrative organizations in general arises from the fact that they are integral parts of the kinds of domination with which Weber is concerned. Weber recognises that, in a broad sense, domination can be said to occur in a wide variety of forms and contexts, but he confines his attention exclusively to a narrower kind of domination, which he defines as *authoritarian power of command*. For the purposes of sociology, as opposed, he suggests, to those of law, for us to say that such power exists it must be actual, i.e., it must be 'heeded to a socially relevant degree',2 and for power to amount to domination in his sense it must be legitimated in one way or another, it must be obeyed by the ruled as if they 'had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake'.3 The habit of obedience which is essential to domination cannot, however, be maintained over time without a continually functioning administrative staff which enforces the order4. Organized domination therefore is always associated with and vitally dependent upon administration.

1 *EaS*, vol. 3, p.941.
Such structures of domination become politically crucial and attain some stability in form and structure, as soon as the group in which they exist becomes at all large, and, often as a result of increase in size, administration increases in complexity. Thus, for example, Weber explains that 'pure' or 'direct' democracy becomes impossible,

where the group grows beyond a certain size or where the administrative function becomes too difficult to be satisfactorily taken care of by anyone whom rotation, the lot, or election may happen to designate. The conditions of administration of mass structures are radically different from those obtaining in small associations resting upon neighbourly or personal relationships...

The growing complexity of the administrative tasks and the sheer expansion of their scope increasingly result in the technical superiority of those who have had training and experience, and will thus inevitably favor the continuity of at least some of the functionaries. Hence, there always exists the probability of the rise of a special, perennial structure for administrative purposes, which of necessity means for the exercise of [domination].

In contrast to Saint-Simon and Marx, then, Weber denies not only that domination of men by men is dispensable, but also that there is an unbridgeable difference in kind, let alone an antithesis, between the imperatives of political and non-political, peaceful and coercive, forms of administration. To be sure, different sorts of administration will possess certain different characteristics. All of them, however, faced with substantial numbers of complex tasks, will require relatively stable administrative staffs to perform them.

On the other hand, Weber would agree with Saint-Simon that the way in which task-oriented institutions are organized results in crucial

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1 *EaS*, vol. 3, pp.951-52. Roth and Wittich translate *Herrschaft* here as 'rule', which is appropriate to the political context of this passage, but appears to be too narrowly political for the point Weber is making.

differences in their manner of operation and that certain modes of organization are better adapted than others for a specific order or range of tasks. It is the mode of organization of officials rather than, say, their number, social status or power position, that Weber regards as the fundamental point of distinction between administrative institutions. He would certainly agree with Saint-Simon or with those, like R.V. Presthus¹, who appear to believe they are criticizing him, that forms of administrative organization cannot simply be abstracted from the environment in which they developed and be expected to perform identically in uncongenial environments. But he insisted not only that administrative structures themselves had powerful consequences, allowed certain activities and inhibited others, but also that these forms were not malleable epiphenomena of their environments; often there were basic internal administrative reasons for organizational forms, which had little to do with their social, political or economic environments. At one point in his discussion of the city, for example, Weber points to similarities between the development of the popolo in medieval Italy and the plebs in the Roman Republic, and he observes:

These similarities between the medieval Italian and the early Roman development are very striking, especially since they appear in spite of fundamental political, social and economic differences... It is a fact, after all, that only a limited variety of different administrative techniques is available for effecting compromises between the status groups within a city. Similarities in the forms of political administration can therefore not be interpreted as identical superstructures over identical economic foundations. These things obey their own laws.²


2 Bureaucracy as a form of Organization

In his scholarly writings Weber used the word 'bureaucracy', not to refer disparagingly to rule by officials, which in his political writings he attacked as Beamtenherrschaft\(^1\), but to designate a quite specific kind of administrative organization. He demonstrated in considerable detail that there were other kinds, which differed in appearance, function and importance, and he insisted that modern bureaucratic organization as a form of apparatus was sui generis. He never defined bureaucracy in the explicit way in which, for example, he defined 'class' or 'status group'. But on a number of occasions he outlined in some detail the characteristics of the ideal type of bureaucracy, which he had drawn from Prussian administrative theory and European administrative history. These characteristics are generally known. The enterprise is organized on the basis of permanent official agencies, divided into jurisdictional areas and ordered by rules which apply generally and impersonally. Within any area authority is hierarchically arranged, management is based on written documents ('the files') and follows more or less stable general rules which can be learnt and knowledge of which 'represents a special technical expertise which the officials possess'.\(^2\) Whereas in many other forms of administrative organization official business is discharged as an avocation, as a secondary activity, the job of the modern bureaucrat demands his full working capacity. Central to his way of working is the separation of his official from his private life, workplace, activity, monies and equipment; 'the more consistently the modern type of business management has been carried through, the

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more are these separations the case. Only people who qualify under general rules are employed, and, finally, their professional obligations are based not on loyalty to personal superiors in or above bureaucracy, but rather to the organization's 'impersonal and functional purposes'.

Two things should be noted about this conception. First, it must be remembered that this is the ideal type of bureaucracy which is never found in 'pure', 'unmixed', form in reality. When Weber writes of certain actual administrative organizations he calls them bureaucracies, even though none of them possesses all and only these characteristics, and even though some are closer to the pure type than others. They warrant the name to the extent that they, as opposed to non-bureaucratic organizations, share characteristics of this type. Thus Weber argues that administration in China and Egypt under the New Kingdom was bureaucratic, even though it also had strongly patrimonial elements, such as personal loyalty to the leader, and appropriation of positions by staff. Similarly, he argues that in India, Kingly administration became patrimonial and bureaucratic. On the one hand, it developed a regulated hierarchical order of officials with local and functional competences and appeals; on the other hand, however, administrative and court offices were not kept separate and the jurisdictional spheres of a bewildering manifold of offices were fluid, indeterminate, irrational, and subject to chance influences.

Secondly, since Weber was interested in the form of organization rather than in the uses to which it was put, he was not limited to talking of government. He recognized that the state's monopoly of legitimate force put its bureaucracy in a unique position, and in his political writings he usually referred specifically to

1 Ibid, p.957.
2 Ibid, p.959.
state bureaucracy when he used the word, but he repeatedly stressed that bureaucracies were found in all kinds of enterprise.

From the viewpoint of the sociology of domination, bureaucracy is merely one among several types of administrative structure. Such structures, whatever their form, are likely to be of social and political significance. But Weber does not regard bureaucracy as just another administrative apparatus. It is specifically the most rational form. Again and again, Weber emphasises the rationality of the pure type of bureaucracy, and the technical superiority over all other forms of administration of the modern Western bureaucracy which most closely approximates to that pure type. He claims, for example, that

Experience tends universally to show that the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization - that is, the monocratic variety of bureaucracy - is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline and in its reliability. It thus makes possible a particularly high degree of calculability of results for the heads of the organization and for those acting in relation to it. It is finally superior both in intensive efficiency and in the scope of its operations, and is formally capable of application to all kinds of administrative tasks.

3 The Indispensability of Bureaucratic Organization

As a result of its technical superiority to all other forms of organization, rational bureaucracy is indispensable both to the modern State and to modern economic organization. The modern State, itself a unique development, is dependent on bureaucracies, for no other form of organization can cope with the enormous scope and complexity of mass administration:

1 *EaS*, vol. 1, p.223.
If bureaucratic administration is, other things being equal, always the most rational type from a technical point of view, the needs of mass administration make it today completely indispensable. The choice is only that between bureaucracy and dilettantism in the field of administration.¹

The modern economic order, too, can work in no other way. Weber recognizes that bureaucracy is not an 'unmoved mover', and among the many preconditions necessary for it to develop in its purest form is the rational economic base of capitalism. But Weber's social theory allows reciprocal relations to occur between institutions, and the factors explaining the role of bureaucracy in capitalism lie at the core of this theory.

Like Marx, and like Werner Sombart whose work he knew well, Weber regarded the developed capitalist order as a system with imperatives, with rules of action which the individual capitalist had to obey to survive. The Protestant ethic had been the source of a cluster of beliefs and attitudes to the world - the spirit of capitalism - which enabled ascetic capitalism to emerge. But with the development of 'the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order',² religious sanction for capitalist behaviour is now unnecessary. Rather, it is this cosmos and this order which now envelop the individual capitalist. Modern capitalism

presents itself to him [the capitalist], at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live ...

... the capitalism of to-day, which has come to dominate economic life, educates and selects the economic subjects which it needs through a process of economic survival of the fittest.³

In this system, the imperatives of mechanized production and incessant competition force enterprises continuously to maximize

¹ Ibid.
³ Ibid, pp.54-55.
profit and therefore to operate in the most efficient way possible.
For this, bureaucracies are essential in two areas. Internally, large
global capitalist enterprises are 'unequalled modes of strict
bureaucratic organization'\(^1\), simply because bureaucracies get things
done better than any other form of organization. For the prisoner of
the 'iron cage' of capitalism this consideration is and must be
decisive. Externally, the capitalist enterprise is equally dependent
on the predictability and calculability provided by a rational legal
order and State administration, staffed bureaucratically and working
according to strictly formalized rules.\(^2\) Rational enterprise cannot
develop in the face of the irrationalities and consequent unpredictability
of kadi justice or non-bureaucratic forms of administration. In the
patrimonial state, such as China, for example,

Rational and calculable administration and law enforcement,
necessary for industrial development, did not exist\(^3\)... the rational industrial capitalism which is specific
for modern development originated nowhere under this regime.
Capital investment in industry is far too sensitive to such
irrational rule and too dependent upon the possibility of
calculating the steady and rational operation of the state
machinery to emerge under an administration of this type.\(^4\)

One can argue, as Weber does, that bureaucracy is indispensable
to fully developed capitalism without claiming that these phenomena
are all parts of the same development, or that bureaucracy developed
simply because it was useful to capitalism. Weber recognizes this
and points out that:

early modern capitalism did not originate in the
bureaucratic model states where bureaucracy was a
product of the state's rationalism. Advanced capitalism,

\(^1\) EaS, vol. 3, p.974.
\(^2\) Ibid, p.1394.
\(^3\) The Religion of China, p.100.
\(^4\) Ibid, p.103.
too, was at first not limited to these countries, in fact, not even primarily located in them ...
Today, however, capitalism and bureaucracy have found one another and belong intimately together.1

And bureaucracy was 'found' by modern capitalism for the same reason that it has advanced in all areas of administration: its technical superiority to any other form of organization.

4 The Inescapability of Bureaucracy and the Power Position of Bureaucrats

Weber regarded this indispensability of developed bureaucracy, with its expertise born of long and specialized training, as the pivotal political fact of the modern age. The individual bureaucrat is a powerless cog 'in a ceaselessly moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march'.2 The ruled in a mass state are increasingly dependent on bureaucracy, for it rests upon expert training, a functional specialization of work, and an attitude set on habitual virtuosity in the mastery of single yet methodically integrated functions. If the apparatus stops working, or if its work is interrupted by force, chaos results, which it is difficult to master by improvised replacements from among the governed.3

Finally, whoever gains power is similarly unable to govern without this organization, and he has little incentive to. For the bureaucrat's 'impersonal' attitude to office, unlike the patrimonial functionary's personal loyalty, allows him to work for anyone who gains control of his organization:

a rationally ordered officialdom continues to function smoothly after the enemy has occupied the territory; he merely needs to change the top officials. It continues

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2 *EaS*, vol. 3, p.988.
to operate because it is to the vital interest of everyone concerned, including above all the enemy.¹

Moreover, not only is bureaucracy indispensable but its influence is inescapable. As an administrative organization found in every kind of enterprise its influence is more pervasive than that of other carriers of the 'rationality' of the modern world, and as the most advanced form of administrative organization it is stronger than any previous form:

Bureaucracy is distinguished from other historical agencies of the modern rational order of life in that it is far more persistent and 'escape-proof'. History shows that wherever bureaucracy gained the upper hand, as in China, Egypt and, to a lesser extent, in the later Roman empire and Byzantium, it did not disappear again unless in the course of the total collapse of the supporting culture. Yet these were still, relatively speaking, highly irrational forms of bureaucracy: 'Patrimonial bureaucracies'. In contrast to these older forms, modern bureaucracy has one characteristic which makes its 'escape-proof' nature much more definite: rational specialization and training...

Wherever the modern specialized official comes to predominate, his power proves practically indestructible since the whole organization of even the most elementary want satisfaction has been tailored to his mode of operation.²

As a result of the attention which has been given to Max Weber's political writings in recent years³, it is now well known that

1  Ibid, pp.988-89.
he was profoundly uneasy about the social and political consequences of the contemporary, irresistible, spread of bureaucracy. There are two principal foci of Weber's unease. The first is the bureaucratization of the whole of society, in the sense of the permeation of bureaucratic values, ways of thought and of behaviour throughout a population. At the 1909 meeting of the Verein für Sozialpolitik Weber and his brother Alfred bitterly opposed older members of the Verein, such as Gustav Schmoller and Adolf Wagner, whose 'passion for bureaucratization ... drives one to despair'\(^1\), and Max Weber's interventions passionately evoked the danger of bureaucratization in this first sense. In Economy and Society Weber pointed to the effect of feudal and patriarchal structures of domination on the ethos and style of life of the societies in which they occurred\(^2\). Given the far greater pervasiveness which he attributed to bureaucratic domination, one would expect the latter to have even stronger effects of this kind. In Economy and Society Weber also drew attention to the 'socially-levelling' effects of bureaucracy on status structure\(^3\), on the one hand, and to the kind of status hierarchy which bureaucracy itself encouraged, on the other: one based on the 'patent of education' and on education of a uniquely important kind, in specialized functional skills.\(^4\) Status in a bureaucratized society, Weber argued in his political writings, went to 'Prüfungsdiplommenschen'\(^5\), who valued security and a comfortable, steadily increasing salary, based on status rather than performance, before all else.

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3 Ibid, pp.983-85.
4 Ibid, pp.998-1002.
5 Gesammelte Politische Schriften, p.278.
Weber did not deny that bureaucratic values and 'Amtslehre' (the sense of the dignity, calling and obligations of office) were important elements in proper bureaucratic performance, but he feared greatly that they would come to expel all other kinds of values and all modes of behaviour inconsistent with them. He found it 'frightful' to contemplate that the world might be filled with nothing but these little cogs, with nothing but men clinging to a little job and striving after a slightly bigger one ... men who need 'order' and nothing but order, who become nervous and cowardly if this order wavers for a moment... That the world should know nothing but these men of order [Ordnungsmenschen] - this is the development in which we are already caught up, and the central question is thus not how we can further promote and accelerate it, but what we can oppose to this machinery, in order to keep a portion of mankind free from this parcelling out of the soul, from this total dominance of the bureaucratic ideal of life.

Weber's second concern was related to but distinct from the one outlined above, and it was more directly political in focus. This was the fear, which the term 'bureaucracy' had originally been used to express, that those who manned bureaucratic organizations might come to be the actual rulers of a State. It was less a fear that we would all become bureaucrats than that we would all come to be ruled by bureaucrats. In one sense Weber believed that this was already the case in every modern society because all domination was exercised through bureaucratic agencies rather than 'through parliamentary speeches [or] monarchical enunciations'. But rule, in the sense of ultimate directive power, did not inevitably lie in the hands of officials, for there was a fundamental distinction between the functional indispensability of bureaucratic forms of organization and of bodies of trained officials, and the power of

1 See H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., op. cit., p.88.
2 Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik, p.414.
those officials. In *Economy and Society* Weber explained that:

... it must ... remain an open question whether the power of bureaucracy is increasing in the modern states in which it is spreading. The fact that bureaucratic organization is technically the most highly developed power instrument in the hands of its controller does not determine the weight that bureaucracy as such is capable of procuring for its own opinions in a particular social structure. The ever-increasing 'indispensability' of the officialdom, swollen to the millions, is no more decisive on this point than is the economic indispensability of the proletarians for the strength of the social and political power position of that class (a view which some representatives of the proletarian movement hold). If 'indispensability' were decisive, the equally 'indispensable' slaves ought to have held this position of power in any economy where slave labour prevailed and consequently freemen, as is the rule, shunned work as degrading. Whether the power of bureaucracy as such increases cannot be decided a priori from such reasons.¹

This analysis, which emphasizes the central importance of bureaucracy but does not claim to pre-determine its specific power position, seems to me to be enormously fruitful and too often ignored. Indeed, Weber himself might well have kept it in mind in some of his last, despairing political writings about Germany, and in his comments on the Bolsheviks' chance of survival in Russia. On the other hand, there was far less of a gulf than is sometimes alleged² between the fear of *Beamtenterror* expressed in Weber's political writings and the analysis of bureaucracy in *Economy and Society*. For in the latter work Weber argued that, while the power position of officials could not be predicted in general terms, it was 'always great, under normal conditions over-towering'³. Compared with the trained official, the political 'master' is always a dilettante, and officials are always keen to secure their privileged access to technical and official knowledge against effective supervision⁴, by insisting on the need for

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¹ *EaS*, vol. 3, p.991.
² Recently and notably by David Beetham, *op. cit.*, esp. at pp.252-61.
³ *EaS*, vol. 3, p.991.
official secrecy and by promoting their interests through conveniently ambiguous ideas, such as that of 'Reasons of State'.

In his sociology, then, as in his politics, Weber argued that, while *Beamtenherrschaft* was not inevitable, bureaucrats had enormous power resources at their disposal which might enable them to rule unless they were kept under political control. In his later political writings he was concerned to show that, in the absence of effective political leadership, *Beamtenherrschaft* existed in Germany, that this was politically disastrous and that means of controlling the *Beamtentum* must be devised.

In opposition to the 'conservative' members of the Verein für Sozialpolitik who, like Hegel, argued that officialdom represented the general common interests of society, Weber insisted that bureaucrats, far from constituting a 'universal estate', fostered quite particular sectional interests. In Prussia they were recruited predominantly from the one class - the economically declining Junkers - and they overemphasized the latters' conservative interests. And in Prussia as elsewhere, officialdom generated its own values and a consciousness of its own special interests, which it was uniquely placed to promote.

But the real problem, for Weber, was not that bureaucrats feathered their own nests. Even if they were determined to serve only the public interest - and Weber believed that many were - they were tragically and inevitably unsuited for the role of political leadership. For politicians and bureaucrats are different types of people; 'the "directing mind", the "moving spirit" - that of the

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2 See Dieter Lindenlaub, *op. cit.* *passim*; on Schmoller's influential views see pp.240-50.
entrepreneur here and of the politician there - differs in substance from the "civil service" mentality of the official. Bureaucrats cannot be adequate politicians because their training, their ways of working, what they value as professionals, all deny that they should fight for their convictions, that they should act on their personal preferences in the execution of their tasks. Rather, the good bureaucrat prides himself on demonstrating that 'his sense of duty stands above his personal preference ... This is the ethos of office'. The politician, on the other hand, like the entrepreneur, is forged through struggle. He seeks power, takes risks, and, most importantly, must take personal responsibility for his acts and decisions. Whereas the bureaucrat is to act as an impartial administrator, sine ira et studio, 'to take a stand, to be passionate - ira et studium - is the politician's element, and above all the element of the political leader.'

What Weber feared most was that modern society might come to be dominated by the bureaucrats who controlled an incomparably effective and inescapable administrative machine and that throughout society only those attitudes and values would be generated which were appropriate to this machine. He considered it essential that non-bureaucratic leaders be selected who might, as it were, control the controllers. The failure of German politics, he believed, could be attributed essentially to two things: the absence of real politicians since Bismarck and as a result of his initiative - numbing dominance, and the fact that, in default of such leaders, Germany was being governed by bureaucrats. In his last years Weber, in increasing despair, sought to devise means to ensure leadership

1 'Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany', p.1403.
2 Ibid, p. 1404.
3 H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., op. cit., p.95.
by men whose 'vocation' was politics. Ultimately he argued that only a charismatic leader who appealed directly to the masses could acquire the independence necessary for controlling and setting the goals for German bureaucrats. The changing details of his proposals are less important for our purposes than their fundamental aim: to secure a political leadership able to control the bureaucrats who threatened to extinguish both Germany's chances of greatness and also 'any remnants of "individualist" freedom in any sense'.

Bureaucracy and Socialism

Weber discussed socialism at any length in only one speech, delivered to Austrian army officers in Vienna in 1918; but in a number of other contexts, he developed the points made in that lecture concerning the consequences of bureaucracy for socialist aspirations. Weber commenced his lecture in a manner which would have seemed very strange to Saint-Simon or Marx, for he began by speaking not of socialism but of aristocratic versus professional officialdom and went on to talk not of countries where socialism did or was likely to exist, but of America. Weber explained that development of professional administration is the fate of all modern mass democracies and he traced at some length the movement in this direction of under-bureaucratized America, hitherto administered by 'dilettantes'. The link between these reflections and Weber's theme only becomes clear on the sixth page of the lecture where Weber explained that:

modern democracy is becoming everywhere where it is the democracy of a large state, a bureaucratized democracy. And it must be so, for it replaces the distinguished aristocratic or other honoured officials by a salaried officialdom. That is happening everywhere, it is also happening within parties.

1 'Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany', p.1403.
2 'Der Sozialismus', Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik, pp.492-518.
It is inescapable, and this fact is the first with which socialism also must reckon: the necessity of a long training in skills, always increasing specialization and management by a skilled officialdom shaped in this way. The modern economy can be managed in no other way.¹

Weber's analysis of capitalism clearly owes much to Marx, but Marx, and socialists generally he argues, have simply failed to come to terms with the inescapability of bureaucracy. This myopia vitiates both their analysis of contemporary society and what he calls their prophecy. In their analysis, socialists rightly emphasize the separation in capitalism of the worker from the means of production. But they wrongly see it merely as an economic phenomenon, and, more wrongly still, attribute it to the existence of private property. In fact, it characterizes all bureaucratized enterprises - factories, armies, governmental bodies, universities.²

The university chemist does not own his laboratory equipment; nor the soldier his gun. In part this separation arises from purely technical considerations having to do with the nature of modern equipment, but, quite independently, it flows from the imperatives of bureaucratic organization. Bureaucratic 'discipline', not private property, gives the form to modern relations of administration and of production. Moreover, Weber argues, it makes no difference in this regard if the head of an enterprise is changed, if a public functionary replaces a private factory owner:

... The 'separation' from the means of production endures in any case. So long as there are mines, blast furnaces, railways, factories and machines, they will never be the property of a single or more than a single worker in the sense that the means of production of a trade in the middle ages were the property of a single master of a guild or of a local partnership or guild. That is excluded by the nature of present day Technik.³

¹ Ibid., pp. 497-98.
³ 'Der Sozialismus', op. cit., p.499.
Weber argues similarly that those socialists who point to the replacement of individual owner-entrepreneurs in public companies by appointed managers, are identifying an important development, but he insists that in describing it as 'socialization from within' they are completely misconstruing its significance. This 'socialization' in fact involves an increase in the role of trained officialdom rather than in the role or power of the worker. Thus, here too, 'the dictatorship of the official, not that of the worker is what - at any rate for the time being - is constantly advancing'.

And in their predictions, too, socialists are no closer to the mark, nor are their hopes any likelier to be achieved. A socialist revolution cannot result in a dictatorship of the proletariat. In modern mass society it can only result in a consolidated dictatorship of the bureaucrats. In economic enterprises bureaucrats would now be in the highest positions, formerly held by private entrepreneurs; strikes would be more difficult than ever before, and the possibility of appeal or support from one enterprise against another would be gone. If private capitalism were destroyed:

what would be the practical result? The destruction of the steel frame of modern industrial work? No! The abolition of private capitalism would simply mean that also the top management of the nationalized or socialized enterprises would become bureaucratic ... there is even less freedom, since every power struggle with a state bureaucracy is hopeless and since there is no appeal to an agency which as a matter of principle would be interested in limiting the employer's power, such as there is in the case of a private enterprise. That would be the whole difference.

State bureaucracy would rule alone if private capitalism were eliminated. The private and public bureaucracies, which now work next to, and potentially against, each other and hence check one another to a degree, would be merged

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1 Ibid, p.508.
into a single hierarchy. This would be similar to the situation in ancient Egypt, but it would occur in a much more rational - and hence unbreakable - form.¹

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Weber was not the only writer who warned against the bureaucratization of modern society in general and post-revolutionary society in particular. His friend Michels' analysis had much in common with Weber's, as, independently, did the writings of Mosca and Pareto in Italy, and of the Polish revolutionary Jan Wacław Machajski in Siberia. Of all these writers, however, it was Weber whose analysis of the role and consequences of bureaucracy was the most profound and, for believers in the transforming power of socialist revolution, the most challenging. Many of the hopes and expectations of the writers discussed in the following pages echoed those of Saint-Simon, and, more directly, Marx. Many of their reactions to frustration and failure vividly call Max Weber to mind.

Contemporary organization theorists have challenged, refined and extended Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy in a number of useful ways, though at times they appear to have ignored Weber's purposes in developing it and the level of historical and theoretical abstraction at which he was writing. Since Weber's time, new forms of organization have developed, in response, among other things, to 'post-industrial' technological developments. Nevertheless, Weber's work remains an indispensable starting-point for modern investigation of bureaucracy, both at 'micro' and at 'macro' levels.

In his diagnosis of the dangers faced by twentieth century Germany and the West, however, and particularly in the prescription he offered, Weber seems to me in one respect to have been tragically misguided: bureaucracies have often been less powerful than he feared and political leaders catastrophically more powerful than he hoped, in Germany and elsewhere. For example, Weber's confidence immediately after the October Revolution, that the Bolshevik 'dilettantes' and intellectuals would lose power within three months was, to say the least, misplaced. However, as Weber himself emphasized, the cogency and utility of his social theory does not depend on the accuracy of his political judgment, though they may, of course, be linked. In particular, as Weber was careful to remind both his readers and
Michels, the functional *indispensability* of large, hierarchical organizations of salaried, permanently-employed officials neither ensured nor depended upon the existence of *Beamtenherrschaft*. It is no refutation of the claim that bureaucracies are indispensable in modern society to show that political rulers can exercise sway over, and indeed cut swathes through their administrative staffs. It would, however, be a refutation to show that bureaucratic organizations and staffs are readily dispensable in modern societies. It is, in effect, such a refutation that Lenin attempted in 1917.

1. **The Simplicity of Administration and the Dispensability of Bureaucracy**

Before 1917, European Marxists had not paid conspicuous attention to the prediction of post-revolutionary institutional arrangements. Marx had provided epistemological objections to that sort of enterprise and, even where it was attempted, it was a far less central preoccupation than problems associated with bringing the revolution about. But on one central issue the mainstreams of German and Russian social democracy converged: most German and Russian Marxists agreed with Kautsky that the proletariat should take over and use the existing state apparatus rather than smash it.¹

Unlike Kautsky, Lenin did not believe that the State could be taken over peacefully, but he did believe that it should be taken over. In 1916, Lenin's colleague Bukharin became the first Bolshevik to challenge this belief. He sent Lenin an essay, 'Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State' in which he described 'the final type of the contemporary imperialist robber state, an iron organization which envelops the living body of society in its tenacious grasping paws. It is a New Leviathan, before which the fantasy of Thomas Hobbes

seems child's play ....'.  

1. Bukharin concluded that the socialist movement must 'emphasize strongly its hostility in principle to state power' and that the proletariat's immediate aim must be to 'destroy the state organization of the bourgeoisie .... explode it from within'.

2. In September 1916 Lenin wrote to Bukharin, rejecting the article for publication, describing its conclusion as 'either supremely inexact, or incorrect' and suggesting that Bukharin's reflections 'about the state in general' be left 'to mature'.

Hurt but undeterred, Bukharin defended his views in correspondence, and published another article repeating his earlier characterizations of the state. Lenin's published reply was unambiguously hostile. He explained that Bukharin ['Comrade Nota Bene'] had ignored

... the main point of difference between socialists and anarchists in their attitude toward the state. Socialists are in favour of utilizing the present state and its institutions in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class, maintaining also that the state should be used for a specific form of transition from capitalism to socialism. This transitional form is the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is also a state.

The anarchists want to 'abolish' the state, 'blow it up' (sprengen) as Comrade Nota-Bene expresses it in one place, erroneously ascribing this view to the socialists.

Lenin also promised to 'return to this very important subject in a separate article' and in the first two months of 1917 he systematically worked through Marx's and Engels' writings on the state. The result of this research was, in effect, an abandonment of the Communist Manifesto for the Civil War in France and of the views of Kautsky

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2 Ibid, p.34.
for those of Bukharin. The views to which Lenin came at this time were systematically elaborated several months later in his famous pamphlet, State and Revolution.

Like Marx, Lenin claimed that bureaucracy was objectionable because bureaucrats are 'a privileged group holding "jobs" remunerated on a high, bourgeois scale' and because '... the police, ... the bureaucracy ... are unanswerable to the people and placed above the people'. Appealing to a strong Russian, rather than simply Marxist tradition, Lenin constantly attacked the existing state machinery as alien, separate, 'above' and not of the people.

But why was it necessary to smash the state machine? Since neither Marx nor Lenin had ever argued that communist society would be administered by 'bureaucrats', Lenin's new position on the proletarian dictatorship cannot follow simply from the inconsistency between 'bureaucracy' and communism. The only reason Lenin seems to give for the necessity to smash the existing machine is the connection between the bureaucrats, police and army and the bourgeoisie. Bureaucrats, he wrote, 'are the most faithful servants of the bourgeoisie', connected to the latter 'by thousands of threads'. Bureaucrats could not be neutral, let alone amiable to the proletariat; as a result of their

1 When Bukharin returned to Moscow in May, Lenin's wife's first words were 'V.I. asked me to tell you that he no longer has any disagreement with you on the question of the state'. See Cohen, op. cit., p.42 and n.151, p.399.
social position, connections and conditioning, they would necessarily take the side of the bourgeoisie. They 'would simply be unfit to carry out the orders of the proletarian state'.

Lenin was not arguing that the proletarian dictatorship could do without a state; indeed it was precisely on this issue that he distinguished his view from that of the anarchists. A state would be required to suppress counter-revolutionaries, and it would also be required in the first stage of socialism, to administer. In 1917, however, Lenin rejected all arguments which purported to link the persistence of state functions with existing forms of organizing state functionaries:

... When asked why it became necessary to have special bodies of armed men placed above society and alienating themselves from it (police and a standing army), the West European and Russian philistines are inclined to utter a few phrases borrowed from Spencer or Mikhailovsky, to refer to the growing complexity of social life, the differentiation of functions, and so on.

Arguments about the complexity of modern society failed to impress Lenin, for he argued that the tasks of the proletarian state had been rendered extraordinarily simple. Since the new 'state' would be, as never before, a state of 'the majority of wage slaves of yesterday' and since, again as never before, only a minority of former exploiters would remain to be suppressed, suppression would become a relatively simple task for which special machinery would hardly be required.

Moreover, drawing on Marx's arguments that the forms of socialist organization are immanent in highly developed capitalism, Lenin claimed that on the basis of the creations of capitalism:

1 CW, vol. 25, p.434.
large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc... the great majority of the functions of the old 'state power' have become so simplified and can be reduced to such exceedingly simple operations of registration, filing and checking that they can be easily performed by every literate person, can quite easily be performed for ordinary 'workman's wages', and that these functions can (and must) be stripped of every shadow of privilege, of every semblance of 'official grandeur'.

Finally, a recurrent refrain in Lenin's writings during 1917 was that workers and peasants would administer better than bureaucrats. Like so many of its critics, Lenin characterized bureaucracy as parasitic, by which he meant both that it was completely dependent on bourgeois society and would fall with it and that bureaucrats played no productive role. Here too, capitalism had, as it were, provided that workers with on-the-job training - 'it was not for nothing that we went to learn in the school of capitalism' - which, according to Lenin, would equip them far better than parasitic bureaucrats for those administrative tasks which would need to be discharged in the new society.

Lenin, who in 1905 had called the Paris Commune 'a government such as ours should not be' and who had never before regarded the Commune's institutional forms as models to be emulated, suddenly based his 1917 model of the proletarian dictatorship on the Commune; the Soviets were its heirs. Lenin's scheme was claimed to ensure popular participation in all public activities and complete popular control over those functionaries who may be required; the scheme's central aim was to eliminate 'bureaucracy' from both politics and economics. Lenin conceded that the new state would require functionaries, but he insisted that these functionaries would not be bureaucrats, that

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1 CW, vol. 25, pp.420-21. See also p.473.
3 CW, vol. 9, p.81.
is, people whose 'essence' is to be 'privileged ... divorced from the people and standing above the people'. There would be an apparatus, but this apparatus will not be 'bureaucratic'. The workers, after winning political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, shatter it to its very foundations, and raze it to the ground; they will replace it by a new one, consisting of the very same workers and other employees, *against* whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels: (1) not only election, but also recall at any time; (2) pay not to exceed that of a workman; (3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by all, so that all may become 'bureaucrats' for a time and that, therefore, nobody may be able to become a 'bureaucrat'.

It is with these measures, plus the conversion of parliamentary institutions into 'working bodies, executive and legislative at the same time', that Lenin turns on Kautsky:

According to Kautsky, since elected functionaries will remain under socialism, so will officials, so will the 'bureaucracy'! This is exactly where he is wrong. Marx, referring to the example of the Commune, showed that under socialism functionaries will cease to be 'bureaucrats', to be 'officials' ....

Such a solution to the problems of controlling bureaucracies in mass societies would not have satisfied Weber, or indeed Lenin at any other time in his life. But while few people suggest that these writings typify Lenin's life work or that they were the model on which later Soviet developments were built, they have received a great amount of attention, and many extravagant claims have been made for them.

In fact, as Dr. T.H. Rigby has demonstrated, despite 'Lenin's constant stress on the non-bureaucratic character of the new proletarian state, the task of equipping itself with an effective bureaucracy was

1 CW, vol. 25, p.486.
2 CW, vol. 25, p.481.
3 CW, vol. 25, p.487.
in fact the main preoccupation of the Soviet state during its initial phase, and predominantly this expressed itself in efforts to "take over" and "set in motion" the old ministerial machine.\(^1\) And quite apart from his subsequent practice, it is worth looking in some detail at Lenin's writings on these matters after 1917, for they are not simply a mass of ad hoc rationalizations designed to cope with individual problems as they arose. They show sufficient coherence to warrant as least as much attention as *The State and Revolution* in the search for Lenin's views on bureaucracy in post-revolutionary society.

2 The Difficulty of Administration; the Importance of Expertise

It had been a fundamental article of faith among Marxists, and another reason for the shock which Lenin's April Theses caused, that socialism could only develop out of, and on the basis of, highly developed capitalism. Lenin played fast and loose with the problems which this belief created for his resolve to institute an immediate proletarian revolution\(^2\), but residues of the belief remained profoundly important in his thought. Even in *The State and Revolution* itself, there are hints that the need to build on capitalism might qualify Lenin's wholesale rejection of the institutions of the ancien régime. In that pamphlet Lenin attributed four categories of tasks to the existing state: suppression of the masses in the interests of the bourgeoisie; keeping control and account of labour, production and distribution; management within industry; and tasks requiring technical expertise. Under the proletarian dictatorship, suppression would be carried out in a totally new way, for the mass of the people, organized

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2 See Jonathan Frankel, 'Lenin's Doctrinal Revolution of April, 1917', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 4, pp.117-42.
in people's militias, would suppress the emeritus exploiters.

Accounting and control could also be carried out by the people at large, for the tasks had been so simplified by capitalism; 'reduced to the extraordinarily simple operations - which any literate person can perform - of supervising and recording, knowledge of the four rules of arithmetic, and issuing appropriate receipts.' Management within industry would require functionaries, but their positions would ultimately become accessible to all, and, in any case the combination of workers' control and the measures of the Paris Commune would sharply distinguish the new situation from the old.

In one sphere, however, Lenin emphasized continuity between the arrangements of the new society and those of the old. He warned against confusing:

> the question of control and accounting ... with the question of the scientifically trained staff of engineers, agronomists and so on. These gentlemen are working today in obedience to the wishes of the capitalists, and will work even better tomorrow in obedience to the wishes of the armed workers.

Certainly, in *The State and Revolution* Lenin pays far less attention to the technical tasks of the proletarian state than to its other tasks; but his remarks on the former suggest a potentially important point of continuity between the new and the old. The image which emerges is less that of a monolith which must be 'razed to the ground' to be replaced by something totally new and different, than a Saint-Simonian image of a growing and potentially healthy organism afflicted by a harmful parasite. Harsh treatment must be administered to destroy the parasite and certain precautions must be followed to keep it at bay. And at one point, though he mixes his metaphors, Lenin says almost precisely that:

... Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type, in which standing over the 'common' people, who are over-worked and starved, one has the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here already to hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalists, crushed the resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the armed workers, and smashed the bureaucratic machine of the modern state, we shall have a splendidly equipped mechanism, free from the 'parasite', a mechanism which can very well be set going by the united workers themselves, who will hire technicians, foremen and accountants, and pay them all, as indeed all 'state' officials in general, workmen's wages."

Shortly before the Revolution, Lenin limited even more clearly the amount of 'smashing' that the state should undergo, and here too, Saint-Simon would have endorsed the terms in which this limitation was cast. In *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* Lenin made it clear that capitalism had bequeathed far more than the simplification of tasks to the new society. According to Lenin, the existing state rested, in effect, on two separate apparatuses: one - police, bureaucracy and army - was 'chiefly "oppressive"' and had to be smashed; the other apparatus, however, had:

extremely close connections with the banks and syndicates [it is] an apparatus which performs an enormous amount of accounting and registration work ... This apparatus must not be smashed. It must be wrested from the control of the capitalists; the capitalists and the wires they pull must be cut off, lopped off, chopped away from this apparatus; it must be subordinated to the proletarian Soviets: it must be expanded, made more comprehensive, and nation-wide. And this can be done by utilizing the achievements already made by large-scale capitalism (in the same way as the proletarian revolution can, in general, reach its goal only by utilizing these achievements).2

A little later Lenin adds that:

We shall not invent the organizational form of the work but take it ready-made from capitalism - we shall take over the banks, syndicates, the best factories, experimental stations, academies, and so forth; all that we shall have to do is to borrow the best models furnished by the advanced countries.3

1 CW, vol. 25, pp.426-27.
Moreover, the proletarian state would not merely preserve and copy existing structures. It would take over the existing employees, 'the majority of whom themselves lead a proletarian or semi-proletarian existence', and deal '"severely"' with capitalists and the higher officials, 'of whom there are very few, but who gravitate towards the capitalists'. But it would not discard them; it would 'employ them in the service of the new state. This applies both to the capitalists and to the upper sections of the bourgeois intellectuals, office employees etc.'.

Though Lenin insisted that the simplification of accounting and control had made possible a vast influx of proletarians into the state service, he cautioned that 'We are not utopians. We know that an unskilled labourer or a cook cannot immediately get on with the job of state administration'. He emphasized the need for 'scientifically trained specialists of every kind', and predicted that 'in all probability we shall introduce complete wage equality only gradually and shall pay these specialists higher salaries during the transition period'.

Almost all of these propositions have their contradictories in other, more common, statements made by Lenin in 1917; they also contain the seeds of most of what he had to say on these subjects after power had been won. Just as he had distinguished between the oppressive and, in a broad sense, administrative tasks of the old state, so by March, 1918 he was distinguishing between suppression of exploiters and administration and organization in the new state, and he was emphasizing that administration had become 'the main and central task' of the state.

And the goal of administration was not simply the restoration and maintenance of order. It was a truly Saint-Simonian vision of centrally directed technical and economic advance. It required 'a single state Bank, the biggest of the big'; 'the transformation of the whole state economic mechanism into a single huge machine'.

More prosaically, it required the most efficient possible development of large-scale industry, for

Socialism owes its origin to large-scale machine industry. If the masses of the working people in introducing socialism prove incapable of adjusting their institutions to the way that large-scale machine industry should work, then there can be no question of introducing socialism.

Together with these commitments, went a real passion for efficiency, for people who could get things done, for practical men, well-versed in the tasks they undertook. As Lenin somewhat apologetically explained in 1918:

The slogan of practical ability and business-like methods has enjoyed little popularity among revolutionaries. One can say that no slogan has been less popular among them ... [However] the chief and urgent requirement now is precisely the slogan of practical ability and business-like methods.

The consequences of these commitments and this passion were profound. Firstly, they led to an insistence - convenient for the 'hard' elements in the Party - that there were many important tasks which the masses, at least at present, were unable to handle. In homely fashion Lenin explained: 'No comrades, the art of administration does not descend from heaven, it is not inspired by the Holy Ghost. And the fact that a class is the leading class does not make it at once capable of administering'. In 1921, he made the point more bluntly:

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1 CW, vol. 26, p.106.
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Does every worker know how to run the state? People working in the practical sphere know that this is not true, that millions of our organized workers are going through what we always said the trade unions were, namely a school of communism and administration. When they have attended this school for a number of years they will have learned to administer, but the going is slow. We have not even abolished illiteracy ... How many of the workers have been engaged in government? A few thousand throughout Russia and no more.¹

That this insistence on the need for administrative competence was not merely a political ploy is clear from Lenin's distinction between the skills of administrators and those of communists. He began relatively politely, stating as early as March 1918 that it was understandable that revolutionaries and agitators know little about large-scale administration and organization; after all, this had not been their métier for long. Moreover, some consolation and explanation lay in the fact that there was no precedent for their new activities and no canonical guide to show them the way:

We know about socialism, but knowledge of organization on a scale of millions, knowledge of the organization and distribution of goods - this we do not have. The old Bolshevik leaders did not teach us. The Bolshevik Party cannot boast of this in its history. We have not done a course on this yet.²

In any event, the Bolsheviks were not only communists but also Russians, and 'so far as ... [organizing skill] is concerned, the Russian is not in the picture'.³ Lenin's remarks on this issue became increasingly impatient and, towards the end of his life, almost desperate. He exhorted communists to 'frankly admit our complete inability to conduct affairs, to be organizers and administrators' and in 1922 he asked:

Will the responsible Communists of the R.S.F.S.R. and of the Russian Communist Party realise that they cannot administer; that they only imagine they are directing, but are, actually,

1 CW, vol. 32, p.61.
2 CW, vol. 27, pp.296-97.
being directed? If they realise this they will learn, of course: for this business can be learnt. But one must study hard to learn it, and our people are not doing this. They scatter orders and decrees right and left, but the result is quite different from what they want.¹

As a result of these deficiencies of the masses and of the communists, and as a result of the bourgeoisie's special talents, Lenin insisted that lessons had to be taken from the bourgeoisie. It was they who knew techniques of management, industrial production and trade; they who were scientists, technologists, engineers and agronomists. Lenin insisted that 'we must take a lesson in socialism from the trust managers ... from capitalism's big organizers'², he exhorted communists to bear in mind that 'the engineer's way to communism is different from that of the underground propagandist: and writer³. He recognized that the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie might contain traitors and saboteurs, but 'they do know how to run shops'⁴, while as he reiterated again and again, no one else did; there were 'no other bricks'⁵ with which to build. In direct and conscious contravention of State and Revolution he fought for better treatment and higher wages for 'bourgeois specialists', higher indeed than those of workers and even of Party leaders. Finally, in his most extravagant, but not uncharacteristic, appeal, he argued that:

Unless our leading bodies ... guard as the apple of their eye every specialist who does his work conscientiously and knows and loves it - even though the ideas of communism are totally alien to him - it will be useless to expect any serious progress in socialist construction. We may not be able to achieve it soon, but we must at all costs achieve a situation in which specialists - as a separate social stratum, which

¹ CW, vol. 33, p.289.
² CW, vol. 42, p.77.
³ CW, vol. 32, p.144.
⁴ CW, vol. 28, p.222.
⁵ CW, vol. 29, p.70.
will persist until we have reached the highest stage of development of communist society - can enjoy better conditions of life under socialism than they enjoyed under capitalism.¹

By 1923, only 23-29 per cent of the directors and managers of boards were Communists, and according to Azrael, the vast majority of the red Communists were bourgeois specialists. By 1921:

... official sources were able to report that specialists and ex-officials occupied no less than 80 per cent of the 'most responsible posts' in the VSNKh [Supreme Economic Council] and comprised 74 per cent of the membership of the administrative collegia of industrial glavka. Moreover, the regime saw fit to order those communists who retained high posts 'to command less or, more accurately, not to command'.²

Lenin, indeed, was so imbued with Saint-Simonian technocratic zeal that he, of all people, pleaded for the supersession of politics by practical control, technical competence and economic reorganization. At the Eight Congress of Soviets in December 1920 he applauded 'the beginning of that very happy time when politics will recede into the background, when politics will be discussed less often and at shorter length, and engineers and agronomists will do most of the talking ... Henceforth, less politics will be the best politics'.³

It is difficult to recognize the Russia of the 1920s, or '30s or '40s, in these remarks, but there is no reason to doubt Lenin's sincerity. At the very least, he was satisfied that his Party was competent to handle political problems and consolidate its power; these were not lessons which a Bolshevik needed to learn in or from Germany or America. The skills required for large-scale economic administration and technological development were. In Russia, they

¹ CW, vol. 33, p.194.
were known only to those who had been involved in these activities; they were, however, best known to those outside. For Lenin was not interested simply in employing the personnel, the administrators, traders and experts of the old regime; he was determined that Russian enterprises be modelled on those enterprises which really worked, those of the West. He sought, as he wrote in 1923, 'a staff of workers really abreast of the times, i.e. not inferior to the best West European standards'.

He called for German and American literature to be obtained:

\textit{Everything} more or less valuable should be collected, especially as regards normalizing bureaucratic work (procedure for despatch of business, forms, control, typing of copies, inquiries and replies, etc. etc.)

\textit{In my opinion the most necessary thing for us now is to learn from Europe and America.}^2

Lenin was fascinated by any technique which promised to increase industrial production - piece-work; adjusting wages to productivity, and, in particular, the Taylor system:

The Russian is a bad worker compared with people in advanced countries ... The task that the Soviet Government must set the people in all its scope is - learn to work. The Taylor system, the last word of capitalism in this respect, like all capitalist progress, is a combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of the greatest scientific achievements in the field of analysing mechanical motions during work, the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions, the elaboration of correct methods of work, the introduction of the best system of accounting and control, etc. The Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology in this field. The possibility of building socialism depends exactly upon our success in combining the Soviet power and the Soviet organization of administration with the up-to-date achievements of capitalism.^3

\begin{itemize}
\item[1] CW, vol. 33, p.487.
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Finally, it was in aid of these same goals that Lenin fought, against great opposition, for single as opposed to collegiate authority in industry. Already in March 1918 he called for the separation of 'two categories of democratic functions'; on the one hand the collegiate discussion of questions preliminary to execution, and, on the other, 'the establishment of strictest responsibility for executive functions and absolutely businesslike, disciplined, voluntary fulfilment of the assignments and decrees necessary for the economic mechanism to function really like clockwork ... the time has come when the achievement of precisely this change is the pivot of all our revolutionary reforms'.¹ It was accepted by Lenin and by his opponents on this issue that single authority and, even more, one-man management was 'dictatorial'; Lenin insisted, however, that dictatorship by the competent was often necessary. Though he encountered strong opposition, he managed to win acknowledgment for his position - in March/April 1920 at the Ninth Party Congress. By the end of 1920, one-man authority was established in 86 per cent of all Soviet enterprises.²

These, then, were the essential ingredients of Lenin's programme for post-revolutionary administration and reconstruction. The consequences of this programme for the doctrine of The State and Revolution can be easily and chronologically charted. In April 1918, Bukharin was rebuked by Lenin for his laudatory review of The State and Revolution, which emphasized the message that the state had to be smashed. This task, Lenin argued, had been accomplished, it was a task of the past. What was now necessary and what Bukharin and the Left Communists ignored, was 'accounting, control and discipline'.³

¹ CW, vol. 27, p.211.
² J.R. Azrael, op. cit., p.46.
In July 1919 Lenin wrote an article on *The State* which interpreted the call to smash the state in a somewhat novel manner:

This machine called the state ... the proletariat will smash. So far we have deprived the capitalists of this machine and have taken it over. We shall use this machine or bludgeon, to destroy all exploitation. And when the possibility of exploitation no longer exists anywhere in the world, when there are no longer owners of land and owners of factories, and when there is no longer a situation in which some gorge while others starve, only when the possibility of this no longer exists shall we consign this machine to the scrapheap. Then there will be no state and no exploitation. Such is the view of our Communist Party.

Lenin claims that he has developed these ideas 'in more detail' in *The State and Revolution*. Finally in January 1923, Lenin called for the reorganization of the machinery of state, 'which is utterly useless and which we took over in its entirety from the preceding epoch; during the past five years of struggle we did not, and could not, drastically reorganize it'.

3 'Bureaucratism', Participation and Administrative Efficiency

It would, however, be quite misleading to end here. For to do so would be to suggest that Lenin's views after 1917 were far more coherent than they were, and that they were simply authoritarian and elitist. In fact, his views exhibit many tensions and strains: Lenin emphasized the primacy of politics in a revolutionary state and decried the excessively 'political' orientation of Communist administrators; he emphasized the need for bourgeois specialists and continually blamed them for their 'bureaucratism'; he insisted that they be treated well and ordered that they in particular should be

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1 CW, vol. 29, p.488.
harshly scrutinized. Moreover, the utopian and participatory elements of his thought did not simply effloresce and die in 1917, but continued to reappear in his later writings.

After the revolution, Lenin continually attacked 'bureaucracy', 'bureaucratism' and 'bureaucratic methods' in Soviet government. Before 1921 critics of 'bureaucracy' such as Bukharin and Preobazhensky linked their criticism directly to the need to take steps towards the 'withering away of the state'. Lenin no longer made this connection; the weakening or loosening of administrative arrangements was not on his post-revolutionary agenda. When Lenin attacked bureaucracy and bureaucratism after the Revolution, as he so often did, he was referring to 'system-immanent' abuses, excesses, and inefficiencies. An efficient bureaucracy staffed increasingly by workers is what he sought; the 'bureaucratism' he abused was a congeries of flaws in the creaking administrative system he knew he had.

The flaws which Lenin most often identified with 'bureaucratism' and 'bureaucratic methods' were of three general kinds. The first kind is a predilection for authoritarian dictation from above, for 'bossing' and ordering'. Lenin accused Trotsky of this. A second flaw, related to the first, is the making of plans without any kind of test, or realistic assessment of their effects. Thus Lenin warned against 'intellectualist and bureaucratic projecteering', and he confessed in 1921 that 'the principal mistake we have all been making up to now is too much optimism; as a result, we succumbed to bureaucratic utopias. Only a very small part of our plans has been realized. Life,
everyone, in fact has laughed at our plans'. Finally, and most commonly, Lenin vented his fury against inefficiency and red-tape by bracketing them with the sin of 'bureaucratism' or by subsuming them under the category of 'bureaucratic methods'. Again and again, Lenin railed against 'bureaucratism, red-tape and mismanagement', and it would not really be appropriate to try to pin down his meaning too closely; he was clearly writing for audiences which understood with him that: 'approval from the bureaucratic standpoint means arbitrary acts on the part of the grandees, the red-tape runaround, the commissions of inquiry game, and the strictly bureaucratic foul-up of everything that is going'.

How had 'bureaucratism' become so prevalent a malaise of the Soviet state? At various times, Lenin suggested a number of different explanations. One simplistic suggestion of which he was particularly fond was that bureaucratism was simply a legacy of the old regime, and specifically of the need to employ the personnel of the old regime:

... We dispersed these old bureaucrats, shuffled them and then began to place them in new posts. The tsarist bureaucrats began to join the Soviet institutions and practise their bureaucratic methods, they began to assume the colouring of Communists and, to succeed better in their careers, to procure membership cards of the Russian Communist Party. And so, they have been thrown out of the door but they creep back in through the window.

Lenin had a substantial temperamental commitment to this sort of explanation, but it is difficult to believe that even he was satisfied with it. It smacks of a particularly vulgar Marxism to suggest that all of the problems associated with the attempt centrally to administer

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1 CW, vol. 32, p.497.
2 CW, vol. 32, p.142.
3 CW, vol. 29, pp.182-83.
a massive state can be explained by the social type of its officeholders. In any case, Lenin gives the lie to this explanation by his constant comparisons between the skills of the old officials and Communists' and workers' lack of skills, and since many of the former had never been thrown 'out of the door' there was no need for them to return through the window.

On a number of occasions, particularly towards the end of his life, Lenin acknowledged that the 'bureaucratism' of which he complained afflicted many people besides the old officials. He admitted that the Party was becoming bureaucratized; indeed on one occasion he explained that:

... It is natural that the bureaucratic methods that have reappeared in Soviet institutions were bound to have a pernicious effect even on Party organizations, since the upper ranks of the Party are at the same time the upper ranks of the state apparatus; they are one and the same thing.1

In this and other passages2 bureaucratism appears as a type of disease, which certainly afflicted the tsarist bureaucracy, but was now afflicting the whole range of Soviet officialdom. And this suggests a far more pervasive and deep-seated problem.

Ulam has suggested that the disparate themes of Lenin's last articles and notes, dictated between December 1922 and March 1923, can be linked if one notes how often Lenin uses the word culture; 'culture and its relatives, so to speak, toleration, politeness, the ability to "attach people to oneself" ... are constantly cited by Lenin as necessary prerequisite of the art of governing, as both the means and the ends of the achievement of socialism ...'3 It seems to me that this stress on the need for, and the Russian lack of, culture, connects much more than Lenin's last writings. It is

the Russian masses' lack of culture and education which for
Lenin explains their inability to step directly into government
and the consequent need to make use of bourgeois leftovers.¹
Russian communists, too, lacked and needed 'a cultured approach to the
simplest affairs of state'.² Not even the officials of the old regime
had much culture; they were all afflicted with the Russian disease.³

What, then was to be done? The Mensheviks might, of course,
have accepted Lenin's analysis, but he could never accept their
solution. In fact, his own answers varied, were not always consistent
with each other and only became at all systematic in his very last
brooding reflections. One measure which Lenin often encouraged was
the punishment, by People's Courts or by sacking, of anyone found
guilty of red tape. This accorded well enough with Lenin's fury with
inefficiency, his tendency to view 'bureaucratism' as a moral fault,
and his desire to set examples for officials; it would not,
however, appear calculated to enhance the level of culture.⁴

³ CW, vol. 29, pp.182-83.
⁴ One vivid example of this line of thought occurs in a letter written
by Lenin to Kamenev in March 1922:

Here is what I would propose: authorise the All-Russia
C.E.C. Presidium to adopt the following decision right away:

In view of the scandalous red tape on the deal
(such-and-such) involving the purchase of food
for Soviet rubles, order the State Political
Administration (they need a little scaring!) to
find those guilty of red tape and incarcerate for
6 hours those working at the Moscow Gubernia Conference
and for 36 hours those working at Vneshtorg (of course,
with the exception of All-Russia C.E.C. members:
after all, we enjoy almost parliamentary immunity).

After this, instruct the press to ridicule both
groups and pour dirt on them. For the disgraceful
thing here is that Muscovites (in Moscow!) have
failed to cope with the red tape. For this they
should be beaten with a stick...
But Lenin did not hope to cure bureaucratism simply by throwing people out of the administration; he also wished to bring a new type of person into it. Again and again, he repeated the claim that the only way to cure bureaucratism and red tape was to 'pour as many workers and peasants as possible into this apparatus'.

In 1919 the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (Rabkrin) was set up under Stalin as a means of drawing the masses into supervising the bureaucracy and of training them in state administration. It is in these pleas more than anywhere else in Lenin's post-revolutionary writings that the mystique of class origin survives. Just as Marx had quite failed to take the point of Bakunin's charge that a communist government would consist 'of former workers, who however, as soon as they become representatives or governors of the people, cease to be workers', so Lenin, at least until 1921, had boundless faith in the consequences of replacing 'hundreds of thousands of bourgeois bureaucrats' by trained workers.

Lenin's pleas are also strikingly reminiscent of the participatory themes of *State and Revolution*, but there is a crucial difference in this respect between his writings of 1917 and those of his period in

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That is the only way to teach them. Otherwise, Soviet personnel, local and central, will never learn. We cannot afford to trade freely: that is Russia's ruin.

But we can and will learn to transfer our red tapists on to a percentage basis: on every deal you get so much per cent (fraction of a percent), and jail - for failure to work.

And the men at the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade need to be changed. The same applies to our state trusts ...


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1 CW, vol. 30, p.351.

power. In 1917 popular participation was seen as the antithesis to existing bureaucratic structures and forms of organization; in the later years, it was seen, on the one hand, as a corrective to abuses within the existing administrative system and, on the other, as a goal, a good in itself, but only to be approached at a pace and to an extent consistent with centralized and effective administrative organization. Workers and peasants were to learn from existing specialists: they would 'gradually proceed from the simple duties they are able to carry out - at first only as onlookers - to more important functions of state'\(^1\) and would replace the existing, tainted functionaries only when they had learnt 'to administer the state (which was something nobody had taught us)'.\(^2\)

In fact, these devices came to nought. \textit{Rabkrin} very quickly grew to some 12,000 officials, very few of whom were workers\(^3\) and it became 'one of the most bureaucracy-ridden agencies in the whole government. Its officials, who had nothing else to do but to snoop around, complain, and censor the work of others, came to be considered the dregs of the Soviet administrative corps'.\(^4\) Nor is it easy to see that \textit{Rabkrin} under Stalin would have lessened bureaucratism even if it \textit{had} introduced more workers into the administration. For in a system such as Lenin's, the Marxist habit of looking to the regime's Indians is often far less apposite than looking to its chiefs. In his last writings, Lenin seems to have begun dimly to perceive this. At any rate, he gave unprecedented attention to the manners, activities and possibilities of restraining the top leadership of the Communist Party.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \(^1\) CW, vol. 30, p.415.
  \item \(^2\) CW, vol. 31, p.435.
  \item \(^3\) M. Lewin, \textit{Lenin's Last Struggle}, (London, 1973), p.120.
  \item \(^4\) A. Ulam, \textit{Lenin and the Bolsheviks}, p.701.
\end{itemize}
Here, the proletarian mystique still lingered, and Lenin suggested that the Central Committee be leavened by 50-100 workers, whose functions and powers were rather sketchily defined but who were intended to check, restrain and remain independent of the personal intrigues and antagonisms within the Politburo. Lenin also suggested that the Central Control Commission be increased to 75-100 in number. But the institution which was to play the big role in curing the administration of bureaucratism was of a quite different sort. Rabkrin was to be revamped and reduced to 300-400 members, and these members were to be a very select group:

specially screened for conscientiousness and knowledge of our state apparatus. They must also undergo a special test as regards their knowledge of the principles of scientific organization of labour in general, and of administration work, office work, and so forth, in particular ... they should be highly skilled, specially screened, particularly reliable, and highly paid ...

Significantly, the only existing government institution which Lenin singled out for praise at this time was the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, which itself was staffed with ex-Menshevik experts and experts from the old regime, and which 'by current standards appeared virtually apolitical'. According to Ulam,

The ministry, in brief, was more efficient, and it worked, not at the behest of some Party bigwig or faction, but for the Party as a whole.

Thus, in a somewhat roundabout way, Lenin defined his prerequisites for sound administration: efficiency and noninvolvement in the personal side of politics. Lenin was, in other words, trying to replace the 'patrimonial' staffs of 'Party bosses' with an impersonal and efficient bureaucracy. This, I believe, is where we began.

1 CW, vol. 33, pp.482-83.
3 Ibid, p.158.
It is extremely doubtful whether Lenin's prescriptions would have been effective even if he had survived. In particular, it is worth noticing how limited his critique is. He never questions the decisive political fact of the regime - one-party dictatorship - nor does he consider the effect that the state's repressive apparatus and activities, the ban on factions, etc., might have on administrative efficiency, and much besides. No external constraints, checks or balances are proposed; merely internal manoeuvrings among bureaucrats and Party overseers. In this context, Moshe Lewin is right to complain that:

Lenin, who always claimed to be an orthodox Marxist, who no doubt did use the Marxist method in approaching social phenomena, and who saw the international situation in class terms, approached the problems of government more like a chief executive of a strictly 'elitist' turn of mind. He did not apply methods of social analysis to the government itself and was content to consider it purely in terms of organizational methods.

However, the point is not simply that Lenin 'approached the problems of government more like a chief executive of a strictly "elitist" turn of mind' - that, after all, is almost precisely what he was - but that he had approached these problems like a chief executive who had not expected them to arise and who had no theory for coping with them.

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1 Lenin's Last Struggle, pp.121-22.
PART FOUR

BUREAUCRACY AND THE FATE OF THE REVOLUTION
'BUREAUCRACY' IN TROTSKY'S ANALYSIS OF STALINISM

As we have seen, 'bureaucracy' played a significant, but very rarely a central role in Marx's writings, while in the post-revolutionary writings of Lenin it usually appeared as a matter of practical rather than theoretical concern and attention. In Trotsky's analyses of the Soviet Union after 1923, on the other hand, the concept of bureaucracy plays a quite different and altogether more substantial part: it stands at the core of these writings - historical, theoretical, polemical - in a way, and to an extent, that it never did for Marx and that it has rarely done for Marxists. In these writings, Trotsky grappled persistently with the issues that the existence of powerful bureaucracies posed for Marxists, and his writings had a considerable influence on the reception of the concept of bureaucracy by later Marxists and by many non- or ex-Marxists. During most of the history of Marxism, 'bureaucracy' - unlike 'capitalism', 'class' or 'proletariat' - was not a deeply 'theorized' concept; from Trotsky's analyses of Stalinism it emerged almost overburdened with theory.

1 From 'Bureaucratism' to Bureaucracy as a 'Social Phenomenon'

When Trotsky writes of 'bureaucracy', his intention is not, as was, for example, Max Weber's in his scholarly work, to refer neutrally to a particular form of organizational structure. First of all, whatever they refer to, 'bureaucracy' and its various derivatives - 'bureaucratic', bureaucratized', 'bureaucratism' - do not in Trotsky's works
refer neutrally. The possibility that a measure might be 'bureaucratic' and yet - let alone hence - commendable, is entertained very rarely indeed. Secondly, Trotsky's focus is not on the organizational structure at all. 'Bureaucracy' for Trotsky is a collective designation for those people, the bureaucrats, who have come to man the organizations, first of the state apparatus and through them increasingly of the party; bureaucracy is a social rather than an organizational phenomenon. Of course, the fortunes of the bureaucracy in this sense, and the organizational structure, are intimately related, but they are not identical. It is quite conceivable - it was in effect Trotsky's and, in part, Weber's hope - that those who staff the organization would be curbed or even purged without the organization suffering: 'a strong state but without mandarins; armed power, but without the Samurai'. Conversely, bureaucrats might draw status, money and power from sources quite independent of the organization in which they work. In Trotsky's analysis, it is bureaucracy as a social stratum which is the main actor and the leading culprit, not, say, the functional imperatives of large-scale organization.

The idea that the October Revolution had spawned a stratum of bureaucrats who were sabotaging its achievements came to dominate Trotsky's thought, but he did not arrive at it immediately. In December 1923, Trotsky published a number of articles in Pravda which were re-published as The Neo Course early in 1924. In them he warned the party against the spread of 'bureaucratism', which was 'the result of the transference to the party of the administrative manners accumulated

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during these last years'.\(^1\) Trotsky's language is much more restrained at this stage than in later writings, and is more calculated to suggest a disease to which party leaders, and especially those involved with the state apparatus, might succumb, rather than to focus on and identify a specific group of carriers who are already irremediably afflicted. Indeed, while Trotsky gives an unmistakable idea of where the carriers are to be found - in the state apparatus - he insists that 'this does not mean, to be sure, that the apparatus is composed exclusively of bureaucratized elements, or even less, of confirmed and incorrigible bureaucrats. Not at all!'.\(^2\)

Secondly, unlike Lenin, Trotsky insists here that Soviet bureaucratism is new, it is a development of 'these last few years'.\(^3\) In his writings on Tsarist Russia, Trotsky, following Parvus and the liberal historian Miliukov, had emphasized the exceptionally powerful role played by the State in Russian development. On a number of occasions he remarked that Tsarism 'represents an intermediate form between European absolutism and Asian despotism, being, possibly, closer to the latter of these two'.\(^4\) However, as Wittfogel has correctly observed, Trotsky did not 'use the criteria of Oriental despotism when he criticised Stalin's bureaucratic despotism',\(^5\) and while he attributed many of the Soviet Union's problems to Russia's backwardness,\(^6\) he did not link the present danger of bureaucratism with the nature of the previous

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3. Sidney Monas has suggested to me that this may be because Trotsky was so strongly identified with the policy of keeping ex-Tsarist officers in the Red Army.
Russian state. Rather, he argued,

The bureaucratism of the party, we have said and we now repeat, is not a survival of some preceding regime, a survival in the process of disappearing; on the contrary, it is an essentially new phenomenon, flowing from the new tasks, the new functions, the new difficulties, and the new mistakes of the party.2

Linked with this insistence on the novelty of Soviet bureaucratism is Trotsky's account of the etiology of the disease. In 1923 Trotsky was not arguing, as he later came to, that leadership had been usurped by a different type of leader. Rather, he argued that the disease was coming to afflict the old revolutionary leadership itself as a result of their post-revolutionary involvement in apparatus-work and in their new positions of power. It was, as it were, an internal degeneration of the leaders - stemming from the necessity of building and maintaining an effective centralized state and army apparatus3 - rather than the supplanting of one group of leaders by men of a quite different sort, which threatened the revolution. The first chapter of The New Course counterposes the new, post-revolutionary generation of party members and the old seasoned revolutionaries whose obligation is to lead, to educate and to involve the young in decisions; and Trotsky writes:

It is completely clear that in the complicated situation of the period immediately following October, the party made its way all the better for the fact that it utilized to the full the experience accumulated by the older generation, to whose representatives it entrusted the most important positions in the organization...On the other hand, the result of this state of things has been that, in playing the role of party leader and being absorbed by the questions of administration, the old generation accustomed itself to think and to decide, as it still does, for the party...

The chief danger of the old course, a result of general historical causes as well as of our own mistakes, is that the apparatus manifests a growing tendency to counterpose a few thousand comrades, who form the leading cadres, to the rest of the mass, whom they look upon only as an object of action. If this regime should persist, it would threaten to provoke, in the long run, a degeneration of the party at both its poles, that is, among the party youth and among the leading cadres.4

1 Perhaps because this may lead to unacceptable 'Menshevik' consequences.
2 The Challenge of the Left Opposition, p.76.
3 Ibid., pp.91-92.
In the next chapter Trotsky warns that:

...we should be fully aware of the dangers of bureaucratic degeneration of the old cadres. It would be vulgar fetishism to consider that just because they have attended the best revolutionary school in the world, they contain within themselves a sure guarantee against any and all dangers of ideological narrowing and opportunistic degeneration.¹

This analysis, with its emphasis on the role of functional and administrative imperatives and constraints, would not, of course, have surprised Weber or Michels. But Trotsky is a Marxist, and already he insists that 'it is unworthy of a Marxist to consider that bureaucratism is only the aggregate of the bad habits of officeholders. Bureaucratism is a social phenomenon in that it is a definite system of administration of people and things'.² For Trotsky bureaucratism is a 'social phenomenon' in two senses: its causes, he argues, are ultimately social, 'the heterogeneity of society, the difference between the daily and the fundamental interests of various groups of the population'³ and its beneficiaries and promoters are not randomly or unrelatedly distributed. Trotsky observed that:

There is no doubt that the chairmen of the regional committees or the divisional commissars, whatever their social origin, represent a definite social type, regardless of their individual origin. During these six years, fairly stable social groupings have been formed in the Soviet regime.⁴

It is on that 'stable social grouping' which constitutes the Soviet bureaucracy that the bulk of Trotsky's explanation of Stalinism is focused, and increasingly, what began as a description of a malign tendency which might afflict members of the party becomes rather a way of characterizing the psychological make-up, the typical ways of behaving, and the working style of a specific, identifiable stratum, the

¹ Ibid., p.75.
² Ibid., p.91.
³ Ibid., p.91.
⁴ Ibid., p.74.
bureaucracy. In 1929, for example, Trotsky adopted Rakovsky's analysis\(^1\) and argued that 'after the conquest of power, an independent bureaucracy differentiated itself out from the working class milieu and that this differentiation was at first only functional, then later became social'.\(^2\) We will soon examine the nature and characteristics of this stratum; it is enough for the moment to note that Trotsky was concerned with it.

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2 The Dictatorship of the Bureaucracy and the Destruction of Political Leadership

What role had this bureaucracy played since the revolution, or, since facts and values are never far apart in Trotsky's writings, what was it guilty of? Expressed elliptically, Trotsky's charge was that 'all power is in the hands of the bureaucracy. The person who rules is the head of this bureaucracy: Stalin'.\(^3\) It was the burden of most of Trotsky's life in exile to try to show that the truth of these two propositions meant that the revolution had been betrayed.

Trotsky's objection is not to strong centralized government. In the industrialization debates of 1924-28, he consistently advocated rapid, centrally directed industrialization, and he repeatedly insisted on the need for a 'concerted general plan'.\(^4\) He never retreated from the belief expressed in 1929 that 'these twelve years have shown that centralized planned economy is immeasurably superior to capitalist

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3 *Writings... (1938-39)*, (New York, 1974), p.43.

anarchy' or, later, that 'the productive advantages of socialism, centralization, concentration, the unified spirit of management, are incalculable'. Nor, within the economy, were individual industries to be spared the benefits of modernity. Trotsky had nothing but scorn for 'the old Tolstoyan-populist lucubrations on the advantages of home industry as opposed to factory industry'. The goal of his economic schemes was to transform 'all of industry into a closed, automatically operating mechanism... But this task may only be solved by pursuing an ever bolder and more persistent specialization in industry, automation of production, and an ever more complete combination of the specialized production giants into a single producing chain'. Trotsky conceded that centralization carried risks - 'not only great advantages but also the danger of centralizing mistakes, that is, of elevating them to an excessively high degree' - but the risks were to be countered by a sensitive, intelligent, flexible leadership rather than by the abandonment of the principle of centralization itself. For the apparently extended 'transitional' period before socialism, Trotsky, to put it mildly, shares none of the anarchists' antagonism toward the state, none of Mill's fear of overgovernment, and certainly none of Tocqueville's opposition to the concentration of central governmental power; Trotsky's objection is that power is being concentrated in the wrong hands, and being exercised in the wrong way.

Nor could Trotsky have simply been objecting to dictatorship. He insisted unreservedly on the need for proletarian dictatorship while classes still existed, that is, until socialism had been achieved. At

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2 *Writings...*(1932), p.278.
the core of his theory of permanent revolution was the demand that the Russian proletariat take power immediately and itself carry through the 'democratic' and then the socialist revolutions, and it was his insistence on the necessity for proletarian dictatorship which his opponents in the 1920s used to accuse him of underrating the role of the peasantry. Even in defending himself against these attacks, Trotsky never doubted either the need for proletarian dictatorship, or the need within the dictatorship, for proletarian hegemony over even the most compliant and proletarianized members of other classes. Not only in the Soviet Union, but in all places of revolutionary struggle - in the 1930s, specifically China and India - the proletariat must reject any idea of a 'two-class party'. An alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry, he insisted, 'is compatible with the socialist revolution only to the extent that it enters into the iron framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat'.

Furthermore, throughout his analyses of Stalinism Trotsky accepted the primacy of the Bolshevik Party in this dictatorship. He had, of course, not always been a Leninist in this respect. Before the Revolution Trotsky had consistently and vehemently attacked Lenin's conception of the Party, and in 1904 he had accused Lenin of 'substitutionism', of desiring a party which would 'substitute itself for the working classes', and he predicted that Lenin's methods would lead to the party organization substituting itself for the party as a whole, the Central Committee substituting itself for the organization, and a single dictator substituting himself for the Central Committee. Despite the poignancy of this prediction, it was not much in Trotsky's mind during the 1920s and 1930s, for he treated the leading role of the party as axiomatic.

2 Nashi Politicheskiye Zadachi, p.54 quoted in Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, (London, 1954), p.90. On Trotsky's writings in this period, which have generally, and notably from Deutscher, received far less attention than they warrant, see Baruch Knei-Paz, op. cit., pp.175-237.
and, until 1935, like both his Bolshevik allies and opponents, he insisted that the Party must have a complete monopoly of power. In 1927, for example, he complained that the 'growing replacement of the party by its own apparatus is promoted by a "theory" of Stalin which denies the Leninist principle, inviolable for every Bolshevik, that the dictatorship of the proletariat will and can be realized only through the dictatorship of the party'.¹ And in regard to internal disputes within the party, the 'threat of factionalism', this relatively recent convert was - in the thick of a faction fight - plus catholique que le pape. In words later echoed by Koestler's Rubashov, Trotsky wrote:

Comrades, none of us wants to be or can be right against the party. In the last analysis, the party is always right, because the party is the sole historical instrument that the working class possesses for the solution of its fundamental tasks... It is only possible to be right with the party and through it since history has not created any other way to determine the correct position.

The English have a proverb: My country right or wrong. We can say with much greater historical justification: Whether it is right or wrong in any particular, specific question at any particular moment, this is my party.²

In reference to the 1936 Soviet Constitution declaring the Bolshevik Party to be the only legal party, Trotsky denied that the prohibition of all other parties was a part of Bolshevik theory and he claimed that it had been merely a temporary 'measure of defence of the dictatorship of the proletariat in a backward and devastated country, surrounded by enemies on all sides'.³ Even at this stage, however, he insisted that 'the proletariat can take power only through its vanguard... The Soviets are only the organized form of the tie between the vanguard and the class. A revolutionary content can be given to this form only by the party... The fact that this party subordinates the Soviets

¹ The Real Situation in Russia, (New York 1928), p.117. See also Writings... (1930-31), (New York, 1973), pp.210-11.
politically to its leaders, has, in itself, abolished the Soviet system no more than the domination of the conservative majority has abolished the British parliamentary system.\textsuperscript{1} The Bolshevik dictatorship, Trotsky now concedes, 'served as a juridical point of departure' for the Stalinist dictatorship, but to confuse the two is anarchist - or Stalinist - nonsense. They are, he insists, totally different \textit{kinds} of phenomena, and the latter did and could hold sway only after the deliberate and complete emasculation of the party.

Trotsky explains at one point that the first question to be asked of a workers' state in the period of proletarian dictatorship is:

\ldots\ has the party retained Marxist clarity of vision, ideological solidity, the ability to arrive collectively at an opinion and to fight self-sacrificingly for it? From this point of view, the state of the party is the highest test of the condition of the proletarian dictatorship, a synthesized measure of its stability. If, in the name of achieving this or that practical aim, a false theoretical attitude is foisted on the party; if the party ranks are forcibly ousted from political leadership; if the vanguard is dissolved into the amorphous mass; if the party cadres are kept in obedience by the apparatus of state repression - then it means that in spite of the economic successes, the general balance of the dictatorship shows a deficit.\textsuperscript{2}

Trotsky had no doubt that this deficit existed and was massive; nor did he doubt that it had been brought about by the bureaucracy's machinations. By admitting to the party 'whole plants

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.21-22. Unless there is some procedure for supplanting the party, this analogy is not one of Trotsky's best.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Writings...}(1930-31) p.211.
and artels, the bureaucracy was effectively dissolving the party into the working class; by doing so it was destroying the party's capacity to function as the vanguard of the working class and its ability to exert control over the bureaucracy. At the same time, by totally purging the party of revolutionaries and replacing them with 'toadies', with 'obedient, accommodating, spineless, and unprincipled functionaries or cynical administrators', the bureaucracy was establishing a dictatorship over the party. 'In other words', Trotsky writes, 'the party was ceasing to be a party'.

One can, I think, distinguish two elements in this charge. The obvious element is the orthodox Bolshevik insistence on the vanguard role of the party in the period of the proletarian dictatorship. The immediate context in which this element arises is one of choice between different forms of revolutionary leadership, and in this context a Leninist would object to threat to the vanguard from any source.

1 *Writings...*(1930), New York 1975, p.117. In fact this specific practice occurred only once - in 1930-31 - it was discontinued by 1932, and recruitment was entirely halted in January, 1933. Even in the two peak periods of worker recruitment - the 'Lenin Enrolment' of 1924, and the 1930-31 recruitment - there was no evidence that Stalin was attempting to dissolve the party into the class, and in 1925-26, when Stalin's supporters advocated slackening worker recruitment, they accused the Leningrad Opposition, whom they labelled 'Makhaevists' and 'Axelrodists', of precisely this sin. (See for this whole period T.H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the U.S.S.R. 1917-1967*, (Princeton, 1968), pp.57-235). However, Trotsky's fears were not totally without foundation. Overall, membership of the party increased from less than half a million to over three and a half millions between 1924 and 1933, and 'throughout the middle and later 1920's, each time Stalin broke with his former allies and manoeuvred them into opposition he proceeded to swamp their supporters with masses of raw recruits whose political attitudes and behaviour could be freely moulded by a party bureaucracy totally controlled by Stalin'.*(Ibid.*, p.131). Of course, in the 1930's the party's problems were of an entirely different kind - many of its members were simply being 'dissolved'.

2 *Writings...*(1929), p.381

But Trotsky's argument can be cast more broadly, and if it is, a strong parallel emerges between it and the work of other, non-revolutionary and non-Marxist writers, in particular with the political writings of the greatest social theorist for whom bureaucracy was a central concern, Max Weber. It is banal to observe that Trotsky and Weber shared few substantive political values, expectations or hopes. Nonetheless, central to the political outlook of both writers was a profound opposition to the supplanting of the political by the bureaucratic-administrative. Both argued that goals must be set, policies weighed and chosen, and peoples led by those whose vocation was politics. Both believed, one of the modern West, the other of the Soviet Union, that bureaucrats were threatening to take over these roles and that they were inherently incapable of carrying them out successfully. We have seen that this is true of Weber; it is equally true of Trotsky.

In *The New Course* Trotsky warned that bureaucratization 'threatens to detach the leaders from the masses; to bring them to concentrate their attention solely upon questions of administration, of appointments and transfers; to narrow their horizon; to weaken their revolutionary spirit; that is, to provoke a more or less opportunistic degeneration of the Old Guard, or at the very least of a considerable part of it'. Increasingly as Trotsky's use of the term 'bureaucratization' shifted from that of suggesting a spreading disease which might afflict the leadership, to that of characterizing a specific stratum, these vices were attributed to the bureaucracy. The bureaucrat was not simply distinguished from the rest of the proletariat by his recently acquired social position; he was a distinguishable and objectionable sort of man,

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1 *The Challenge of the Left Opposition*, p.72.
a different psychological type from the Bolshevik revolutionary. Beginning shortly after the revolution, and increasingly after Lenin's death, Trotsky writes, 'a division began to reveal itself between the leaders who expressed the historical line of the class and could see beyond the apparatus, and the apparatus itself — a huge, cumbersome, heterogeneous thing that easily sucked in the average communist... under cover of the traditional forms, a different psychology was developing.'\(^1\). The bureaucrat was deeply conservative, he was 'inclined to think that everything needed for human well-being has already been done',\(^2\) he shared with the property-owner an 'organic antagonism... to world revolution with its "permanent" disturbances;\(^3\) and with the petty bourgeois he shared 'the yearning... for tranquility and order'.\(^4\) In matters of ideology, as perhaps befits a conservative, he was not at home; in fact he was monumentally inept. For him 'theory is an administrative formula',\(^5\) he was saturated with 'short sighted empiricism',\(^6\) though in the Marxist sense — and of course this too is considered a fatal flaw — 'bureaucrats are always idealists'.\(^7\) Perhaps appropriately, then, his head was 'so constructed that all the winds of eclecticism constantly whistle through it'.\(^8\) The bureaucrat as an individual and the bureaucracy as a stratum were characterized by an opportunistic and, given the times, fear-ridden clawing to secure and maintain their positions. The only interests they served, Trotsky wrote, were their personal or their 'caste' interests, and he explained in a passage strikingly reminiscent of Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*:\(^9\)

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2. *Writings... (1929)*, p.48.
4. Ibid.
5. *Writings... (1930)*, p.329.
that 'the growth of bureaucratism reflects the growth of the contradiction between the private and social interests. Representing the "social" interests, the bureaucracy identifies them to a large measure with its own interests. It draws the distinction between the social and the private in accordance with its own private interests'.

But Trotsky's objection to bureaucratic dominance is not simply that a flock of mediocrities have come to feather their own nests at the expense of the workers' state. For quite apart from their personal venality, Trotsky repeatedly insisted that as administrators they are simply incompetent in political roles. Observe, for example, the terms in which he characterized Molotov. The man, he wrote, 'is unquestionably the most complete embodiment of the bureaucracy that rose on the wave of reaction in 1924-29 and is deeply convinced that all problems are to be resolved by financial or administrative measures. These gentlemen are blind to the fundamental questions of world development. However, they are masters of corridor skills. With the help of blind administrative might, they have already beheaded several parties and several revolutions'.

There are here several of the leitmotifs of Trotsky's attacks on bureaucracy. There is, especially, his insistence that the bureaucrat naturally and typically conceives of social and political problems in purely administrative terms, he reacts 'with mere administrative reflexes'. According to Trotsky, these reflexes

3 *The Revolution Betrayed*, p.86. Similar observations have, of course, been made by other writers. Karl Mannheim, for example, argues that 'the fundamental tendency of all bureaucratic thought is to turn all problems of politics into problems of administration... The attempt to hide all problems of politics under the cover of administration... 'Ideology and Utopia', (London, 1936), p.105. Ironically, this is probably part of what Lenin had in mind when he claimed in his 'Testament' that Trotsky was 'given too much to the administrative side of things'. Dr Rigby has informed me that in Russian this expression also suggests that he is too much given to coercion.
manifest themselves in a blind adherence to plans conceived \textit{a priori}, a complete absence of flexibility or tempering of these plans in the light of political, social or economic circumstances. Instead of such flexibility, we have bureaucratic substitution of 'administrative goading, with the absence of any serious collective verification',\textsuperscript{1} 'the naked administrative whip... [instead of] ... a Marxian analysis and flexible regulation of the economy'.\textsuperscript{2} This way of proceeding, Trotsky insists, is and must be fundamentally misconceived. Planning is indeed essential, but, especially in a backward country racked by 'contradictions', a plan 'is not a fixed gospel, but a rough working hypothesis which must be verified and reconstructed in the process of its fulfilment'.\textsuperscript{3} What is needed is in part financial and administrative \textit{noue}, which Trotsky believes the existing crop of 'toadies' is ill-equipped to display and - far more important - enlightened political leadership, which bureaucrats by their nature are incompetent to give.

According to Trotsky, the Party's uniqueness lay not merely in the quality of its members, but also in the way this 'flower of the class, its revolutionary selection'\textsuperscript{4} went about its tasks. The Party would be abdicating its function if it did not \textit{lead} the masses toward socialism, but it was pointless and hopeless to attempt to \textit{dragoon} them into it. Moreover, it was enormously wasteful, inefficient and often counterproductive to \textit{ignore} their sentiments, local knowledge, fears and hopes. What, above all, was unique about a properly constituted Party leadership was the 'multiple collective experience'\textsuperscript{5} on which it could draw:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} \textit{Writings...(1930-31)} pp.206-7
\item \textsuperscript{2} \textit{Ibid.}, p.282
\item \textsuperscript{3} \textit{The Revolution Betrayed}, p.66
\item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{Writings...(1932-33)}, p.170
\item \textsuperscript{5} \textit{The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)}, p.77.
\end{itemize}
The essential, incomparable advantage of our party consists in its being able, at every moment, to look at industry with the eyes of the communist machinist, the communist specialist, the communist director, and the communist merchant, collect the experience of these mutually complementary workers, draw conclusions from them, and thus determine its line for directing the economy in general and each enterprise in particular.¹

But if this is how leadership should be exercised, it had little to do with the way in which the Stalinist bureaucracy did exercise it. A crucial cause and index of the bureaucracy's incapacity in its new role, Trotsky argued, was its isolation from the masses. He treated it as virtually a defining characteristic of bureaucracy that 'everything is worked out at the top, behind closed doors, and then handed down to the masses like the tablets from Sinai'.² And while what was required to prevent such isolation was the encouragement of 'soviet democracy', the bureaucrats were destroying it.

It is not always easy to ascertain the substantive content, or even, for that matter, the sincerity of Trotsky's appeals for democracy. First, as Cohen suggests in explaining Bukharin's anti-Trotskyism after 1923, 'Trotsky's own motives and ambitions were not above suspicion, his sudden commitment to democratic procedures being suspect if only because previously he had been among the most authoritarian of Bolshevik leaders.'³ Secondly, Trotsky's appeals for democracy often ring louder in his attacks on the Stalinists than in his advice to his followers. Trotsky denies that the reconciliation of proletarian dictatorship with 'soviet democracy' is at all problematic, and in fact he insists that the essence of correct political leadership consists in just this reconciliation. And indeed the sort of democracy that Trotsky favours is

¹ Ibid.
² Writings...(1930-31) p.51: 'Only fools and the blind can believe that socialism can be handed down from above, that it can be introduced bureaucratically'. Ibid. p.291.
easier than most to reconcile with dictatorship. For 'soviet democracy' is not common or garden democracy and it is certainly not 'absolute', 'formal', or 'pure' democracy. As we have seen, the only democracy Trotsky was talking about until about 1935 was inner-party democracy. Even here, Trotsky explained, 'the principle of party democracy is in no way identical with the principle of the open door' and the door was to be closed to all but the working class and some 'proletarianized' peasants of inferior status. And within the vanguard itself 'we stand not for democracy in general but for centralist democracy ... The revolutionary party has nothing in common with a discussion club where everybody comes as to a café. (This is Souvarine's great idea.) The party is an organization for action. The unity of party ideas is assured through democratic channels, but the ideological framework of the party must be strictly delimited'. It is on this ground that Trotsky advocates the party's 'constant self-purging'. The problem with the Stalinists, it would appear, was not that the purges took place, but that the wrong people were purged, many of the right people were not, and that

1 **Writings... (1932-33),** p.56.
2 The similarity between this passage and a 1932 attack on him by Stalin, is striking: 'Stalin ... insisted ... that "the party is not only a union of like-minded people, it is ... a fighting unit of common action ..." This meant to Stalin, "It is necessary to put limits to discussion, to preserve the party, which is the fighting unit of the proletariat, from degeneration into a discussion club."', in Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution*, (New York, 1969), p.221.
3 **Writings ... (1932-33),** p.88.
4 'We Bolshevik-Leninists never looked upon party democracy as free entry for Thermidorean views and tendencies; on the contrary, party democracy was trampled underfoot in the promotion of the latter.
What we mean by the restoration of party democracy is that the real revolutionary proletarian core of the party win the right to curb the bureaucracy and to really purge the party: to purge the party of the Thermidoreans in principle as well as their unprincipled and careerist cohorts who vote according to command from above, of the tendencies of tail-endism as well as the numerous factions of toadyism, whose title should not be derived from the Greek or Latin but from the real Russian word for toady in its contemporary, bureaucratized, and Stalinized form. This is the reason we need democracy!' **Writings ... (1930-31),** p.57.
the purges were used as a means to terrorize the party. And even party democracy was never for Trotsky an intrinsic good; it was 'not necessary in itself but as a means of educating and uniting the proletarian vanguard in the spirit of revolutionary Marxism'.

From 1935 Trotsky began to express views which only a short time before, he would have considered heretical, and which, of course, orthodox Communists still considered so. However, his few statements remained guarded. In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky demanded 'a restoration of the right of criticism' and, as Deutscher notes, he made a 'new departure' in calling for 'genuine freedom of elections'. But even this departure remains completely within the boudaries of the proletarian dictatorship: it occurs in the same chapter as an attack on the equalization of workers' and peasants' political rights, and, further, as Deutscher somewhat coyly explains:

On this point, however, he was confronted with a dilemma: he had discarded the principle of the single party; but he did not advocate unqualified freedom of parties. Going back to a pre-1921 formula, he spoke of 'a revival of freedom of Soviet parties', that is of the parties that 'stood on the ground of the October Revolution'. But who was to determine which were and which were not 'Soviet parties'? Should the Mensheviks, for instance, be allowed to benefit from the 'revived' freedom? He left these questions in suspense, no doubt because he held that they could not be resolved in advance, regardless of circumstances.

Finally in 1938, Trotsky argued in his most liberal public statement, that 'democratization of the soviets is impossible without legalization of soviet parties. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as soviet parties'. Even here, the lack of attention to what choice will be

2 at pp.289-90.
offered to the workers and peasants - whether and how heavily it will be delimited, and whether the proletarian dictatorship will be allowed any dilution - is, at the very least, cavalier.

In any speculation as to how much more democratic than Stalin's a regime under Trotsky might have been, the qualifications which hedge his conception of democracy on all sides must be borne in mind. Trotsky, nonetheless, certainly believed that there was a qualitative difference between his 'democracy for proletarian dictatorship and within the framework of that dictatorship'\(^1\) and bureaucratic dictatorship. The former would allow ideologically correct Marxists to have access to influence, it would encourage recruitment on the basis of talent and it would provide cues and information of value to the sensitive political leadership at the centre. The latter simply bludgeoned and bulldozed its way through obstacles, social and economic realities, and of course people. Moreover, it recruited only those who were no threat to it, and was therefore bereft of any people with talents appropriate to the development of the Soviet Union.

Trotsky was not arguing that bureaucracy could be dispensed with, nor even that it should be diluted; the Maoist slogan 'Better Red than Expert' would have seemed nonsense to him and completely inconsistent with what was required for the building of socialism. Though bureaucracy would disappear after the coming of socialism, for the interim Trotsky was in effect a Weberian in his conviction that professional, trained bureaucrats manning an apparatus of great power were indispensable. But the bureaucracy had to be controlled and its goals and policies set by people of a quite different stamp with priorities and goals of a quite different order.

\(^1\) *Writings ...*(1932-33), p.166.
The Soviet tragedy, on Trotsky's view, was not so much that in all circumstances the correct political regime must be superior to a bureaucratic regime, and that here this wasn't so. After all, when socialism is achieved, the comparison will be empty of reference, for there will be no state or politics at all. But in the Soviet Union in transition to socialism, the quality of the political regime is of unique importance, for 'there is no other government on the world in whose hands the fate of the whole country is concentrated to such a degree'. It was in this country, whose future was of fundamental importance for world development and whose own development was uniquely dependent on talented, dedicated and ideologically sound political leadership, that, instead, the ranks of farsighted revolutionaries were being decimated by a bloated, incompetent layer of bureaucrats. Trotsky never gives an adequate explanation of how the crawlers of the years before 1928 became the racers of later years but he insisted that their earlier timidity and their later 'ultra-left lunacy' were merely two sides of the same coin. At the very least they were both manifestations of a fundamental lack of political talent, which in existing circumstances was the most important talent of all.

2 The Revolution Betrayed, p.43.
3 In fact Trotsky explained that the direction of the turn was due to the combined pressure of the Left Opposition and the failure of the rulers' previous policies, and he claimed that the bureaucrats turned unwillingly and that the turn was far more extreme than they had wished. But faced with the problem of accounting at the psychological level for the reckless zeal which now characterized these previously timid, conservative, self-satisfied bureaucrats, Trotsky doesn't turn a hair. In a formula of blunt if somewhat mystifying simplicity, he explains: 'After the first new successes the slogan was advanced: "Achieve the five-year plan in four years". The startled empirics now decided that everything was possible. Opportunism, as has often happened in history, turned into its opposite, adventurism'. The Revolution Betrayed, p.35.
Political versus Bureaucratic Leadership: the Role of Stalin

This contrast between the revolutionary politician's way of approaching tasks and solving problems and that of the bureaucrats is called on by Trotsky to perform some very weighty tasks. It is the means of distinguishing between the Soviet Union as it had been and as it had become. It is thereby the means of warding off attacks by anarchists and other anti-communists, as well as Stalinist apologias, all of which insisted on a continuity between the policies of Lenin and those of Stalin. It also provides the tools for Trotsky's criticism of any specific policies undertaken by Stalin. However, this dichotomy between the revolutionary political leader and the bureaucrat is faced with an obvious difficulty - the case of Stalin himself. For Stalin was of the Old Guard, he had long been a revolutionary and, for most of their collaboration, the 'wonderful Georgian' had been trusted by Lenin. Unfortunately he was also at the pinnacle of the regime which Trotsky accused of bureaucratic deformation. Trotsky overcomes this problem, at least from the point of view of internal consistency, at the same time as he deals with two other problems which Stalin creates for his analysis.

The first of these problems is the Marxist's genuine theoretical difficulty in accounting for the pre-eminent individual, in this case the anti-hero, in history. Trotsky frequently insists that to view his clash with Stalin, or Stalin's rise to power, in personal terms, is quite wrong, that, for example, 'he who sees only the victories and the defeats of personalities understands nothing in the struggle between factions in the USSR'. The fate of individuals, he argues, can only be explained in terms of the historical, economic, and social forces.

1 Writings ... (1934-35), (New York, 1971), p.130.
which they represent and which, indeed, have placed them where they are. It is true that, faced with an individual of Lenin's stature, the Marxist in Trotsky occasionally capitulates, as when he admits in his diary that without Lenin 'there would have been no October Revolution'\(^1\) or when he laments that on Lenin's death 'Russia lost a man who could not be replaced'.\(^2\) Before Stalin, however, Trotsky feels no such need to capitulate. Marxists, after all, have on other occasions had to account for the rise to power of people they considered non-entities - 'the hero Crapulinski' of *The Eighteenth Brumaire...* is an obvious example and precedent. But while a Stalin might be easier to accommodate theoretically than a Lenin, I think it fair to say that Trotsky finds real personal difficulty in confronting his own defeat and what he regards as the betrayal of the revolution at the hands of this provincial boor.
For on Trotsky's account, Stalin can scarcely be said to exist in world-historical terms. He is portrayed as a quintessential mediocrity: dull, boorish, narrow-minded, ideologically primitive, and - as Trotsky is so often pleased to note of his opponents - he knows no foreign languages! His very mediocrity is in a sense grist to Trotsky's theoretical mill, for whether or not individuals in general are merely buoys buffeted by historical currents, this particular individual, as Trotsky portrays him, can scarcely be anything else.

Trotsky accounts with the same explanation for all three of these problems: explaining a bureaucratic dictatorship whose chief single beneficiary is not simply a bureaucrat; accounting for the rise to apparent pre-eminence of a single individual; and coming to terms with the extraordinary success of this specific mediocrity. His solution is, so to speak, to collapse Stalin into the bureaucracy. He

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expresses this solution in two ways, one of which is more colourful, but the other more serious. One way in which he makes the point suggests that Stalin had nothing to do with his position. He is the bureaucracy's 'personal pseudonym',¹ he is 'not an individual but a caste symbol',² he 'did not create the apparatus. The apparatus created Stalin - after its own image'.³ Except for the special venom which usually infects his characterizations of Stalin, these statements find parallels in Trotsky's treatment of significant - and sometimes not so significant - opponents in a variety of contexts. The Romanovs⁴, Hindenburg⁵ and Hitler⁶ receive similar characterizations. In all these contexts Trotsky attempts to play down the importance of a leader's personality in his fate and to emphasize how little of that personality is really an autonomous, distinguishable element of the socially moulded face he presents to the world. Since Stalin has come to head the bureaucracy, it is to it rather than to him that we should look to explain his position.

Nonetheless we must look to him, for there is a second question to be asked of all political leaders except hereditary ones - why one person succeeded rather than the other contenders. In Stalin's case this question is particularly important, given the fate of his many eminent rivals. In answering this question, Trotsky again insists that the initiative comes from the bureaucracy, but it comes to Stalin, not because his personality is a tabula rasa on which the bureaucracy can simply write at will. Rather it comes to him because he is

¹ Writings ...(1933-34), p.273.
⁵ The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, p.255.
inherently just the sort of man who is suited to preside over the 
bureaucratic destruction of the revolution. His role in the revolution, 
Trotsky insists, was insignificant, and even at the end of the Civil 
War he was 'still in the shadows politically'. Moreover, though 
he had undeniably been a revolutionary, his cast of mind was always 
that of a bureaucrat. In his biography of Stalin, Trotsky cites an 
article Stalin had written in 1920, on 'Lenin as Organizer and Leader of 
the Russian Communist Party' and he comments:

... The article is interesting because not only in the title 
but in his whole conception of him, Stalin acclaims Lenin pri­
marily as an organizer and only secondarily as a political 
leader... It is no exaggeration to say that no other Marx­
ist, certainly no other Russian Marxist, would have so con­ 
structed an appraisal of Lenin... Yet it is no accident 
that Stalin looked upon the organizational lever as basic; 
whatever deals with programmes and policies was for him 
always essentially an ornament of the organizational found­
at ion.2

Trotsky considered it natural that the bureaucracy should seek 
out and promote Stalin, for he combined the necessary aura of the revol­
ution with a practical, dull, narrow-minded and prosaically bureaucrat­
ic personality and intellect. 'Before he felt out his own course', 
Trotsky writes, 'the bureaucracy felt out Stalin himself. He brought 
it all the necessary guarantees: the prestige of an old Bolshevik, a 
strong character, narrow vision, and close bonds with the political 
machine as the sole source of his influence. The success which fell 
upon him was a surprise at first to Stalin himself. It was the first 
warm welcome of the new ruling group, trying to free itself from the 
old principles and from the control of the masses, and having need of a 

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reliable arbiter in its inner affairs. A secondary figure before the masses and in the events of the revolution, Stalin revealed himself as the indubitable leader of the Thermidorean bureaucracy, as first in its midst. On this view the fate of individuals exemplifies the reigning state of historical, economic and social forces. The triumph of glorious individuals like Lenin and Trotsky is, then, attributable to the ascendancy of glorious historical forces - the victory of the working class through its vanguard, the Bolsheviks. The triumph of mediocrities is, likewise, no argument against their being mediocre; it is simply a manifestation of the ascendancy of mediocre historical forces.

Indeed Trotsky argues that in certain circumstances mediocrity is required of leaders; it becomes, as it were, an asset of world historical significance. In his autobiography, Trotsky concedes that a counter-revolution might spawn great men, 'but its first stage, the Thermidor, demands mediocrities who can't see farther than their noses. Their strength lies in their political blindness, like the mill-horse that thinks he is moving up when really he is only pushing down the belt-wheel. A horse that sees is incapable of doing the work'. Stalin on this view is simply the mill-horse of the bureaucratic decimation of the party:

To the leading group of the party (in the wider circles he was not known at all) he always seemed a man destined to play second and third fiddle. And the fact that to-day he is playing first is not so much a summing up of the man as it is of this transitional period of political backsliding in the country. Helvetius said it long ago, 'Every period has its great men, and if these are lacking, it invents them'. Stalinism is above all else the automatic work of the impersonal apparatus on the decline of the revolution.

1 The Revolution Betrayed, p.93.
2 My Life, p.513.
3 Ibid. p.506.
But Stalin was a quite extraordinarily powerful and independent 'mill-horse'. Notwithstanding Trotsky's recurrent prediction that Stalinism was about to collapse, he knew only too well that in the meantime it was Stalin's opponents - real, potential and imagined - together with millions of ordinary citizens and, at least from 1937, a whole generation of faithful Stalinists, who perished while Stalin survived. Trotsky was also aware of the 'vile leader-cult, attributing to leaders divine qualities', of which Stalin was the focus and beneficiary. It was necessary, therefore, for Trotsky to explain not only how Stalin came to lead, but also how he attained and maintained his extraordinary dominance. And since Trotsky again looked to the bureaucracy, he had to explain how Stalin's dominance was in its interests.

The explanation which Trotsky chose owed, I believe, a good deal to Marx's discussion in *The 18th Brumaire* of the relationship between Bonapartism and its class base. Marx had argued, as we have seen, that the French peasants were unable to organize to protect their class interests, but required domination by a 'representative [who] must at same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above'. According to Trotsky - well before he alleged that the Soviet Union was 'Bonapartist' - the bureaucracy too, though for quite different reasons, could not do without authoritative leadership and domination. It was an incoherent stratum as a result of its internal contradictions, the contradictions between itself and the masses and between its activities and economic requirements. Though a ruling stratum, it itself required a rigid

1 *Writings ... (1934-35)*, p.124.
'monolithism' and an artificially inflated 'superarbiter' to be able to survive and rule:

An apparatus that sees itself forced to find within itself sanctions against itself cannot help being dominated by one person. The bureaucracy needs a super-arbiter and for this it nominates the one who best meets its instinct for survival. That is what Stalinism is - a preparation for Bonapartism inside the party. The contradictions within the bureaucracy itself have led to a system of handpicking the main commanding staff; the need for discipline within the select order has led to the rule of a single person and to the cult of the infallible leader.

In the party, the plebiscite regime has been established conclusively. The bureaucracy, not daring to bring questions up for decision by the masses, is forced to find a 'boss' in order to sustain its own monolithic unity - without which it would be doomed to collapse.

Stalin's personal position, then, far from being a refutation of the bureaucracy's dominance, was a function of that dominance. It was not due to his own talents, or was due to them only to the extent that they satisfied the bureaucracy's needs. One of these needs was for a dominating 'infallible' leader.

4 The Sources of Bureaucratic Dominance

This analysis merely pushes the fundamental problem back one step. For if the mediocrity which Stalin incarnates is that of the bureaucracy then it remains to be explained how this rapacious clique came to dominate the first workers' state. One can distinguish three partly related elements in Trotsky's explanation. The first element appears in occasional, scattered comments on the general fate of revolutions, and suggests a general theory of post-revolutionary development, which the Soviet Union exemplifies. A revolution, Trotsky suggests, is inevitably followed by a 'downswing' in which weariness, apathy and

1 Writings... (1930), p.206.
2 Writings... (1934-35),p.171.
3 Writings... (1930), p.335.
disillusionment set in and reactionary forces have an opportunity to prosper. (Marx took this view of the Thermidorean reaction in the French Revolution, and Trotsky developed it.) In the Soviet Union, then, not Stalin's political skill nor Trotsky's lack of it, but objective concomitants of revolutionary upheaval explain the 'backsliding', the 'downswing' of the revolution. On this view it is not pre-determined that the forces of reaction will be victorious, but it can be expected that they will come strongly into play.¹

The second element in Trotsky's explanation is an amalgam of forces related specifically to the development of the Russian Revolution, and it includes events which should have taken place but did not, and other permanent structural problems which had led to a realignment of class forces and to great stresses on the revolutionary leadership. The major event which should have occurred but had not was the spread of the revolution through the advanced countries of Europe, in the absence of which 'socialism cannot be built'.² The 'delay' of the revolution in Europe had left the Soviet Union isolated in a capitalist sea and had, Trotsky claimed, intensified the already massive 'contradictions' involved in preparing socialism in a backward country. Among these contradictions were 'the heritage of the capitalist and precapitalist contradictions of old czarist-bourgeois Russia... the contradiction between the general cultural-economic backwardness of Russia and the tasks of socialist transformation...';³ the post-revolutionary weariness, apathy and quest for order of the working-class, and the upsurge of classes hostile to the proletariat after the introduction of NEP. At different times Trotsky isolates individual 'contradictions' from among

1 See Writings... (1932), p.289; The Revolution Betrayed, p.88.
3 Writings ... (1930-31), p.206.
those listed and calls them fundamental,¹ but it is clear that he regards this whole complex of factors as contributing to the reactionary build-up of forces favouring reactionary leadership and militating against the power of revolutionaries. Even if a healthy leadership did exist, it would have to face these problems; the sin of the Stalinists was that 'instead of reducing them, the policy of the present leadership aggravates them'.²

The third element in Trotsky's explanation deals with the question of why the bureaucracy in particular had been strengthened to such a degree. To answer this question, Trotsky considers himself forced to introduce some novelties into Marxism since, he explains, Marx never envisaged a proletarian revolution in a backward country, and Lenin never foresaw so prolonged an isolation of the Soviet state.³

As theorist of the laws of proletarian dictatorship in an underdeveloped country, and as theorist of post-revolutionary bureaucratization, Trotsky has thus had to be original. He believed, as we have seen, that any workers' regime would require a centralized state to transform society and prepare the way for socialism, and he agreed with Marx and Lenin that ultimately this state structure with its distinct and privileged group of professional bureaucrats would be eliminated. In the period of transition, however, especially in a poor country, Trotsky argues, a distinct bureaucracy must be maintained. It is required to arbitrate in the struggle for scarce resources, to stimulate maximum production, and to police and regulate distribution. And so long as these functions need to be performed, elements of capitalism, such as wage incentives,

¹ e.g.: 'In this reaction of weariness, quite inevitable after every great revolutionary tension, lies the chief cause of the consolidation of the bureaucratic regime and the growth of that personal power of Stalin, in whom the new bureaucracy has found its personification', Writings (1932), p.39; 'the fundamental causes for the existing contractions are inherent in the isolation of the Soviet Union', Writings (1930), p.137.
² Writings ... (1930), p.137.
³ The Revolution Betrayed, p.56.
must survive to encourage the bureaucrats to perform them. Bureaucracy has a necessary role as policeman, arbitrator and distributor so long as 'contradictions' and economic scarcity persist. And so long as bureaucracy has this role, bureaucrats have an institutional base for the power and privilege which they seek to protect and enhance:

If the state does not die away, but grows more and more despotic, if the plenipotentiaries of the working class become bureaucratized, and the bureaucracy rises above the new society, this is not for some secondary reasons like the psychological relics of the past, etc., but is a result of the iron necessity to give birth to and support a privileged minority so long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality.¹

How then is the transition to be made from this heavily bureaucratized state to the socialist society where, after Saint-Simon and Engels, Trotsky believes, 'the present method of commanding human beings will give way to one of disposing over things'.² On this question Trotsky is no more enlightening than any other socialist thinker who chooses to combine étatist means with anarchist ends. The key for Trotsky, as for Marx, was the expansion of economic production to the point where it would be possible 'to satisfy all human needs'.³ Since the only positive role Trotsky appears to envisage for the bureaucracy is as a sort of policeman-foreman-distributor in situations of scarcity, if one eliminates the scarcity then the bureaucrat will also disappear as if by magic, or at least by definition. Again, Trotsky explains that bureaucracies are the result not of the tasks to be performed but of the class structure of society 'carried over' into these organizations. Therefore, when classes disappear and there is plenty for all, there might be organizations but not bureaucracies or a state in the old sense - a special apparatus for holding in subjection the majority of the people.

¹ Ibid., p.55.
² Writings ... (1932), p.183.
³ Writings ... (1933-34), p.226.
But though the bureaucrat will disappear, there will be a good deal left for somebody to do, for:

The process of the liquidation of the state takes place along two different roads. To the extent that the classes are being liquidated, i.e., dissolved in a homogeneous society, coercion withers away in the direct sense of the word, dropping out forever from social use. The organizational functions of the state, on the contrary, become more complex, more detailed. They penetrate into ever-new fields which until then remained as if beyond the threshold of society (the household, children's education etc.) and for the first time subject them to the control of the collective mind.

Trotsky, in other words, displays a typical form of 'revolutionary optimism', not to say utopianism, which can be traced back at least to Saint-Simon: function upon function is piled upon projected organizations, coercion is wished away, and the problem of bureaucracy is deemed to be solved.

It is perhaps also worth noting here that Trotsky, unconscious-ly following a distinguished Marxist tradition, manages to stand Tocqueville and Weber and not only Hegel on their heads. The growth of bureaucracy on his view varies directly with economic backwardness, scarcity and social dislocation, and inversely with equality and affluence. Trotsky acknowledges that a bureaucracy has a role in promoting economic development, but his view of bureaucracy as a sort of scaffolding which can be dismantled once the building is completed allows him to evade some of the central structural problems of modern society.

1 Ibid., pp.215-16.
Bureaucracy: Caste or Class?

On Trotsky's argument, then, there is inevitably a post-revolutionary 'downswing' which threatens to enthrone some reactionary element or other; there has been such a downswing in the Soviet Union and it has enthroned a contemptible bureaucracy; and this should come as no great surprise (though it did) because such a bureaucracy has considerable source of power in a transitional, under-developed society. Now if all this is true, one might expect that the danger most to be feared in the Soviet Union is the consolidation of this bureaucratic dictatorship. One might also wonder whether it is enough to talk simply of the 'deformation' or 'degeneration' of the revolution: even if the initial promise of the revolution is conceded, has this promise survived or has it been totally destroyed? Trotsky, however, continually denied that the bureaucracy could stabilize its rule. Though bureaucracy came to occupy the centre of Trotsky's immediate focus of attention soon after 1923, it took him much longer - in fact, until a year before his death - to acknowledge it as a potentially major institution in the general course of historical development. The development of an awareness of the importance of bureaucracy, a development which Trotsky did much to create and further within Marxism, is repeated in microcosm within his own thought. Trotsky's reluctance to acknowledge the long-term significance of bureaucracy, and his repeated resistance to those who suggested it, are interesting not simply as a piece of intellectual biography; they are also of interest as a case study of some of the difficulties faced by a Marxist in dealing with one of the fundamental developments of the modern age.

Trotsky describes the options facing the Soviet Union in terms of a Manichaean struggle between the forces of the proletariat and those of capitalism. The Soviet Union was surrounded by hostile capitalist
powers, and internally a similar conflict between bourgeois and pro­
letarian forces was taking place. For most of his life it was incon­ceivable to Trotsky that the bureaucracy might constitute a rival in its own right to either or both of these great protagonists. In The New Course, where Trotsky is concerned with a disease afflicting
some party leaders rather than a stratum of parvenu bureaucrats, the
problem is not yet confronted directly. But the enemy is clearly identified:

...whatsoever the speed of our economic successes may be, our fundamental political line in the military cells must be directed not simply against the Nepmen, but primarily against the renaissance kulak stratum, the only historically conceivable and serious support for any and all counter-revolutionary attempts.¹

Throughout the 1920's despite his slowly dawning recognition that it was Stalin who was his most significant Party opponent, Trotsky warned that the real danger came not from Stalin or his direct supporters, but from external forces pushing on them 'from the Right, not from the Right wing of our party - the Right wing of our party serves only as a trans­mitting mechanism - the real, basic danger comes from the side of the bourgeois classes who are raising their heads...² Indeed in the 1920s Trotsky quickly forsook the insights displayed in his early warnings against the intrinsic danger that bureaucratism might affect leaders and insisted that the growth of bureaucratism was purely the result of the pressures exerted by hostile classes.³ In 1929, on the eve of the 'liquidation of the kulak as a class', Trotsky explained that:

...The problem of Thermidor and Bonapartism is at bottom the problem of the kulak. Those who shy away from this problem, those who minimize its importance and distract attention to questions of party regime, to bureaucratism, to unfair polemical methods, and other superficial manifest­ations and expressions of the pressure of kulak elements upon.

¹ The Challenge of the Left Opposition, p.91.
² The Stalinist School of Falsification, p.111.
³ See The Third International After Lenin, pp.158; 160; 164; 224.
the dictatorship of the proletariat resemble a physician who chases after symptoms while ignoring functional and organic disturbances.1

Throughout this period, while Stalin was steadily consolidating his own position, and although, as Lewin has pointed out, 'the Rightist dangers against which they were fighting were phantoms',2 Trotsky and the rest of the Left repeatedly warned the party against the threat of renascent bourgeoisie.

With the crushing of millions of 'kulaks' in the 1930's this warning became singularly inappropriate, both because they could not now seriously be regarded as an imminent threat to anyone and because the bureaucracy itself appeared more than a little independent of them. Trotsky certainly acknowledged that there had been a significant weakening of the 'bourgeoisie' with Stalin's 'left' turn. But if many of the native bourgeoisie had been eliminated or crushed, this was no reason for Trotsky to alter his conception of the general course of social development. With one significant exception,3 Trotsky always insisted that if the proletariat were to be defeated, in the Soviet Union and everywhere else, it could only be at the hands of world capitalism. All that the liquidation of the kulaks meant was that the weapons and means available to the capitalist opponents of communism had been changed and their price since, say 1927, had been somewhat raised.

But, as Trotsky began increasingly to be asked, why should this be so? Why should a stratum which, as he so often emphasized, had enormous power and resources at its disposal, which was directly responsible for the 'degeneration' of the revolution, be doomed to swing between bourgeois and proletarians? The importance of the answer to

1 Writings ... (1929), p.113.
3 See below, pp.211-16.
this question stemmed from what Trotsky and almost all who debated him took to be its consequences: if the bureaucracy's rule were capable of stable, autonomous development, then the Soviet Union was no longer a workers' state and the revolution had been in vain, or worse than in vain.

Trotsky was, as it were, constantly fighting a battle on two fronts. On one front were massed Stalin and the existing rulers of the Soviet Union, and Trotsky's efforts were here directed to showing that they had distorted and deformed the achievements of the revolution. On the other front were those who agreed with Trotsky about the Stalinists' iniquity but went further than he to argue that the existing rulers had transformed the Soviet Union into something other than a workers' state. Trotsky was prepared, on the first front, to insist that the revolution had been betrayed, but he never conceded to the second front that it had been 'overthrown'.

For this distinction to make any sense, one must be able to specify the minimum conditions which a state must satisfy to be a 'workers' state'; one must determine, in other words, some boundary within which there is a workers' state, however degenerate, and beyond which a workers' state becomes something else. Trotsky recognizes this, and from at least as early as 1928, he attempts to stipulate where the boundary lies. His attempts are not always consistent, but looked at as a whole they do form a pattern of reluctant but steadily growing perception of the potential longevity of the existing regime, a perception which combines uneasily with his determination to affirm that the Soviet Union is a workers' state.

In 1928 Trotsky rejected the claim of the exiled Democratic Centralist Borodai, that the Soviet Union had ceased to be a workers' state, and Trotsky's criterion for doing so is essentially political. One had to determine who had power or at least who had the possibility
of peacefully regaining power. Since, Trotsky insisted, the proletariat could gain power by reform, but the bourgeois could not, the Revolution had not been defeated.¹

For the next year this is the basis on which Trotsky attempted to demonstrate that the revolution was still alive² and until 1933 it reappeared frequently. But fairly shortly Trotsky began to emphasize a quite different set of elements of the workers' state - nationalized property, which was rapidly increasing in extent under Stalin, and the monopoly of foreign trade. To begin with, Trotsky mentioned these elements less as a substitute for his political criterion than as evidence that capitalism, to which these forms of ownership were anathema, could not have arrived. But soon Trotsky began to speak of state ownership of the means of production as 'this basic difference which determines the class character of a social order'.³ Together with this new emphasis goes an increasing pessimism about the possibility of peacefully overcoming the bureaucracy. By 1933 Trotsky had decided that the problem could not be resolved peacefully. In March, after the failure of Communist policies in Germany Trotsky announced that the KPD was 'doomed' and that 'German Communism can be reborn only on a new basis and with a new leadership';⁴ in July he announced that the International as a whole could not be remedied, and in October he declared that the Soviet bureaucracy could only be defeated by force.⁵

Now, if one were to insist on Trotsky's earlier political criterion one would be forced to admit that the Soviet Union was no

¹ The New International, April, 1943, pp.124 and 125.
² See Writings... (1929), pp.118; 120; 280.
³ Writings... (1929), p.321.
⁴ The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, p.397
⁵ Writings ... (1933-34), pp.117 and 118.
longer a workers' state. But Trotsky did not admit this. Instead, his supplementary economic criterion, increasingly emphasized after the latter part of 1929, became for him and for all orthodox Trotskyists the sole and adequate test. Trotsky now repeatedly reminded Marxists that the character of a state is determined by the property relations within it. The achievement of the October Revolution had been to expropriate the possessing classes, to nationalize property and to institute a planned economy under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The result of this was that the proletariat was the ruling class of the Soviet Union. So long as this achievement survived, so long as no other class came to own the means of production, the proletariat would remain the ruling class. It is only if political 'distortions have extended to the economic foundations of the state'\(^1\) that one can properly speak of the defeat or overthrow of the revolution.

These propositions rapidly congealed into part of Trotskyist political dogma, part of a set of assumptions which were unquestioned, indeed unquestionable, and which set the terms within which discussion could proceed. It was the critics who appeared to accept these assumptions but still denied that the Soviet Union was a workers' state that Trotsky treated most seriously,\(^2\) in particular those who argued that the Soviet Union was ruled by a new class, the bureaucracy. For from Trotsky's premises it is a simple inference that if the bureaucracy dominating the Soviet Union is a new governing class, then the proletariat has been expropriated and a new form of exploitative society has come into being. As Trotsky put it, 'if the Bonapartist riffraff is a class this

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1 *Writings... (1934-35)*, p.169.

2 His respect for these critics is not, however, always apparent: "There are some who say that since the actual state that has emerged from the proletarian revolution does not correspond to ideal a priori norms, therefore they turn their backs on it. This is political snobbery, common to pacificist - democratic libertarian, anarcho-syndicalist and generally, ultraleft circles of petty-bourgeois intelligentsia". *Ibid.*
means that it is not an abortion but a viable child of history.

If its marauding parasitism is "exploitation" in the scientific sense
of the term this means that the bureaucracy possesses a historical future
as the ruling class indispensable to the given system of economy.¹

It therefore becomes an issue of pivotal importance to Trotsky to show
that the Soviet Union's governing 'caste' was not its ruling class.

In the earlier years of opposition, Trotsky was not very bothered
about this argument. In 1928, for example, he dismissed the possibility
that the bureaucracy might be a class, without any obvious awareness
that this might be seriously suggested:

Centrism is the official line of the apparatus. Its
protagonist is the party official. But the officialdom
is no class. It serves classes.²

But during the 1930's Trotsky replied with increasing concern to a wide
range of dissident Marxists - including Hugo Urbahns, Lucien Laurat, Yvan
Craipeau, Joseph Carter, James Burnham and Bruno Rizzi. These writers
differed considerably among themselves on points of detail but to Trotsky
they all presented essentially the same challenge. All of them denied
that the Soviet Union remained a workers' state; almost all of them³
claimed that the bureaucracy was a new exploiting class.

As we have seen, Trotsky was fully alive to the political
power and economic privilege of the bureaucracy. 'In no other regime',
he conceded, 'has a bureaucracy ever achieved such a degree of independ-
ence from the dominating class... It is in the full sense of the word
the sole privileged and commanding stratum in the Soviet society'.⁴

Nonetheless, this did not make it a class, for 'the class has an exception-
ally important and, moreover, a scientifically restricted meaning to

¹ *In Defence of Marxism* (London 1971), p.29
² 'Crisis in the Right-Center Block I', *New International*, December 1941, p.316.
³ At this stage Burnahm and Carter still denied that the bureaucracy
was an independent class.
⁴ *The Revolution Betrayed*, pp.248-49.
A class must have an independent role and independent roots in the economic structure, that is an independent role in production and a relationship to productive property that is peculiarly its own; a ruling class, moreover, has to have a quite special relationship to property in the means of production - it must own it. The fact that bureaucrats own articles of consumption is important enough to them and to the wretched proletariat, but it is irrelevant to whether they are a class. The bureaucracy had no independent role in production and no property in the means of productions; it 'has neither stocks nor bonds. It is recruited, supplemented and renewed in the manner of an administrative hierarchy, independently of any special property relations of its own. The individual bureaucrat cannot transmit to his heirs his rights in the exploitation of the state apparatus'.

A bureaucracy is an 'instrument', a 'hireling' of class rule which can be found in every class society. In the Soviet Union it is a particularly overweening, incompetent and expensive hireling, but it is not a class; it is not - since for Trotsky only a class can be - an independent historical force. It certainly does rob the society in which it exists, but so long as it does this on the property relations instituted in October, 1917, its theft is social parasitism like that of the modern clergy, not class exploitation like that of bourgeoisie. It has the power to damage the workers' state, to weaken it in the face of hostile classes and for a time to keep its own head (even toes!) above water. While it does not have its own forms of production and property, however, 'it is compelled to defend state property as the source of its power and its income'.

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1 Writings... (1933-34), p.112.
2 The Revolution Betrayed, p.249.
3 Ibid.
Trotsky also seems to be persuaded by a sort of functional argument that a bureaucracy cannot be a ruling class, an argument which proceeds from identifying the function of an institution to deducing the roles it must, and the roles it cannot play. Trotsky does not employ this sort of argument very often, but it accords with what he believes must be the case in the long term and should be the case at every moment:

...The existence of a bureaucracy, in all its variety of forms and differences in specific weight, characterizes every class regime. Its power is of a reflected character. The bureaucracy is indissolubly bound up with a ruling economic class, feeding itself upon the social roots of the latter, maintaining itself and falling together with it.  

Soviet bureaucracy, Trotsky concedes, is more independent than any other, but since it is a bureaucracy it cannot ultimately prevail against economic classes; there is something intrinsically subaltern about bureaucracy which prevents it from ruling in its own right.

Conversely, a class can be identified by its function, its 'historic mission', which is to develop the system of production. If a purported new class does not do this it has simply been wrongly classified, for while 'social excrescences can be the product of an "accidental", (i.e. temporary and extraordinary), enmeshing of historical circumstances [a] social organ (and such is every class, including an exploiting class) can take shape only as a result of the deeply rooted inner reeds of production itself'.  

It is in this context that Trotsky emphasizes that bureaucratic management in the Soviet Union stands in increasing contradiction to the requirements of economic development. That the economy had developed was due to nationalized ownership and economic planning, but as the economy progressed

1 Writings...(1933-34), pp.112-113.
2 In Defence of Marxism, p.7.
...The more complex its requirements became, all the more unbearable became the obstacle of the bureaucratic regime. The constantly sharpening contradiction between them leads to uninterrupted political convulsions, to systematic annihilation of the most outstanding creative elements in all spheres of activity. Thus, before the bureaucracy could succeed in exuding from itself a 'ruling class', it came into irreconcilable contradiction with the demands of development. The explanation for this is to be found precisely in the fact that the bureaucracy is not the bearer of a new system of economy peculiar to itself and impossible without itself, but is a parasitic growth on a workers' state.

Even where Trotsky is not directly concerned with rebutting the new class theorists, his concern with these issues is constantly manifest. The very notion of 'betrayal' suggests the special relationship which Trotsky believes to exist between the bureaucracy and the proletariat - the bureaucracy threatens from within, and not, as a rival class would, from without. The various organic metaphors used by Trotsky have a similar function. Bureaucracy is a 'tumour', an 'ulcer', an 'excrescence'; it is, in other words, a malign growth and not an independent external enemy. Or, when its description as a 'parasite' suggests that it might be external, it also suggests, in common with the other metaphors, that it has no life independent of the worker's state. But what, then, was the bureaucracy's place and role in this struggle? Given its power, the bureaucracy could hardly be irrelevant to the outcome, and given its vices it could hardly be considered a reliable ally. Did its existence therefore blur the lines of battle, did it favour one side rather than another or might it constitute a third side itself? Trotsky's concern with questions such as these pervades his attempt to give a Marxist characterization of Soviet bureaucracy; it is particularly evident in the labels he chooses to describe this bureaucracy - and the shifts of meaning and replacement which these labels undergo.

1 Ibid., p.8.
Until 1935 Trotsky described the bureaucracy's political tendency as \textit{centrist}. Centrism, according to Trotsky, occurs in several forms, including his own prerevolutionary 'conciliationism'\footnote{The Challenge of the Left Opposition, p.265} and it is neither necessarily associated with bureaucrats nor the only political orientation which bureaucrats can display. It is 'composed of all those trends within the proletariat and on its periphery which are distributed between reformism and Marxism, and which most often represent various stages of evolution from reformism to Marxism - and vice versa.'\footnote{The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, p.190} But while in capitalist countries centrism appears in all sorts of temporary, transitional and evanescent forms, 'reflecting the evolution of certain workers' strata to the right or to the left',\footnote{Ibid., p.195} Soviet centrism has a particularly powerful social base, the 'multi-millioned bureaucracy'.\footnote{Ibid., p.195} It is thus a tendency within the working class. Although based on a specific and very powerful stratum of that class it is not a counter-revolutionary but an internal degenerative force. In particular, it is not a capitalist force: 'to identify centrism with big capital is to understand nothing',\footnote{Writings... (1929), p.216.} and to identify it with the petty bourgeoisie is to understand little more. What is characteristic of bureaucratic centrism is not the blatant defence of capitalist interests but an aimless and destructive sliding between the proletarian and the capitalist poles; representing neither, the bureaucracy is fated to 'zigzag' between them, to grope for support sometimes on the right, sometimes on the left.

We are fighting against the centrism of the Stalinist bureaucracy (remember: centrism is a tendency within the working class itself) because centrist policies may help
the bourgeoisie to gain power, first the petty and middle bourgeoisie and, eventually, finance capital. This is the historical danger; but this is a process that is by no means at the point of completion.

Trotsky repeatedly explains that centrism 'has not and cannot have its own independent line', that it is inherently unstable and that ultimately 'it will be ground away between the mill-stones of social democracy and communism'. On his account it appears that, whereas 'Left' and 'Right' have ceased to be merely relational terms and denote the qualities of certain political views and policies, 'centrism' is to be defined simply in terms of the points it stands between. That it is 'bureaucratic' suggests its social bias and the manner in which it will be implemented; that it is 'centrist' suggests merely that we should look to either side.

This absence of a determinate political core is emphasized again in the uses Trotsky makes of the Thermidorean analogy. Until 1935 Trotsky insisted that Thermidor had been not merely a reaction on the base of the French Revolution but the first victorious stage of counter-revolution. It was, however, a very special kind of counter-revolution, one which was prepared in stealth, and one of which its early and visible abettors neither intended to be, nor were, the ultimate beneficiaries. Both in the French Revolution and now, members of the reaction within the revolutionary party aided the interests of, and provided camouflage for, counter-revolutionaries too weak to defeat the revolution by open civil war. By so doing, they had masked in France, and threatened to mask here, the dawning counter-revolution which they made possible. In the 1920s Trotsky regarded the Bukharinists and the bureaucratic centre of the party as the foes within it, but as the 'centre' asserted itself at the expense of the 'Right', the former became the primary focus of his

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p. 223.
3 Ibid., p. 108.
The bureaucrats, however, were not the leaders of the counter-revolution but merely its pawns. In one of his earliest public uses of the analogy Trotsky explained:

When the term 'Thermidorian' is used among us, it is taken for a term of abuse. It is thought that the Thermidorians were arrant counter-revolutionists, conscious supporters of the monarchic rule, and so on. Nothing of the kind! The Thermidorians were Jacobins, with this difference, that they had moved to the Right...

They reckoned that in the path of the triumph of the revolution stood the interests of 'a few isolated individuals'. They did not understand... The Thermidorians thought that the issue involved a change of individuals and not a class shift.¹

Again, a month before his deportation, Trotsky wrote to the G.P.U.:

The incurable weakness of the reaction headed by the apparatus in spite of its apparent power, lies in the fact that 'they know not what they do'. They are executing the orders of the enemy classes. There can be no greater historical curse on a faction, which came out of the revolution and is now undermining it.²

Moreover, quite apart from their good intentions - in which Trotsky had progressively less faith - he insisted that so long as the bureaucrats remained in power, Thermidor had not arrived. For while Thermidor was a counter-revolution prepared in stealth, it could not be achieved without civil war between the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces. Thus it was quite inappropriate to identify the growth of the Stalinist bureaucracy with the victory of hostile class forces. Trotsky was adamant that this had not occurred, and he was equally adamant that it was this, above all, which was to be feared:

A real civil war could develop not between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat but between the proletariat and the active forces of the counter-revolution. In the event of an open clash between the two mass camps, there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an

¹ The Stalin School of Falsification, pp.113; 115.
² My Life, p.560.
independent role. Its polar flanks will be flung to the different sides of the barricade.\textsuperscript{1}

Trotsky persisted with his original use of the French parallels until February 1935 when he announced that the Soviet Thermidor had occurred, and, indeed, that it had occurred in 1924!\textsuperscript{2} But he insisted that this somewhat drastic change of opinion was not a product of any change in attitude to the Soviet situation; it was the result of a new appraisal of the French revolution. Trotsky now explained that Thermidor had not been the first stage of the counter-revolution but had been the transfer of power 'into the hands of the more moderate and conservative Jacobins, the better-to-do elements of bourgeois society';\textsuperscript{3} in the Soviet Union a parallel development had taken place with the crushing of the Left Opposition. Moreover, whereas Trotsky had previously regarded the Eighteenth Brumaire as the consolidation of the counter-revolution, he now argued that Bonapartism, too, had occurred on the social base of the revolution, and that since the former ruling class had not been reinstated, the revolution survived.

Like Marx in the bulk of The 18th Brumaire, Trotsky was seeking to explain the rise of a bureaucratic-military apparatus, headed by a leader whom he considered to be mediocre, to apparent independence from society and, in particular, from its ruling class. And like Marx, Trotsky concentrated on the struggles in which the ruling class was involved. Already, in describing 'the Papen-Schleicher government' of Germany as Bonapartist, Trotsky had argued that Bonapartism occurs when the ruling class under siege 'tolerates' the elevation of the executive to a position of pre-eminence in order to protect what it has.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1} Writings.(1933-34), p.118.
\textsuperscript{2} Writings... (1934-35), p.174
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{4} See The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, p.263.
When Trotsky argued after 1935 that Stalinism was Bonapartist, he was simply transposing to the proletariat his characterization of bourgeois Bonapartism. The social base of each differed, but the regime's function in each was similar:

By Bonapartism we mean a regime in which the economically dominant class, having the qualities necessary for democratic methods of government, finds itself compelled to tolerate - in order to preserve its possessions - the uncontrolled command of a military and police apparatus over it, of a crowned 'savior'. This kind of situation is created in periods when the class contradictions have become particularly acute; the aim of Bonapartism is to prevent explosions...

The employment of the Bonapartist analogy, then, was intended to take into account the independence of the Soviet bureaucracy from the proletariat without conceding that this independence signified the death of the revolution. The mere fact that a Bonapartist bureaucracy enjoyed great power did not signify that it was a class, nor that it had an assured future, for Bonapartism 'by its very essence cannot long maintain itself; a sphere balanced on the point of a pyramid must invariably roll down on one side or the other'. Moreover, while the bureaucracy's power and independence now made its revolutionary overthrow necessary, the special type of revolution required was a function of the bureaucracy's role and character. Since it was not a class, but only the flawed instrument of the proletariat, a bourgeois counter-revolution would have to overthrow not only the bureaucracy but also the forms of property established by the revolution. A workers' revolution, on the other hand, would leave the forms of property unaltered and would merely supplant the bureaucracy; it would be merely a political not a social revolution.

1 Writings... (1934-35), p.206-7.
2 Writings... (1934-35), p.181-82.
Trotsky continued, until his death, to call the Soviet regime Bonapartist and to resist suggestions that the bureaucracy was a class, just as he continued to reaffirm his revolutionary optimism and confidence in the ultimate victory of the proletariat. But if Trotsky was never prepared to concede that the bureaucracy was a class, what he ultimately did concede was significant enough. In September 1939 Trotsky published 'The U.S.S.R. in War' in which, though his appraisal of the existing Soviet regime remained what it had been since 1935, he came to entertain seriously a hitherto rejected possibility.

It is crucial in this connection to attend to the context in which this article appeared, specifically to the effects of the war on Trotsky's analysis. Fundamental to Trotsky's argument in 'The U.S.S.R. in War' is the conviction that capitalism had at last truly played itself out. Trotsky regarded the war as the latest and most severe manifestation of the ever sharper contradictions within and between capitalist states, and its outbreak seemed to him to confirm that capitalism was not merely moribund but was in its 'death agony'. The war, he wrote, 'attests incontrovertibly to the fact that society can no longer live on the basis of capitalism'. Given what he elsewhere had called 'the progressive tendencies of the objective historical process itself' and given that the disorganizing core of capitalism was the anarchy of production, the societies to emerge from the crisis would have to have been purged of this anarchy; their 'productive forces must be organized in accordance with a plan'. The future course of human development will depend on 'who will accomplish this task - the prolet-

2 *In Defence of Marxism*, p.3-26.
3 Ibid. p.10.
4 *Writings...*(1937-38), p.68.
5 *In Defence of Marxism*, p.9.
ariat or a new ruling class of "Commissars" - politicians, administrators and technicians? It is in terms of this assessment of the effects of the war on capitalism that Trotsky's predictions regarding the Soviet Union must be understood.

Trotsky's most important remarks on the future of the Soviet Union occur in his discussion of a book, La Bureaucratization du Monde, published in 1939 by Bruno Rizzi. Rizzi argued that the bourgeoisie was an exhausted social force and that a new form of society which he called 'bureaucratic collectivism', was expropriating the bourgeoisie and capitalism throughout the world - it had emerged in the Soviet Union, was partially achieved in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Japan and was developing via the New Deal in the United States. Rizzi regarded bureaucratic collectivism as a historically progressive social order between capitalism and socialism, and he argued that there was, therefore, no danger of a capitalist restoration, for this would be a historically retrograde step, and history does not move backwards. Rizzi insisted that in developed bureaucratic collectivism the bureaucracy formed a class which collectively exploited the mass of the population and drew surplus from it.

We have seen the dismissive way in which Trotsky had hitherto treated writers who claimed that the Soviet bureaucracy was a class. Rizzi, on the other hand, was not dismissed in the same way. 'Bruno R.' had, Trotsky wrote, 'the merit of seeking to transfer the question from

1 Ibid.

2 The section of this book which deals with the Soviet Union was re-published in Paris in 1976 by Editions Champ Libre, as L'U.R.S.S.: Collectivisme Bureaucratique.

the charmed circle of terminological copybook exercises to the plane of major historical generalizations'.

Trotsky nonetheless rejects this analysis too, especially on the ground that despite the considerable political similarities between Stalinism and fascism there is an unbridgeable gulf between the partial statism of the fascist regimes and the nationalization of the means of production achieved in the Soviet Union. But the effect of Rizzi's analysis on Trotsky is obvious, and the way in which he deals with it is an index of the distance his views have moved under the pressure of recent events, and particularly of the war. In a letter to the American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon, written while 'The U.S.S.R. in War' was being composed, Trotsky wrote, 'The U.S.S.R. question cannot be isolated as unique from the whole historic process of our times. Either the Stalin state is a transitory formation, it is a deformation of a worker's state in a backward and isolated country, or "bureaucratic collectivism" (Bruno R., La Bureaucratisation du Monde) is a new social formation which is replacing capitalism throughout the world (Stalinism, Fascism, New Deals etc.). The terminological experiments (workers' state, not workers' state, class, not class, etc.) receive a sense only under this historic aspect'.

Again, in the most frequently quoted passage from 'The U.S.S.R. in War' Trotsky writes:

The historic alternative, carried to the end, is as follows: either the Stalin regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin regime is the first stage of a new exploiting society. If the second prognosis proves to be correct, then, of course, the bureaucracy will become a new exploiting class. However onerous the second perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the

1 In Defence of Marxism, p.12.
2 Ibid. p.1.
the course of development, nothing else would remain except only to recognize that the socialist programme, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia. It is self-evident that a new 'minimum' programme would be required - for the defence of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society.¹

The most obvious thing to be noted about these passages is the momentous starkness of the alternatives posed and the unrelieved bleakness of the possibility of failure. Deutscher, commenting on the second passage quoted, puts it well and with empathy:

Perhaps only Marxists could sense fully the tragic solemnity which these words had in Trotsky's mouth. True, he uttered them for the sake of the argument; but even for the sake of the argument he had never yet contemplated the possibility of an utter failure of socialism so closely; he insisted that the final 'test' was a matter of the next few years; and he defined the terms of the test with painful precision.²

But these passages represent much more than an alteration of mood or of tone. As the dissident American Trotskyists were quick to point out, they betray a completely new direction in the movement of Trotsky's thought. And in denying that any change had occurred, that he had been involved in any 'revision of Marxism',³ Trotsky completely misses the point. The standard reply of Trotsky and his orthodox followers to the charge that 'The U.S.S.R. in War' represents a marked deviation from Trotskyism is to construe the charge as one of inconsistency between serious contemplation of the possibility of failure, and historically sanctioned 'revolutionary optimism'. But, Trotsky replies, 'the Marxist comprehension of historical necessity has nothing in common with fatalism. Socialism is not realizable "by itself", but as a result of the struggle of living forces, classes and their parties... we have full right to ask ourselves: What character will society take

¹ Ibid., p.11. See also the passage explicitly identifying the war as the occasion for this historic test, at pp.17-18.
² The Prophet Outcast, p.468.
³ In Defence of Marxism, p.37.
if the forces of reaction conquer? If this were the point at issue, and if the problems of determinism and voluntarism were so easily solved, Trotsky's reply would be adequate. For, while he had always claimed that the Soviet Union was a workers' state, he had frequently insisted that the future was not closed, and his whole opposition to Stalinism was premised on the necessity for continued and unremitting struggle.

But a willingness to conceive of the possibility of failure manifestly is not what is novel about the passages I have quoted. What is novel is that the 'historic' alternatives have been completely redrawn. As we have seen, Trotsky had insisted throughout his previous writings that the real threat to socialism in the Soviet Union and in the world, the phenomenon constantly to be struggled against, was a restoration of capitalism - the bureaucracy was to be opposed for what it might clear the way to, rather than simply, or even primarily, for what it was.

On the rare occasions when Trotsky had considered the theoretical possibility of the stabilization of bureaucratic rule, he was heavily sceptical, and even on these occasions the possibility of a third form was little more than raised by Trotsky. It was always overshadowed in his mind by a far more daunting and probable alternative, a capitalist restoration. In 1937, for example, Trotsky repeated his long - and deeply - held conviction that:

The struggle for domination, considered on a historical scale, is not between the proletariat and the bureaucracy but between the proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is only the transmitting mechanism in this struggle. The struggle is not concluded.

1 Ibid.
2 Writings... (1935-36), pp.121-22; The Revolution Betrayed, pp.253-54; Writings... (1937-38), pp.61-71.
3 Writings... (1937-38), p.70.
In 'The U.S.S.R. in War', however, 'bureaucratic collectivism' is portrayed not merely as a possible successor to socialism, which itself would be fairly new for Trotsky, but as the only possible successor. It is true, as Trotsky says, that 'Marxists have formulated an incalculable number of times the alternatives: either socialism or return to barbarism', but in 'The U.S.S.R. in War', the specific nature of the barbarous alternative has completely changed, and even on Trotsky's account, let alone Rizzi's, the alternative is in no way a return. If bureaucratic collectivism triumphs, it will be, according to Trotsky, a totally new kind of social formation, the successor to both capitalism and socialism - it may be a step downward, but it is not a step backward. On this view, it will be a modern, post-capitalist phenomenon in which, for the first time, bureaucracy will have come into its own.

Marxism, Bolshevism and Bureaucracy

Trotsky is clearly not among the most profound of twentieth century thinkers, not even of twentieth century Marxist thinkers. But he is a thinker who confronted some of the most pressing issues raised by the revolution in which he had been involved, and in the process of doing so he was led to consider other issues of even more general and contemporary relevance. In the material discussed in the first four sections

1 In Defence of Marxism, p.37.

2 This sentence, like the whole of this chapter, was written before the recent publication of Knei-Paz's exhaustive study of Trotsky's thought. One great merit of this book is that while the author is highly critical of Trotsky as a social and political thinker, he makes a convincing case for Trotsky's originality and perceptiveness, particularly as an analyst of the problems of 'backward' societies. The first part of the sentence in my text seems to me to be unaffected by the book; I am no longer as confident about the concluding phrase.
of this chapter Trotsky was, above all, concerned to explain why the revolution had borne spoiled fruit. In the material discussed in the fifth section, he was concerned to determine whether the damage was irreparable, whether the fruit could be saved and propagated. In the answer to the first question, bureaucracy played the central role; in the answer to the second, its role was, until 1939, quite overshadowed. An apparent paradox seems to emerge: when Trotsky seeks the traitor of the revolution he systematically overestimates the bureaucracy's role; when he seeks the revolution's real foe, he systematically underestimates this role.

In the first case, it is not hard to see ways in which the concept of bureaucracy might prove useful to a person in Trotsky's position. Theoretically it allows a Marxist faced with the destruction of hostile classes in the Soviet Union to focus attention on a stratum whose motivations can be cast in a familiar mode, a stratum which, if not a class, acts sufficiently like one in Trotsky's account to be plausibly regarded as the culprit in the betrayal of the revolution. Theoretically again, concentration on the bureaucracy is far more satisfactory for a Marxist than any attempt to portray Stalin as an independently significant actor. Ideologically it is useful (and is so used by Trotsky) as a means of drawing a veil between those consequences of the Revolution for which the Bolshevik willingly accepts responsibility - the revolution itself; the dictatorship; the centralized economy and the arguments for, if not the practice of, rapid industrialization and collectivization - and those consequences which should be laid at the door of the degenerates and usurpers.

Moreover, it is obvious that Trotsky's focus on the bureaucracy was more than a random or simply convenient choice. The bureaucracy had grown massively in the period since the revolution, and particularly
during Trotsky's exile: all social bases of potential opposition - private and corporate - had been systematically destroyed; classes had been emasculated, millions of individuals were killed, deported and terrorized. Moreover, there clearly was a close relationship between Stalin and the bureaucratic machine, and Stalin's rise is in large part attributable to this connection. But even when these points are made, Trotsky's account is inadequate. On most normal readings of the disputes of the 1920's, Trotsky was defeated by a skilled politician who masterfully appealed to a powerful constituency, whereas Trotsky himself displayed a striking absence or paralysis of political skills.¹ In fact, quite apart from the psychological difficulties Trotsky may have faced in appreciating this, his whole conception of 'politics' was an extraordinarily rarefied one. For Trotsky, politics was an heroic activity,² characterized by courage, self-sacrifice, 'creativity', 'initiative' and so on. Coarser ways of conducting affairs were 'administrative', 'corridor skills'. Since much of what commonly goes under the name of politics is thereby consigned to bureaucratic oblivion, and since even Lenin and Trotsky had not been averse to 'administrative measures', Trotsky's dichotomy between the way of the politician and that of the bureaucrat is not self evident. Moreover the very chaos of the 1930's, which Trotsky deplored, could be characterized with considerable plausibility as a victory of the political arm over the bureaucratic, rather than, as Trotsky insists, the reverse. After all, it is not obvious that the economic and technical skills which he values inhere


² See Stephen F. Cohen, *op.cit.*, pp.129-32, on the 'revolutionary heroic' tradition within the party.
more in politicians, even revolutionary ones, than in bureaucrats, nor
does Trotsky explain why they do. It is difficult to see why, for
example, his characterization of the left turn should be preferred to
the following passage from Lewin, in which the description is very similar
to Trotsky's but the analysis and attribution of blame quite different:

Turetsky and Strumilin, both prominent economists,
...at that time... clearly favoured giving the political
leadership full freedom of action according to its will
without any guidance or restraint, and this was in fact
occurring. Economics was stifled, as were the planners.
The political leadership seized complete control over
the process and brushed aside strictures, 'regulators',
sophisticated work on a 'balance of national economy',
mathematical models of growth, studies of accumulation
and consumption, research on management methods, studies on
scientific organization of labor, and many other endeavours,
which were discontinued during the 1930's and abandoned
until at least the mid-1950's. But these studies were
the very tools of planning.¹

However, without some dichotomy such as Trotsky's, without
the elevation of bureaucracy to an even greater role than it actually
played, Trotsky's whole distinction between the actual and the potential
fate of the revolution, is placed under threat.

Moreover, even if the people who supported Stalin can be
called 'bureaucrats' in some meaningful sense, Trotsky's explanation has
nothing useful to say about their fate. If it was the 'bureaucrats' who
enabled Stalin to gain power, it was these same 'bureaucrats' who scarcely
lived long enough to regret their achievement. If one attempts to
weigh the relative power of Stalin and his supporters, one must take into
account that by mid-1937 he had come to be able to decide personally,
'anything he wanted to, unconstrained by the power of any individual,
group, institution or laws'.² Until 1937 this was not absolutely true,

¹ Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates, p.98.
² T.H. Rigby, 'Stalinism and the Mono-Organizational Society', in Robert
C. Tucker (ed.) Stalinism. Essays in Historical Interpretation,
(New York, 1977), pp.53-76.
and while Stalin was purging oppositionists, ex-oppositionists and potential oppositionists, he was replacing them with his own nominees, Stalinists, who had reason to be grateful. If one were so disposed, then, one could talk sensibly, if not adequately, of Stalin as the 'representative' of these people. But after about March 1937, when Stalin's total personal domination was established, this sort of explanation cannot work, for the brunt of the Ezhovshchina was borne by these very people. And, as Dr. Rigby has pointed out, there is good reason to believe 'that something like the Ezhovshchina was planned well in advance by Stalin, and that the earlier purge operations though they served other purposes, were designed to make possible the Ezhovshchina'.

Early in 1937, Trotsky clearly recognized that something new was occurring, that the purge was being directed against the Stalinists, but he never seemed to recognize the importance of these events for his analysis. Clearly, if a bureaucratic structure endures, someone will benefit from the annihilation of millions of his peers and superiors. But for an explanation which focuses on 'the bureaucracy' to have any weight, one must show either that the liquidation of those who had helped Stalin was in their own interests - this presents difficulties in principle - or that those who survived the slaughter had real control over their fates - this presents practical difficulties. And even if one seeks to argue that measures can be in the interests of a stratum without being in the interests of all of its members, one must come to terms with the unparalleled magnitude of the measures directed against the bureaucrats; one must explain why in its own interests, an already cowed and subservient bureaucracy required that its higher levels be almost wiped out by the Ezhovshchina. Finally, even if one tries to portray

2 Writings... (1937-38),p.38.
the Ezhovshchina as being conducted in the interests of the better educated post-Ezhovshchina leadership, there is then the problem of the enormous discontinuity between the pre-and-post-Ezhovshchina generations and the difficulty in the light of it of attributing all that had gone wrong to 'THE bureaucracy'. In the context of Stalin's Russia, the term is so vague and the variety of people that it must encompass so vast, that little explanatory use can be made of it.

I see, then, no plausible way in which the decimation of the bureaucracy in the Ezhovshchina can be derived from the bureaucracy's 'caste' interests. Far more economical and enlightening is Aristotle's account of the 'traditional' methods by which a tyrant maintains his power,1 which Khrushchev has, innocently, confirmed. Or, one might invoke a more recent theorist - Al Capone. Asked what he thought of Mussolini's prospects, Capone replied, 'He'll be O.K. if he can keep the boys in line'. Stalin could keep the boys in line, and the fact that he could, and the way in which he did, say as much about his role in Soviet politics as they do about theirs.

Concepts can, of course, be put to ideological uses even if they are analytically quite appropriate to the tasks in hand. But the tenacity with which Trotsky holds to his focus on the bureaucracy, rather than Stalin, the party or the dictatorship - despite its manifest implausibility, suggests that the ideological and programmatic functions which 'bureaucracy' performs are of considerable importance to Trotsky.

But if Trotsky greatly underestimated Stalin's power vis-à-vis the bureaucracy, in his theoretical writings for most of his life, he equally underestimated the role of Stalin-and-the-bureaucracy vis-à-vis anyone else. This underestimation derived from two central theoretical

1 The Politics (Harmondsworth 1966) pp.224-28. The relevance of Aristotle's analysis to Stalinism is discussed in some detail by Dr. Rigby in the article cited above.
commitments. The first of these, set irrevocably soon after 1929, was Trotsky's claim that so long as a stratum was not an economic class in the strict sense, it could never wrest ultimate rule of the Soviet Union from the proletariat.

It is striking, given Trotsky's concern with bureaucracy, just how vague he leaves the actual specification of its social character. To learn that a social group is a 'tumour' tells us something, but not much. To learn that it is a 'stratum', a 'layer', a 'clique', 'Bonapartist riffraff' does not tell us very much more. This vagueness is at first sight surprising, but the reason for it is clear enough. On Trotsky's argument, only one thing matters - is it a class? If it is not, then what else it might be is plainly of secondary importance. However, the economic determinism which underlies this position received a considerable battering from the Stalinist state. Echoing Engels, Trotsky insisted repeatedly on the complexity of the relationship between economic and political forces, and on the vulgarity of any one to one formulation of this relationship. Going beyond Engels to Lenin, Trotsky claims that:

The economic contradictions of the regime do not develop in a 'vacuum'. The political contradictions of the regime of the dictatorship, even though in the final analysis they grow out of the economic, have an independent and also a more direct significance for the fate of the dictatorship than the economic crisis.

Politics is concentrated economics. Politics decides.

Under the conditions of the transitional epoch, the political superstructure plays a decisive role.

Now the economic determinism which survives in these formulations is so porous that it is hard to know what to make of it. To reply,

1 See, e.g. Writings... (1930), p. 86; Writings... (1930-31), p. 74.
3 Writings... (1932-33), p. 75.
4 Writings... (1933-34), p. 116.
in the face of these qualifications, that the economic is nonetheless the fundamental determinant in the long run seems to me to require an act of faith rather than reasoning. Moreover, it is hard to see what bearing this reply could have on any specific analysis unless some time scale is specified.\footnote{See Sidney Hook's excellent critique of The Revolution Betrayed where similar points are made. ("Reflections on the Russian Revolution", in Reason, Social Myth and Democracy, (New York, 1966), pp.142-180, esp. at pp.152-155.) Hook also points out that Trotsky's own comments on specific events and crises conflict again and again with this possible rejoinder. \textit{Inter alia} he cites Trotsky's retort to 'vulgar defenders of the Soviet Union' who defend the regime on the ground that 'a further development of the productive forces on the present foundations must sooner or later lead to the triumph of socialism. Hence only the factor of time is uncertain'. Trotsky replies that 'Time is by no means a secondary factor when historical processes are in question. It is far more dangerous to confuse the present and the future in politics than in grammar'. (The Revolution Betrayed p.48). Even more succinct, and in this context singularly apt, is Keynes' splendid aphorism that 'in the long run we will all be dead'.} If, as an Althusserian might insist, economics only determines politics 'in the final analysis', if it merely sets 'certain limits', and if politics is as 'decisive' as Trotsky maintains, is he saying in effect any more than that economics influences politics? And if this is all that he is saying, then the acknowledged political power of the Soviet bureaucracy might be a fact of equal or greater importance than whether it is a class or not. If economic determinism is weakened or rejected - either in principle or specifically in the face of the massive political power of certain groups in the Soviet Union - then much of Trotsky's debate seems beside the point. The power of a group will depend on many of the factors of which Trotsky was so well aware - economic, social, psychological, and political. It will be important to analyse the specific and changing power resources of different groups - ownership or control of the means of production; control of the state machine; control of the GPU, of the army, and so on.
But the question of a regime's stability and historical importance will not easily be amenable to Trotsky's dogmatic clarity.

Trotsky's thought also laboured under another, related, constraint. For Trotsky did not simply insist that a stratum must be a class in order to rule; he also insisted for most of his life that only two opposed groups could now be classes. As many writers have noted, this insistence seriously weakened his understanding of Soviet politics; it marred in particular his analysis of the bureaucracy. For if the bureaucracy was less powerful in relation to Stalin than Trotsky allowed, it was a good deal more powerful than he allowed in relation to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Rizzi put the point well when he characterized the 'bête noir' of orthodox Marxists. According to them, he wrote, 'Capitalism is on the watch and the bureaucracy is in the process of committing harakiri! Sleep tranquilly, oh valiant chevalier, the bureaucracy has quite different intentions!' Quite apart from his recurrently falsified predictions about Soviet developments, Trotsky's concern with spectral foes caused him to neglect earlier insights, which he actually had, into the reasons for bureaucratic growth in modern society.

What is most lacking in Trotsky's voluminous writings about bureaucracy, and his frequent attempts to analyse the reasons for its growth, is an appreciation of the administrative imperatives which have led to the growth of bureaucracies throughout the modern world, and of the massive opportunities for bureaucratic growth opened up by the Russian Revolution in particular. In The New Course Trotsky's warnings against bureaucratism come closer than any of his later writings to an

1 L'U.R.S.S.: Collectivisme Bureaucratique, p.94.
understanding of some of the causes of bureaucratic growth. But when he began to be concerned with a stratum - which indeed was growing - and with external class forces - which had little to do with this growth - he did not supplement, but jettisoned his former insights. The only vestiges of them remained in his explanations of the necessity of bureaucracy in a 'transitional' society. But these vestiges were quite inadequate. Moshe Lewin praises an analysis made by Bukharin in 1928, one which, Lewin claims:

provided a good departure for a serious sociological and political analysis of the Soviet state, in fact, a basis for a genuine political sociology...The centralized socialist economy, to consider only this crucial factor, created an immense administrative apparatus, and this, in turn, set in motion its own self-sustaining dynamism. Class origin of the office holders was not the problem here...Petit-bourgeois influence - the other current scapegoat - could not but be a part of the story. All this seemed obvious to Bukharin, but such an analysis had already become heretical since it 'slandered' the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.

Perhaps for the same reason Trotsky failed to develop his earlier suggestions, and he continued to warn against non-bureaucratic counter revolution. And it is difficult to see how he could have attended to the real reasons for bureaucratic growth without a crisis of faith. As he acknowledged in 1939, one basis of that faith - the allegedly necessary course of historical development - would have been undermined by recognition of a new 'bureaucratic' society. But this was not all. For if the growth of bureaucracy had been simply the result of the trends Trotsky had noted in 1923, or if it had been fully explained by the necessary tasks involved in transforming a backward society into a socialist one, then it would be hard to know whom to blame for it, if not the Bolsheviks. Some autonomous

'forces of reaction' had *logically* to be at fault, for Trotsky's stark distinction, between what *had* happened and what *should have* happened, to be tenable. And here we have come full circle. Just as the concept of bureaucracy had important uses to one who wished to explain yet dissociate himself from the failure of a costly experiment, so, too, concern with 'hostile class forces' shifted attention from the true nature and causes of that failure. If the concept's uses have something to do with Trotsky's chronic *over*-emphasis on 'bureaucracy' in the explanation of Stalinism, the standing embarrassment caused by the growth and dominance of the bureaucratic state in the Soviet Union, is evident in his reluctance to examine its genuine causes, role and importance.

But even if Trotsky had wished to be more discriminating in his analysis of Soviet bureaucracy, and even if he had simply been a Marxist rather than a leading Bolshevik, it is not obvious that his problems would have been solved. For inadequate appraisal of the role and consequences of bureaucracy in post-revolutionary society was not a Trotskyist innovation, and an obsession with identifying the class character of a society's rulers neither was born with Trotsky nor died with him.
Explanations and theories do not develop in a vacuum; they are strongly coloured by the assumptions and presuppositions which a thinker brings to his work. Questions arise, and answers are given, in the context of conscious or unconscious theoretical frameworks, in terms of interests and beliefs that distinguish or seek to distinguish the potentially significant from the non-significant, that lay down what are seen as 'satisfactory' ways of providing explanations. Such frameworks are often very resistant to change; most traditions of thought are held together by agreement on the important problems and the proper ways of solving them rather than by specific solutions. Modern thinkers have called such theoretical frameworks the 'paradigm' or 'problematic' within which a thinker works.

Marxism has operated, for many thinkers, as such a 'paradigm'. It has stipulated what the fundamental activities and actors in society are and where they are carrying men and societies. Individual societies, Marxists have insisted, can only be understood through a proper appreciation of these basic forces: to unravel the nature of a given society, one must grasp its class structure; to discover who rules the society, one must determine which class owns the means of production; to ascertain what the future holds, one must recognize that a new ruling class can only supplant an existing one if it is capable of organizing production
at a higher level. More specifically, Marxists have been confident that a capitalist society will ultimately fall to a proletarian revolution and that this revolution will pave the way for a society without classes.

Of course, there is much more in Marx than this, and his writings are infinitely subtler, and display many more nuances, than those of most of his followers. 'Orthodox' Marxists, however, were not wrong to believe that these elements stood at the core of Marx's social theory. Moreover, only if one appreciates that these and related beliefs were considered by many Marxists to hold the key to the understanding of social reality, can one understand the rise, nature, and persistence of 'new class' theories and the heat which they have generated. Similarly, without appreciation of the tenacity with which these conceptions have been held, it would be difficult to comprehend why writers who have broken with Marxism on fundamental issues of fact and principles still persist in trying to find new answers to old questions, rather than shift to asking new questions. New class theories are significant Marxist heresies; they stop well short of apostasy.

No Marxist has insisted more strongly on the propositions outlined above than Leon Trotsky. Until the postwar disputes between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Trotskyism, as John Plamenatz wrote at the time, was 'the only major heresy since the seat of Marxism was shifted to Moscow' and Trotsky himself was 'the arch-heretic, more evil and more dangerous than all the others together'. The doctrinal core of Trotsky's heresy was expressed in his claim that the Soviet bureaucracy had betrayed the Revolution. As we have seen, precisely because of his role as heresiarch, it was crucial for Trotsky on the one hand to determine

whether Soviet bureaucracy could be a class, and on the other to deny that it was one. 'New class' theorists have been prepared to go a good deal further than Trotsky; not in disputing the importance of the questions which he asked, but in rejecting his answers to them.

'New class' theories have appeared in a variety of forms. In 1869, e.g., Bakunin asked,

...what do we find throughout history? The State has always been the patrimony of some privileged class: a priestly class, an aristocratic class, a bourgeois class. And finally, when all the other classes have exhausted themselves, the State then becomes the patrimony of the bureaucratic class and then falls or, if you will, rises - to the position of a machine.¹

In 1872, after he had been expelled from the First International, Bakunin directly attacked Marx:

But in the People's State of Marx there will be, we are told, no privileged class at all... but there will be a government and, note this well, an extremely complex government. This government will not content itself with administering and governing the masses politically, as all governments do today. It will also administer the masses economically, concentrating in the hands of the State the production and division of wealth, the cultivation of land, the establishment and development of factories, the organization and direction of commerce, and finally the application of capital to production by the only banker - the State. All that will demand an immense knowledge and many heads 'overflowing with brains' in this government. It will be the reign of scientific intelligence, the most aristocratic, despotic, arrogant, and elitist of all regimes. There will be a new class, a new hierarchy of real and counterfeit scientists and scholars, and the work will be divided into a minority ruling in the name of knowledge, and an immense ignorant majority. And then, woe unto the mass of ignorant ones! ²

The writings of the Polish revolutionary, Jan Wacław Machajski (especially his The Intellectual Worker) were animated by a similar belief that Marxists sought a state in which the 'intellectual capital' monopolized by

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² I b i d . , pp. 318-319.
their class, the *intelligentsia*, would be pre-eminent.¹ These themes were taken up in anarchist and 'left-Communist' critiques of Bolshevism in the 1920s and 1930s.

These writers' place in the genealogy of new class theory is secure. It is not surprising, however, that their critiques did not have dramatic repercussions in orthodox Marxist circles. Bakunin had been anathemized by Marx; Machajski, who had begun to write his critique as a Marxist was, nonetheless, a minor figure of brief fame among exiles in Siberia, and could be dismissed as an 'economist' or, as Trotsky, after having been greatly impressed, dismissed him, as an anarchist.²

Moreover, another reason why these ideas did not find an earlier and wider market among Marxists, and especially among Bolsheviks, is that the latter's world view was not yet unsettled by the recognition of a major crisis which had to be faced and explained. In this connection the rise in the 'stocks' of new class theories bears striking resemblances

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2. See *My Life*, p. 129.
to the development of what Thomas Kuhn calls 'normal science'. Kuhn observes that:

...that enterprise [normal science] seems an attempt to force nature into the preformed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies. No part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sorts of phenomena; indeed those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all. Nor do scientists normally aim to invent new theories, and they are often intolerant of those invented by others. Instead, normal-scientific research is directed to the articulation of those phenomena and theories that the paradigm already supplies.

Kuhn also draws attention to the role of crisis in the development of novel scientific theories, and after discussing three examples of the emergence of a new scientific theory he remarks,

These three examples are almost entirely typical. In each case a novel theory emerged only after a pronounced failure in the normal problem-solving activity...The novel theory seems a direct response to crisis...Finally, these examples share another characteristic that may help to make the case for the role of crisis impressive: the solution to each of them has been at least partially anticipated during a period when there was no crisis in the corresponding science; and in the absence of crisis these anticipations had been ignored.

From at least the 1930s, Western Marxists have been confronted with a plentiful and steady supply of crises. One response has been the elaboration of theories of a 'new class'.

1 Theories of a Global New Class

In 1939 and 1940 there appeared a number of new class theories of a special sort: global theories which suggested that a new class, unforeseen by Marx, was coming into power throughout the developed world. Like Trotsky's reflections in 'The USSR in War', these writings were stimulated by a combination of Stalin's success in the Soviet Union and

2 Ibid., pp.74-75.
the extraordinary breakdowns, changes and fascist successes in capitalist states of the 1930s.

The most famous of these books, James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution*, was the culmination of the author's split with the American Trotskyist movement. Like the ideas of Trotsky himself, Burnham's movement away from Trotskyist orthodoxy began under the pressure of 'the Russian question'. In 1937, Burnham and another Trotskyist, Joseph Carter, attempted to challenge Trotsky's view that the Soviet Union was a worker's state governed by a bureaucratic caste. They argued, on the one hand, that the proletarian dictatorship was essentially a *political* rather than an economic concept, and that once the proletariat had ceded all political power to the bureaucracy as in the Soviet Union, one could no longer speak of a workers' state. On the other hand they still admitted that the bureaucracy was not a class, insisted with Trotsky that the Soviet 'economic structure remains unchanged' and had to be defended, and that the bourgeoisie had not been reinstated. They asked that the Soviet Union be defined as 'neither a workers' nor a bourgeois state'. There is in this contribution, as Rizzi already saw in 1939, 'a great deal of confusion... a confusion appropriate to that state of mind where ideas are in the process of forming'. And this effort to change the official Trotskyist analysis met with little success. It was opposed by Trotsky, failed to win substantial support and was not publicly pressed by Burnham. However

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1 First printed in 1941; (reprinted Harmondsworth, 1962).
after the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland, and of Finland, and the incorporation of the Baltic states, Burnham, Carter and Max Shachtman led a dissident wing of the Socialist Workers' Party in denying that socialists were obliged to support the Soviet Union simply because, whatever it did in the war it was still a workers' state struggling in an imperialist war. Burnham insisted, at this stage, that it did not matter how one defined the Soviet bureaucracy and state; the only relevant decisions to be made were concrete assessments of the Soviet Union's activities in the war:

The dominant issues dividing the ranks of our party and the International are not dialectics or sociology or logic. To pose the question in this manner is an evasion or fraud...
This conflict of strategical orientations is the central political issue, and nothing else. 1

Trotsky replied, insistently and repeatedly, that the 'conflict of strategical orientations' was not, and for a Marxist could not be, the central issue. And there was a sense in which he was right, for by arguing that discussion could be confined to discrete and separable 'concrete' issues, the membership of the opposition were challenging much more than they admitted, and Trotsky was not simply being evasive in insisting that they were.

As the intensity of Trotsky's attachment to the 'workers' state' theory - in all its permutations - attested, there had always been much more to his analysis of Soviet bureaucracy than mere classification. Indeed, Trotsky insisted that nothing less than the validity of Marxism was at stake in this debate:

...The remarks...to the effect that you do not now pose for the decision of the party the question of the nature of the Soviet state signify in reality that you do pose this question, if not juridically, then theoretically and politically. Only infants can fail to understand this. This very statement likewise has another meaning, far more outrageous and pernicious. It means that you divorce politics from Marxist sociology. Yet for us the crux of the matter lies precisely in this. If it is possible to give a correct definition of the state without utilizing the method of dialectical materialism; if it is possible correctly to determine politics without giving a class analysis of the state, the question arises: is there any need whatsoever for Marxism?

In other words, Trotsky was accusing Burnham of apostasy; and in his letter of resignation from the Workers' Party which he and Max Shachtman had formed one month earlier, Burnham confessed that:

by no stretching of terminology can I any longer regard myself or permit others to regard me as a Marxist.

Yet, as *The Managerial Revolution* makes abundantly clear in its relentless determination to answer the questions which Trotsky posed, both Trotsky and Burnham were mistaken on this point. Burnham's journey to apostasy took much longer than he seems to have anticipated: his most famous work, and the earlier, similar theses of Bruno Rizzi and the non-Bolshevik, democratic Marxist, Lucien Laurat, were merely heresies.

Burnham's heresy in *The Managerial Revolution* took the form of denying that capitalism was the last form of antagonistic society, and of arguing that, while the prospects of achieving socialism seemed slim, the probability that capitalism would be replaced throughout the world

1. *In Defence of Marxism*, p.98.
by a new form of class society was very great indeed. Burnham argued that this new form of class society, which he called 'managerial society', was coming into being throughout the modern world, and that it was most fully developed in the Soviet Union, was less, but significantly, developed in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and was increasingly evident in America. As we have seen, Bruno Rizzi had already, in an odd, confused and at times evil book, come to a very similar conclusion. Unlike Burnham, however, Rizzi still maintained that the new social formation, 'bureaucratic collectivism', would ultimately be succeeded by socialism.

Laurat's analysis shared a great deal with those of Burnham and Rizzi, though since he condemned the Bolshevik Revolution, Laurat did not consider it the definitive test of the proletariat's maturity, and he exhorted the workers to struggle against the new despotism which was emerging throughout the world.

1. Surprisingly, Trotsky had nothing at all to say about the odious anti-Semitic passages in Rizzi's book. See, e.g. *La Bureaucratization du Monde*, pp. 291 - 300, 'La Question Juive'. Rizzi explains that the Nazis are acting correctly in this question, though they do not quite realise why. Jews are pre-eminently capitalists, and as representatives of this dying class, they also need to be eliminated by the representatives of the more 'progressive' new class:

The racist struggle of national socialism and of fascism is fundamentally only an anti-capitalist struggle led by the new social synthesis, in a theoretically erroneous, but practically just, fashion...Hitler is right, and we [the workers] are wrong. We must correct ourselves and become anti-Jewish because we are anti-capitalist. (Op. cit., pp. 295-296).

Rizzi pauses for a moment to deal with a possible objection that his anti-Semitism clashes with his respect for Marx and Trotsky:

We respect and honour Marx and Trotsky and several of our obscure friends of the Jewish race. Certain very beautiful flowers push, isolated, through the dung, but collectively the Jewish people has become a pile of capitalist dung. (Ibid, p.300).
The most striking feature of these theories, and the one which distinguishes them from more recent theories emanating from within the 'socialist' states, is that none of them is simply concerned with socialist states. The belief that socialism would be a successor to capitalism on a world scale, rather than a mere international competitor, was, after all, basic in classical Marxism. Laurat, Rizzi and Burnham retained the scope of the original drama but inserted a new character. Laurat identified the new class as 'pluto-technocratic' in the West and 'bureau-technocratic' in the Soviet Union; Rizzi was content with Trotsky's 'bureaucracy'; Burnham believed that 'managers' were introducing 'managerial society' throughout the world. Burnham, for example, explains that:

...though Russia did not move toward socialism, at the same time it did not move back to capitalism. This is a point which is of key significance for the problem of this book. All of those who predicted what would happen in Russia, friends and enemies, shared the assumption that socialism is the only alternative to capitalism; from which it followed that Russia - since presumably it could not stay still - would either move toward socialism or back to the restoration of capitalism. Neither of these anticipated developments has taken place...

The only way out of the theoretical jam is to recognise that the assumption must be dropped, that socialism and capitalism are not the sole alternatives, that Russia's motion has been toward neither capitalism nor socialism, but toward managerial society, the type of society now in the process of replacing capitalist society on a world scale.  

Like Trotsky, these authors were convinced that capitalism was moribund. On the one hand, there was the Depression and the probability - by the time that Burnham wrote, the fact - of war. On the other hand, the very measures which capitalist states were taking to overcome their problems were incompatible with capitalism. Above all this was true of the enormous growth in the size and activity of the twentieth century state. Laurat argued that in Italy and Germany, rule by the capitalist class had already given way to rule by a monopolist and financial aristocracy, and he continued:

1. op. cit., pp.53-54.
but even this restricted fraction of the capitalist class does not enjoy absolute power. It is compelled to share economic power to an increasing extent with the State apparatus, with the fascist bureaucracy. In view of the innumerable economic functions exercised by the State in our day, that bureaucracy is not to be confounded with the bureaucracy which existed under Liberal capitalism. Being an economic factor of first-rate importance, the State to-day becomes the forcing-house of a new class of exploiters....

Rizzi and Burnham both emphasized that the capitalist state always does and must play a secondary role. Now, however, though the state was being called to intervene in the economy ostensibly on behalf of capitalism, in doing so it was inevitably changing the whole structure of the economic system. Rizzi and Burnham make this point frequently and with the substitution of 'managers' for 'bureaucrats', Burnham's conclusion is identical to the following passage from Rizzi:

...Exploiting this new function [intervention in the economy after the 1929 crash], it [the State] gradually transferred the political sceptre from the hands of the bourgeoisie into those of government organisms which, from day to day, grew to excess and became little by little their own government, the government of a social class, which has the bureaucracy for its core...The bureaucratic class is in the process of formation, while the bourgeois class is disintegrating.

These authors all considered the growth of the state and of state functions as the most important vehicle for the rise of the new class. Indeed Rizzi concentrated almost exclusively on this and on developments associated with, or contributing to it. But to minds willing to dismiss distinctions between the nature of state intervention and control in the Soviet Union, Germany, Italy and America, other distinctions remained to be blurred. The most important of these

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was that between state and non-state functionaries. Since they did not deny that private corporations still existed in the West, and since they recognized that, in America particularly, the state did not yet completely direct corporate activities, Laurat and Burnham still had to explain the role of private corporations. This involved two moves: first, to argue that capitalists had been virtually expropriated in corporations by someone else; second, to argue, or at least to claim, that these expropriators were part of the same group as those who were coming to run the state.

There were two sources on which to base the first of these moves. One, on which Laurat explicitly relied, was Marx's predictions in Volume III of *Capital* that the capitalist was becoming superfluous in modern large-scale industry, and was being replaced by the non-owning manager, as the company underwent 'socialization from within'. Thus Laurat drew attention to a 'separation between capitalist property and the directive function of the capitalist' and to the rise of 'a new oligarchy' and he explained that:

Karl Marx points out all this in his 'Capital', and in his 'Theories of Surplus Value'. Our whole demonstration is based on his analysis...The exception of his day has become the rule of ours. 3

Burnham, on the other hand, did not rely on these elements in Marx to make this point. Indeed, so far as I know, he never mentions Marx's predictions in this connection. Instead he referred to *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* published in 1932 by Adolf A. Berle and Gardner C. Means. This book was

the first major attempt to provide detailed empirical data about stock ownership in order to substantiate the claim that shareholders were becoming less influential in the conduct of corporation affairs, and that the 'control' function of ownership was being superseded by that of management. 4

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Burnham had referred to this book before. In 1933, when he was already a Marxist but not yet a Trotskyist, he reviewed the book in *The Symposium*, a journal which he edited for its four-year existence with the literary critic Philip Wheelwright. Burnham praised the book very highly but made three criticisms of it. First, he argued that it was inadequate because its authors appeared either not to have read Marx, not to have understood him or, as he put it, 'for that variety of reasons that so insistently operates...having understood him and being unwilling to accept their understanding...'.

Burnham continued:

any political, economic, or social study at the present time is fated by a neglect of Marx to remain, however brilliantly, wandering among scientific symptoms. It is the Marxian analysis that cuts through to the major organs.

Secondly, and quite extraordinarily in the light of his later work, Burnham objected to 'the almost universal error, where the subject matter is social and thus involves human activity, of projecting statistical trends too confidently into the future...'

Finally, and most important, Burnham insisted that Berle and Means were mistaken in thinking that they had identified a major social revolution, for:

a major social revolution is a change in the basic property relation. The mistake of the authors is in their belief that the relation they deal with is basic. Or, in other words, the change they describe is a change within the structure of capitalism, not from capitalism to a new social order.

*The Managerial Revolution* might be described as an attempt to rectify the first defect and duplicate, somewhat noisily, the other two.

1 *The Symposium*, vol. 4, 1933, p. 259.
In that book Burnham insists that the growth of the large corporation and the technological developments of modern industry have left owners in control only of small businesses, and have led to a completely different social category coming to control the large corporations:

These changes have meant that to an ever-growing extent the managers are no longer, either as individuals or legally or historically, the same as the capitalists. There is a combined shift: through changes in the technique of production, the functions of management become more distinctive, more complex, more specialized, and more crucial to the whole process of production, thus serving to set off those who perform these functions as a separate group or class in society; and at the same time those who formerly carried out what functions there were of management, the bourgeoisie, themselves withdraw from management, so that the difference in function becomes also a difference in the individuals who carry out the function. 1

There was, then, an omnipotent state in the Soviet Union and, in the West, an unprecedentedly active one linked to a completely new group of corporate controllers. The latter were also members of the new class.

This crucial but scarcely argued-for connection between state and non-state functionaries is made plausible largely because of the definitional vagueness so characteristic of 'new class' discussion. Thus Laurat simply points to the rise of technicians in all fields and assumes that their interests, at least vis-à-vis anyone else, will converge. Burnham relies on modern developments to encourage the rise of a new type of man - not ex-seminarians or postcard painters, but technically competent administrators - in both government and private industry. 2

It is their determination, not to say obsession, to identify and demarcate a new ruling class, which indicates the profoundly Marxist nature of these theories. Trotsky had insisted that to a Marxist the

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1 Burnham, op. cit., p. 82.
2 See Burnham, op. cit., p. 105, p. 141.
birth of a new class was not a haphazard affair but signalled profound economic developments and indicated that the new class was economically more progressive than the former ruling class. So Laurat, Rizzi and Burnham emphasize that the coming economic system is a great economic advance on the capitalism which it replaces. So too its progressive elements are familiar to most Marxists:

1. The increasing organic fusion between the State and the economic system; the development ...of 'control levers'; the rapidly increasing centralization of all economic activity; the development of decentralized control lacking co-ordination in the direction of centralized and co-ordinated control.

2. The development of property towards more and more collectivist forms (increase in the numbers of the shareholding public, the decline of the private sector of the economic system before the advance of the public sector); the broadening of social legislation; the development of increasingly collectivist legal forms. 1

Laurat, it is true, believes that such a system will be less progressive than it might be unless the proletariat can win control over it, but he also has no doubt that the new ruling class is economically superior to the old.

Again, Trotsky insisted that a ruling class must own the means of production, and an enormous amount of ink, and some blood, has been spilt as a result of new class theorists' attempts to show that what the new class has amounts to ownership. Rizzi was one of the first to sound an oft-repeated note by arguing that the bureaucracy owned property as much as the capitalists had, but that it owned it, as it exploited the proletariat and drew off the surplus value which the latter produced, not individually but collectively, 'en bloc'. True, Rizzi concedes, this is a different manner of ownership from bourgeois ownership, but, he insists repeatedly, it is ownership nonetheless. Burnham, too, is determined to show that his managers 'own' the means of production. He

1 Lucien Laurat, op. cit., p. 211.
agrees with Rizzi as to the collective nature of managerial ownership; he goes on to claim that, pace Berle and Means, there is no distinction between ownership and control and that since the managers are in control of the means of production, they therefore own them. Laurat is less obsessed with the term 'ownership' than are those who argue with Trotsky: he dismisses the importance of legal property, but he too gives primacy to the new class's collective economic exploitation and total economic control.

Finally, what in other circles might pass for arid terminological disputes gain substance here from what orthodox and heretics agree are the consequences of identifying the class which owns the means of production. As Burnham explains:

In most types of society that we know about, and in all complex societies so far, there is a particular, and relatively small group of men that controls [for the orthodox read 'owns'] the chief instruments of production...Where there is such a controlling group in society...we may speak of this group as the socially dominant or ruling class in that society. It is hard, indeed, to see what else could be meant by 'dominant' or 'ruling' class. Such a group has the power and privilege and wealth in the society, as against the remainder of society.

And Rizzi also reveals what must, in the case of Russia, have been an extraordinarily powerful argument for many Marxists:

The 'clerk' who, following Trotsky, is only the transmission mechanism of imperialism, has ruled in Russia for over twenty years and rules a country which takes up a sixth of the continents, with a population of 180 millions. Obviously, the clerk has alarming proportions, much greater than those of his masters themselves. Such domination requires a 'staff' which on the national scale, represents for us a class. To reinforce it, this class pushes its domination into all domains of society, and where it encounters resistance, bypasses it by climbing over mountains of corpses. The bureaucratic regime of the U.S.S.R. has first, sacrificed the communist party and the Third International, then the Red Army itself. Tasks of this magnitude cannot be done by 'cliques' or 'staffs' or 'clerks' but only by classes.

2 Ibid., p. 93.
Theories of a Communist New Class

The Second World War, the collapse of Fascist regimes in Germany and Italy, and the distinctly un-Marxist postwar concern with contrasts between democracy and totalitarianism, laid global new class theories to rest for a time; the more fashionable theories of 'convergence' between Communist and noncommunist states, that followed them in some quarters in the West, owe much to ideas such as Burnham's, however. With the establishment of communist rule in Eastern Europe another form of new class theory has been developed, primarily by dissidents within communist states, meant to explain the, to them, disillusioning nature and development of those states. There are fundamental differences between the 'global' new class theorists discussed earlier and these 'socialist' new class theorists. The former claimed to be identifying and explaining a world-wide phenomenon; the latter have more restrained and realistic ambitions. The former, especially Burnham, claimed that industrial managers and analogous functionaries were inheriting the earth; the latter believe that the new class is based on the political bureaucracy which forms around the Communist party. The former saw the new class as a phenomenon of the developed world, as a successor to advanced capitalism; the latter see it as a means of bringing rapid industrialization to the less developed areas of the world. And there are many other differences between these two groups of writers and within each group. What is therefore striking is the similarity between the moulds into which their different analyses were poured.

The most famous and politically prominent of the latter writers is Milovan Djilas, a one-time leader and ideologist of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Anyone familiar with Trotsky's post-1923 writings will experience an extraordinary sense of déja vu in tracing Djilas' road through heresy to ultimate apostasy. Djilas' reflections on 'bureaucracy' and 'bureaucratism' began as part of the Yugoslav critique of the Soviet Union after the Cominform split of 1948 and the Rajk trial of 1949. In 1949, Djilas still hoped to
limit criticism of the Soviet Union to foreign policy, to 'relations between Socialist States'.

But by 1950 he had become the most outspoken public critic of the Soviet Union, and in a speech to Belgrade students in March of that year he became the first Party leader to ask publicly whether the Soviet Union was still a socialist state. Djilas explained that the dictatorship of the proletariat could develop in one of two ways: either toward its own disappearance or 'in the direction of strengthening and transformation of bureaucracy into a privileged caste which lives at the expense of society as a whole'.

The latter development, he argued, had occurred in the Soviet Union. Like Trotsky, Djilas was careful to distinguish this claim from a far more dangerous one:

...In the Soviet Union, there are no economic bases for the creation of a new class. What is happening there, the outward manifestations of which we see, does not mean and cannot mean a return to capitalism. This is actually a matter of new phenomena which arose on the ground and within the framework of socialism itself...There we see the creation of a privileged bureaucratic centralism, temporary transformation of the state into a 'force above society'. (Some of the reasons for this are the fact that the U.S.S.R. was for a long time the only socialist country, that it was backward, surrounded by capitalism, that the masses had a relatively weak conscious role in the struggle for socialist building and that there were relatively weak foreign and internal revolutionary forces)...

In November, Djilas published a series of articles on 'Contemporary Themes' which again dealt with 'the phenomenon and essence of the Soviet Union'. Djilas now claimed that rather than exhibiting a 'crisis of socialism', the Soviet system was,

state capitalism...a restoration and counter revolution of a special type...because it does not restore the old individual capitalist ownership...but state (in fact, capitalist) ownership.

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Djilas' position here, as Trotsky could have explained to him, was incoherent. For while he called the Soviet system state capitalism: he had merely advanced from calling the bureaucracy a ruling stratum to calling it a ruling caste. According to the tradition to which both Trotsky and Djilas belonged, however, either the first characterization must be inaccurate or the bureaucracy must be a class. But, as Trotsky's example also reveals, a Communist leader, even a heretical one, has the greatest difficulty in referring to post-revolutionary bureaucracy as a class. In an article entitled 'Class or Caste?' published in April, 1952, Djilas explained the difficulty. He recognised, as Trotsky had, that the Soviet bureaucracy had accumulated many of the advantages of the traditional ruling classes: it had exclusive control over production and distribution; it grabbed 'the lion's share of the surplus for itself' and it lived at the expense of the 'direct producers [who] have no rights'. However, the bureaucracy was not a class, for 'it does not own the means of production in the traditional sense, because ownership is collective rather than individual' and because:

the individual cannot pass his position on to his progeny, nor indeed is his unique set of privileges necessarily passed on to anyone. For the bureaucracy does not reproduce itself as a set of individuals, or as a set of positions. Rather, it perpetuates itself as a body, drawing its members both from its own ranks and from the peasantry and proletariat. If we look at the bureaucracy in this light we can see that it is a new historical phenomenon...''

Since it is not a class, though it shares many of a class's characteristics, Djilas concludes that,

It must be something else, and that can only be a caste. The essential characteristic of a caste is that privileges of all kinds are accorded on the basis of functions performed, and not on the basis of ownership.  

Like Trotsky, Djilas had no doubts about the importance of the characterization one chose:

It is very important, both for us in Yugoslavia and for socialism in general, to be sure of the answer. If the bureaucracy were a new class, its victory could not be prevented; it would be inevitable because it is brought about by objective social processes. Thus, if we were dealing here with a class, a new class, and not a caste, the struggle against the bureaucracy would be futile and utopian, and we who fought against it would be comic, reactionary figures. But since the bureaucracy is not a class, but a reactionary antisocialist tendency that appears in the transition from capitalism to Communism, the struggle against it is revolutionary and progressive. And it can succeed...

Djilas's position was quickly challenged by two Yugoslav Communists, Zvonimir Kristl and Janez Stanovnik, who argued that as the collective owner of the means of production the bureaucracy was the Soviet Union's ruling class, that this had always been the case in the Soviet Union and that it had been the case in Yugoslavia before 1948. According to Kristl:

The emergence of a new class in the Soviet Union... was as important theoretically as politically. It showed the necessity of a 'dialectical critique of Marx, especially of his theory of the transition period and the dictatorship of the proletariat', for there existed 'a separate social-economic system between capitalism and communism'.

1 Ibid., pp.175-176.
2 Ibid, p. 177.
3 A. Ross Johnson, op. cit., p. 108.
Djilas replied:

The truth which Marx affirmed...cannot lightly be ignored. He showed in *Das Kapital* that after capitalism and capitalists no new class can arise or come to power... Even if we assume that Marx was wrong or that he could not see everything in advance, nevertheless the Marxist question remains: Is the formation of a new class on the basis of not only the same forces of production but the same production relations (the exploitation of labor by capital) possible after the expropriation of the capitalists? If that is possible, then why was the expropriation of the bourgeoisie a historical inevitability...

Hitherto, Djilas had been a rather outspoken exponent of the corporate Yugoslav attack on Moscow. In 1953, he took the unprecedented step of shifting his attack from the Soviet Union to Yugoslavia, and in a series of articles which led to his expulsion from the Party, he bitterly attacked the attitudes, behaviour and mores of the Communist leadership and insisted that the main danger was not the bourgeoisie or capitalism but bureaucratic despotism of the Soviet type. His attack was replete with bitter characterizations of bureaucratic behaviour, snobbishness and social exclusiveness, but while Djilas proposed a number of measures to allow greater democracy, he still contented himself with pointing to the danger of bureaucratic perversion of the revolution and did not suggest that a new class had emerged.

In *The New Class* 2, Djilas took this final step, a step Trotsky never took. In other ways, too, he went further in repudiating the movement to which he had given his life than any other comparable Party leader, including Trotsky. An index of how much further than Trotsky he chose to go, can be found by comparing what the two writers were referring to as 'bureaucracy'. When Trotsky attacked the 'bureaucrats' who had betrayed the Revolution, he always distinguished between them and the political leaders such as himself, whose power had been usurped.

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1 quoted in *ibid*, p. 109.
For Djilas, on the other hand, the ruling bureaucracy was the political leadership, and all other strata, including Burnham's managers, were subordinate to it. In other respects, however, Djilas was quite orthodox. He was well aware that a class must be shown to own the means of production before it can be said to rule, and so he explained that:

As defined by Roman law, property constitutes the use, enjoyment, and disposition of material goods. The Communist political bureaucracy uses, enjoys, and disposes of nationalized property... The new class obtains its power, privileges, ideology, and its customs from one specific form of ownership - collective ownership in which the class administers and distributes in the name of the nation and society... To divest Communists of their ownership rights would be to abolish them as a class.

Lest anyone still doubt that the bureaucracy is a ruling class, Djilas shares Rizzi's confidence that the very excesses for which Communist rulers have been responsible decide the issue, for:

If these parties had not at the same time been the beginning of new classes, and if they had not had a special historical role to play, obligatory ideological unity could not have existed in them. Except for the Communist bureaucracy, not a single class or party in modern history has attained complete ideological unity. None had, before, the task of transforming all of society, mostly through political and administrative means. For such a task, a complete, fanatical confidence in the righteousness and nobility of their views is necessary. Such a task calls for exceptional brutal measures against other ideologies and social groups. It also calls for ideological monopoly over society and for absolute unity of the ruling class.

Indeed, while the class had exercised dreadful tyranny over those whom it ruled, it, too, had a historic 'task', though hardly the one predicted by Marx. It had to introduce modern industry to the less developed East. And Djilas occasionally cuts across the outrage he feels by insisting that 'one reason for total tyranny is historical; the people were forced

1 See op. cit., pp. 42-43.
2 Ibid, pp. 44-45.
3 Ibid, pp. 76-77.
to undergo the loss of freedom in the irresistible drive toward economic change.¹

Djilas is particularly interesting because he ran the whole course from orthodoxy to heresy and, after The New Class, to apostasy.² One need not, however, be as politically eminent, nor move as far, as Djilas, to adopt a new class analysis. For dissidents within communist states, and for Marxists elsewhere who are disillusioned with the progress of such states, a new class analysis requires an initial doctrinal heresy, but thereafter can be readily combined with the categories and intellectual baggage which lie to hand. It is thus not surprising, 'no accident', that writers as diverse as the dissident American Trotskyist, Max Shachtman, the Poles, Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski and the Yugoslav philosopher Svetozar Stojanović, should exhibit striking similarities not merely in the form but also in the substance of their analyses.³ Like Trotsky, these authors insist that the October Revolution was a workers' revolution, but they go on to argue that bureaucratic

1 Ibid, p. 98.

2 In his The Unperfect Society, Beyond the New Class, (London, 1969), Djilas argues that the Communist system constitutes a refutation of historical materialism. See pp. 101-02 and 125.

3 Shachtman was leader, initially with Burnham, of a group of American Trotskyists who broke with Trotsky and the majority wing of American Trotskyists in 1940. He took with him the Party journal, The New International, and his articles on the Soviet Union appeared there until the close of the magazine in 1958. These articles have been collected in Max Shachtman, The Bureaucratic Revolution: The Rise of the Stalinist State, (New York, 1962). Kuron and Modzelewski published their 'Open Letter to Communist Party Members' in 1965, after having been expelled from the Party in November of the previous year. They were brought to trial in July, 1965, and sentenced to several years' imprisonment. Their Open Letter is included in George Lavan Weissman, ed., Revolutionary Marxist Students in Poland Speak Out (1964-1968), (New York, 1972). Kuron is again active politically and is a prominent member of the Committee for Workers' Defence (KOR). Stojanović was later a member of the 'Belgrade Eight'. His analysis is contained in 'The Statist Myth of Socialism', Between Ideals and Reality, (New York, 1973), pp. 37-75.
degeneration led to the installation of a new ruling class; Stojanovic, for example, explains that the October Revolution was a 'socialist revolution par excellence, although a new form of class, statist society was born with Stalinism'. Shachtman, constantly wrestling with Trotsky's ghost, developed an ingenious argument to solve the problem of ownership. The capitalist, he explained has individual property rights in the means of production, from which his power derives, and he therefore does not always need immediate control over the political apparatus. The proletarian, on the other hand, since he has no property rights, only comes to own the means of production through his control of the state; deprive him of that and he has nothing. Kuron and Modzelewski and Stojanović are less bothered by the problem of bureaucratic ownership than Shachtman; like Rizzi, they stress that it is collective rather than individual, and that such ownership is not unprecedented.

Shachtman makes another distinction which is very often echoed by those new class theorists who remain socialists: that between property relations and property forms. Trotsky, Shachtman argued, was beguiled by the property forms in the Soviet Union - state ownership - but ignored the real relationships between groups, which had changed completely, notwithstanding these forms, since 1918:

...what Trotsky called the political rule of the working class was actually its class rule; - this had been brought to an end by the counter-revolution of the Stalinist bureaucracy - roughly in the period between 1933 and 1936 - which established new property relations while retaining more or less intact the old property forms (i.e. state property) and thereby set up a new, reactionary, hitherto unprecedented state with a new ruling class. 2

1 Stojanović, op. cit., p. 38.
Kuron and Modzelewski similarly distinguish between state and what they call social ownership:

...The concept of state property can conceal different social contents, depending on the class character of the state... State ownership of the means of production is only a property form, the property belongs to the social groups controlling the state... Political power is the power over the process of production and distribution.

And Stojanovic, ostensibly writing of the Soviet Union, also explains that:

So long as the new state apparatus represents the interests of the working class and the labouring masses as a whole, Marxists can consider the system built upon these foundations to be socialist (more specifically, state socialist). However, it is well known that the state apparatus, from its very inception has a second tendency as well - to emancipate itself from society, to become its master and to give the pursuit of its own interests priority over all others. When this indeed does happen, in my opinion, it is no longer possible to speak of state socialism, but only of statism.

All of these writers agree that the system they criticize is no longer 'genuine' socialism and has outlived its 'historical' purpose - to force industrialization. It is now an exploitative system destined to fall and to be replaced by genuine socialist relations of production. According to Kuron and Modzelewski, who are particularly mechanistic in this regard, the bureaucracy's 'task', and therefore its 'class goal' was to increase production, at the expense of consumption. Beyond a certain level of productivity, however:

Keeping production as the goal of production after the construction of the industrial base has been completed - under conditions of industrial 'saturation' - creates a contradiction between the already developed industrial capacity and the low level of consumption.

1 Kuron and Modzelewski, op. cit., p. 18.
2 Stojanović, op. cit., p. 43.
3 Kuron and Modzelewski, op. cit., p. 43.
The result of this contradiction will be economic crisis within the existing system, and the result of *that* is predicted in familiar terms:

This general crisis of social relations flows from the fact that the productive relations, on which the power of the bureaucracy is based, have become an obstacle to the development of the economy and the source of its crisis, and that all segments of society are without hope of progress or of satisfying their minimum class interests within the framework of the system. Thus, no more than the economic crisis can be overcome on the basis of present productive relations, can the general social crisis be overcome within the framework of present social relations, which only aggravate the crisis; it can be overcome only by the abolition of the prevailing production and social relationships. *The only road to progress is through revolution.*

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### Marxism and Theories of the New Class

The analyses which I have discussed clearly differ from each other in many ways. In particular, there are sharp differences over the nature of the groups which make up the new class. One line of such theories, deriving originally from Bakunin and Machajski, suggests that the source of the new class's distinctiveness is its education and training; this strongly Saint-Simonian claim lies at the heart of 'technocratic' new class theories and is a strong element in the 'managerial' thesis. Within this line, however, one would have to distinguish sharply between two sub-strands. On the one hand, Saint-Simon, many 'new-skilled class' Marxists and, for that matter, convergence theorists in general, tend to argue that the skilled owe their positions to industrial and technological developments in modern society which have occurred independently of their will or their plans. In Bakunin and Machajski, on the other hand, the

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1 *Ibid*, p. 68.
story is altogether more voluntarist: Marxists intend to make over the state to serve their interests, and they must be opposed.

A second line of new class theory, of which Trotsky is an important precursor, suggests a new class which has little in common with the intellectuals attacked by Bakunin and Machajski; the last accusation which Trotsky would have made against Stalin is that he led a despotism of the intellectuals! This line draws on the rich and almost wholly bad associations of the word 'bureaucrat': pervasive, parasitic, thugs, power-wielders, administrators of a brutal and wholly unimaginative kind. This line usually stresses the power and control position of the new class vis-à-vis the masses rather than their intrinsic sources of distinctiveness. Again this line has its voluntarists and those who, like Djilas and Kuron and Modzelewski, believed that this class originally had a historic task to perform. Among the voluntarists there are some who believe that establishing the new class was the aim of Lenin and his followers, though this accusation comes usually and more readily from outside the tradition altogether. New class theorists more usually argue that there was an unforeseen degeneration, that the revolution had been betrayed by a rising class of power-hungry bureaucrats.

These two lines - the 'technocratic' and the 'bureaucratic' - can also be interwoven, as they are in Laurat's suggestions, which Stojanović repeats, that 'bureaucrats' form the first stage of the rise of the new class, and then give way to 'technocrats'.

Given these and other differences between new class theorists, the amount they have in common is all the more striking. They all pick out a group of power - or skill-wielders and all insist that, although Marx did not predict the importance of this group, it has now become dominant. They all claim that the group with which they are concerned has displaced either or both of the protagonists in Marx's historical
drama: all agree that it has displaced the proletariat in the socialist states, and those who claim to detect the convergence of capitalism and communism argue that it has dispossessed, or is in the process of dispossessing, capitalists in the capitalist states. Finally, and most important of all, they are all convinced that the group on which they focus is a class which owns or threatens to own the means of production, and that this matters; that only classes can rule a society, and that the group they discuss is a ruling class.

It is not surprising that concepts such as 'bureaucracy' and 'technocracy' should have been prominent in new class theories. The massive twentieth century growth of bureaucratic personnel, on the one hand, and the increasing importance of those with training and technical skills, on the other, are crucially important developments in modern societies. Orthodox Marxists frequently underplay the significance of such developments, by comparison with the alleged importance of capitalists and proletarians; disenchanted Marxists, used to emphasizing the importance of large-scale social groupings, are well placed to notice and draw attention to such developments.

It is not obvious, however, that analysis is aided by a determination to identify a society's ruling class, old or new. Where analysis requires careful distinctions between power-wielders and executors, leaders and led, power and indispensability, new class analysis tends to blur these crucial distinctions. It can also serve to overemphasize the importance and power of the designated group, at the expense of forces which fit such theories less well, such as individuals or small groups of political power-holders. As we saw in the preceding chapter, for example, vis-à-vis the Russian population in the 1930s, the Russian 'bureaucracy' had awesome power; vis-à-vis Stalin, millions of 'bureaucrats' discovered after 1937, it had distinctly less. Within the bureaucracy itself, Burnham's
technical managers were far less powerful than their political masters.

In the face of the diversity of 'new class' theories, and the difficulties they face, what, then, accounts for their persistence and the vocabulary and preoccupations which they so manifestly share? Rizzi's often repeated charge of plagiarism against Burnham can be quickly dismissed. It is unlikely to be true of Burnham - Rizzi, for example, had very little to say about changes within the modern corporation - and it certainly cannot be generalized to other new class theorists. Very few people have been able to obtain, let alone, read, Rizzi's book, and, with the exception of his discussion of the Soviet Union, they have missed little. Another suggestion which has been pressed strongly in the case of the early Yugoslav critique of Stalinism, is that the Yugoslavs, and one might argue, mutatis mutandis, later heretics such as the Chinese, have taken up Trotsky's arguments, for as Plamenatz puts it well:

He has forged weapons that no liberal could use effectively, but they are ready to hand for every communist who quarrels with Moscow. The Yugoslavs are already using them; and they won't use them the less freely because they denounce their maker. This seems to me to catch a good deal of the truth, but it does not explain 'new class' analyses which preceded Trotsky's arguments or the special importance that Trotsky himself and those who argued with him attached to those arguments. Moreover, in the Yugoslav case itself, it is not clear that the protagonists had read or were influenced by Trotsky's writings. ²

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More recently, it has been argued that new class theories are adopted in an attempt to influence revolutionary action, that these theories should be assessed primarily in terms of their expressive and mobilizing functions, and as a protest against patterns of social organization which are assumed in other theories of industrial society. In terms of the Marxist theory of history it obviously makes more sense to symbolize relations of dominance as class relations than to attempt to mobilize the masses against abstractions such as 'bureaucratic deformations'.

This 'expressive' element certainly has been important in many new class theories, but it seems to me that it is only one use among several to which such theories can be put, rather than an explanation for them. Trotsky and, for some years, Djilas resisted calling the bureaucracy a class precisely because they believe that classes are borne by objective historical forces, that they have historical 'tasks' to perform, and that resistance to a 'new class' would be futile. Again, except for the penultimate chapter, which contradicts the arguments of the whole of the book, Rizzi used his 'new class' analysis to argue that 'bureaucratic collectivism' was inevitable and should not be resisted by workers, even in Italy and Germany; only capitalists because they were obsolete, and Jews because they were capitalists, should be. Nor did Burnham draw revolutionary lessons from his analysis.

New-class theories can be used for a variety of purposes, though often and within Communist countries necessarily, they will be used by opponents of the existing rulers. But their common features do not stem from the uses to which they are put. Rather they share what they do because they are a natural, though not the only possible, way in which a Marxist heretic can analyze a society, especially one with growing numbers of 'bureaucrats' and 'technocrats', from within a tradition which provides a restricted range of fundamental categories.

Terms which are used in theoretical discussion, polemic and popular talk, commonly have fairly 'open texture': it is frequently difficult to distinguish the meanings of such terms from those of others dealing with related phenomena, and a single term can be used in a variety of senses. This is manifestly true of 'bureaucracy'. As we have seen, throughout its history the term has been peculiarly malleable, useful in polemic and only with difficulty dusted down and imported into the 'value-free' academy. It is rich in associations, both for those who have used it and for those to whom they appeal. The term's texture has not 'closed' perceptibly in recent years nor will it, so long as bureaucracies evolve, and remain important features of modern states.

It would be unwise to discard the term as too vague, or too cluttered with different meanings, to be interesting. On the one hand, a writer's conception of bureaucracy and its role often reveals, like a kind of Rorschach test, as much about the writer's thought or about the tradition within which he writes, as it does about the phenomena with which he purports to deal. On the other hand, unlike blots of ink, the various phenomena to which the term has been applied, are of profound importance in modern societies. The perceptiveness and accuracy of what a writer has to say about 'bureaucracy' is, consequently, of more than psychological interest.
It is obvious, merely from a glance at the writings discussed in this thesis, that there is no single, comprehensive, 'Marxist' attitude to, or analysis of, bureaucracy. Moreover, though they are hardly a random or uninfluential sample, the authors I have discussed certainly do not exhaust the field. However, their Marxism is not a cloak worn lightly and easily discarded, nor is it merely a fashionable pose. They all belong, or belonged, to a tradition which regarded Marx's thought as its source, a tradition which, though it allowed a fair amount of tampering and reinterpretation, took this source as quite unparalleled in insight and authority and was profoundly influenced by it. This common lineage has led to the recurrence of certain preoccupations, limitations and difficulties in their views of society and politics; and though there are, of course, many 'Marxisms', I do not consider it likely, or even very plausible, that these recurrent patterns find no reflection or repetition in the thought of other writers deeply influenced by Marx.

As we have seen, the concept of bureaucracy did not play a primary role in Marx's own analysis of contemporary society; in his portrayal of the future society, it was altogether swept from the stage. By the time we come to Trotsky and the new class theorists, there has been a striking about-face: bureaucracy has come to play a central and ultimately the central role. Marx contemptuously, if not convincingly, dismissed Bakunin's arguments in *Statism and Anarchy*, but Marx never became involved in long and agonizing debates over the precise role and social character of bureaucracy in pre- and post-revolutionary society. Some of his successors were ultimately interested in little else.

One obvious reason for this shift in emphasis is that the world has changed. Bureaucratic institutions and personnel, it need no longer be argued, are more prominent and their effects more pervasive than they
were in nineteenth-century Europe, or Russia, and no broadly conceived 
social and political theory which left them out of account could now be 
taken seriously. It might be argued, then, that Marxists have simply 
responded to these changes, that they have merely had to look around them 
to realize that bureaucracy now required closer attention than earlier 
Marxists had given it.

This suggestion, which focuses on the facts outside the theory 
rather than the theory itself, is plausible, yet it leaves a good deal 
out of account. First of all, it says nothing of the continuing reluct-
ance of many Marxists to give a central place to bureaucracy in their 
analysis of society: if 'heretical' Marxists seize on the importance of 
bureaucracy in the modern world, 'orthodox' Marxists have traditionally 
not done so.

Marxists have been well aware of the existence, and some have 
stressed the importance, of state institutions and personnel. Apart from 
the fact that Marx wrote a fair amount about these matters, had he not 
considered 'bureaucracy' incompatible with socialism, he would not have 
come to insist that it be smashed. Yet, the following passages from 
the contemporary Marxist, Nicos Poulantzas, though verging on caricature 
and at this time of day slightly bizarre, are not devoid of basis in 
Marx's own writings on capitalist society:

By power, we shall designate the capacity of a social class to realize its specific objective interests. 1

... The various social institutions, in particular the institutions of the state, do not, strictly speaking, have any power. Institutions, considered from the point of view of power, can be related only to social classes which hold power... 2

Marx and Engels adopt an unvarying theoretical line on this problem: this relative autonomy of the bureaucracy from the dominant classes is absolutely and exhaustively determined by the relations between the capitalist state and the class struggle. Since the bureaucracy has no power of its own, its relative autonomy is none other than

2. Ibid, p.115
that which devolves on this state in the power relations of the class struggle; state power is held by classes, since the state is in fact only a power centre.¹

Göran Therborn has recently argued, on similar lines, that 'the state as such has no power; it is an institution where social power is concentrated and exercised'.² Much of this argument follows from Poulantzas' initial, explicitly stipulative, definition of 'power'. But the stipulation is not theoretically innocent, nor is it simply a travesty of Marx's thought on class or bureaucracy.

Again, when one considers how confident Marxists were that bureaucracy would not be required after the revolution, the following remark of Isaac Deutscher, whose Marxism survived every discouragement, has considerable force:

As I looked through some of the classical Marxist writings on bureaucracy I was struck by how relatively optimistically - one might say lightmindedly - Marxists approached the problem.³

This 'lightmindedness', I have argued, is not confined to Marxists: Saint-Simon, who was far more explicitly and perceptively concerned with the imperatives of administration than Marx was, shared it. On the other hand, as Weber demonstrated, one did not need the experience of Stalinism to dispel it. The condition itself deserves some comment, for it did not die with Marx, nor was it without consequence for subsequent attempts by Marxists to analyze bureaucracy in both 'capitalist' and 'socialist' societies.

Thirdly, it is also significant that those Marxists who have sought to give prominence to powerful bureaucracies in their theory have not found it an easy matter. On the contrary, for many Marxists,

1. Ibid, p.351.
the attempt to find a central role for bureaucracy has burst apart commitments and beliefs which hitherto had appeared interconnected and compatible, if it has not cast them adrift altogether. In this context it is not at all accidental that, as Albrow noticed, 'a theoretical dispute over bureaucracy has so often been the ostensible reason for many partings of the way in the Communist world - between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, Trotsky and Stalin, Stalin and Tito, Tito and Djilas';

the list could, of course, be extended.

Finally, and in the light of the foregoing, paradoxically, the increased importance of bureaucracy in contemporary society does not by itself account for the overemphasis on the concept which one finds in the writings of people such as Trotsky, Rizzi and many other new-class theorists. While it would be foolish indeed to consider the career of 'bureaucracy' within Marxism in vacuo, it would be equally foolish to attempt any such consideration without attending to the logic of the theory itself, to gaps within it, and to constraints which it imposes.

2 Marxism, Bureaucrats and Bureaux

A number of contemporary Marxists have recognized, and some are seeking to rectify, the lack of a highly developed theory of politics within Marxism. Colletti, for example, calls on Marxists to 'realize that Marx's own discussion on the State never developed very far,' and he has sought 'to draw attention to a particular fact - the weakness and sparse development of political theory in Marxism ... the political movement inspired by Marxism has been virtually innocent of political

1. Albrow, op.cit., p.78.
theory'. Miliband, similarly, has pointed out that:

it is as well to recognise that ... 'the corpus of Marxism' has very definite limitations in terms of the construction or reconstruction of a Marxist politics - one of these limitations is that available classical writings are simply silent or extremely perfunctory over major issues of politics and political theory: there is a limit to what can properly be squeezed out of a paragraph, a phrase, an allusion or a metaphor.2

The absence of a highly developed Marxist theory of politics, and the difficulties and obscurities of such theories as exist, are general problems, and stem from a variety of sources. Among these sources, one is especially important for our theme, for it is central not merely to the revolutionary aspirations of Marxists but to Marxist social theory generally and to Marxist consideration of bureaucracy in particular. This is the emphasis on what are regarded as the sources of political arrangements. A fundamental, almost defining element of Marx's thought is the insistence that political and administrative arrangements cannot be successfully analyzed or understood in isolation from their socio-economic context. This claim is, of course, not unique to Marxism: Saint-Simon made it and, though some writers have disputed


this, it was also central to Max Weber's social and political theory. There is nothing inherently 'vulgar' about the claim; on the contrary, one of the most salutary features of Marxism is the attention it draws to the powerful and pervasive influence of context in specific areas of social life, such as politics, law and administration. One has only to read the myopic writings of so much of 'organization theory', for example, or pick at random a text on the law of property or contract, to feel grateful for the Marxist reminder that no institutions exist or develop in a social vacuum.

1. Weber has been criticized by a number of authors influenced by Althusser for working within a 'problematic of the subject', that is, for focusing on the motives and actions of social actors. To Althusser, on the other hand, the true 'subjects' (in the sense of constitutive subjects of the process) are ... not these occupants or functionaries [individual capitalists], are not, despite all appearances, the 'obviousness' of the 'given' of naive anthropology, 'concrete individuals', 'real men' - but the definition and distribution of these places and functions. The true 'subjects' are these definers and distributors: the relations of production. (L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Reading Capital, (London, 1970), p.180).

This criticism seems to me to be completely misplaced. One does not have to choose between these two 'problematics'. If one is not a structural or an economic determinist one can pay due regard to the social and economic order in which individuals act without disregarding them as actors, and this is precisely what Weber does in his discussions of the 'iron cage' of capitalism, in his pre-occupation with social relations in Economy and Society (See John Rex, 'Typology and objectivity: a comment on Weber's four sociological methods' in Arun Sahay (ed.) Max Weber and Modern Sociology, (London, 1971), p.27 and in the following passage which Turner quotes from Economy and Society:

Industrialization was not impeded by Islam as the religion of individuals ... but by the religiously determined structure of the Islamic states, their officialdom and their jurisprudence. (Eas, vol. 3, p.1095, quoted in Bryan S. Turner 'The Structuralist critique of Weber's sociology', British Journal of Sociology, vol.28, 1977, p.10). Turner argues that Weber was inconsistent and vacillated between both problematicats, but quite apart from what Weber said he was doing in his early methodological essays, in what he actually wrote in social theory, I do not see that he needed to, or should have made a choice.
In broad terms, then, a reminder of the importance of context in human affairs is unexceptionable. In Marxism, however, it has rarely remained a mere reminder, nor has it been cast in broad terms. Marxists have been convinced that a specific part of the context is more important than other parts, and that the context, thus limited, is more worthy of close attention than, say, the internal imperatives, constraints, or available alternatives among legal and administrative arrangements. This ordering of priorities has frequently had the effect of directing Marxists' attention to social forces which other theorists have ignored or underplayed; it has, on the other hand, also led to certain recurrent theoretical difficulties and limitations.

In approaching these problems, it might be useful to recall and distinguish two foci of attention of writers on 'bureaucracy' which have been prominent almost since the term was coined: one is officials; the other is institutional and organizational structures and arrangements. Marxists, and not only they, have fairly indiscriminately used 'bureaucracy' to refer to either or both. When, for example, Marx and Lenin insisted that the existing state must be 'smashed', they left unclear whether they meant that the existing forms of organization, existing records, files and procedures, were simply to be done away with, or whether all existing personnel were to be sacked, or both. These are quite distinct choices, and a lot might depend on which of the three is ultimately adopted. In exposition, it would be pedantic and not especially illuminating repeatedly to insist on distinctions which were simply not being made. Let us, however, look now at bureaucrats and later at bureaux.

(i) Bureaucrats, Classes and Political Elites

In large part, as we have seen, the secondary role which Marx attributed to bureaucrats was derived from the conviction, which he
shared with Adam Smith, Saint-Simon and much of nineteenth-century liberalism, that the motor of social and economic change lay outside the state, in the activities and clashes of social classes. The Bonapartist state, pathologically powerful though it was, nevertheless served the interests of the bourgeoisie. ' Asiatic' society lacked class struggle and was dominated by an omnipotent state: it was therefore static, bereft of internal mechanisms for development, its ' Chinese walls' destined to collapse before the ' heavy artillery' of the European bourgeoisie.

Marx's conviction that social classes are pre-eminent in society, that where they exist the state is necessarily subordinate to them, and where they are lacking society is static, had two important effects on later Marxist thought about bureaucracy. Firstly, though Marxists might revile bureaucracy and bureaucrats as much and as fiercely as anarchists did, they did not regard them as centrally important elements of contemporary social structures. The existence of powerful bureaucracies might raise important tactical or even strategic considerations for revolutionaries, just as the fact that one's opponents have rifles rather than sabres might affect one's plans. On the view that the basic constituents of, and opponents in, society are social classes, however, their ' weapons' can be regarded as secondary in theoretical importance; bureaucrats' masters are far more important than the bureaucrats themselves. This kind of sentiment was nicely expressed by Aneurin Bevan, in another context and with a quite different analogy, during the Suez crisis: Bevan stopped questioning the Foreign Minister, Selwyn Lloyd, when Anthony Eden appeared in the House, and he remarked, ' why should I question the monkey when I can question the organ grinder?'.

It is important to make clear what I am not claiming here. Many contemporary Marxists have sought to demonstrate that Marx was not vulgar, that his view of the relationship between social classes and bureaucracy was not 'mechanistic'. Marx, it is stressed, did not regard bureaucrats
as completely passive and obedient instruments of a ruling class. He had a subtle and sophisticated conception of the relationships within and between social classes themselves, and between social classes and the state. This is all true. One can point to several passages in Marx's works which are not particularly sophisticated, but there is little doubt that in a number of writings, in particular, the 18th Brumaire, Marx developed a very complex version of historical materialism, one in which, to say the least, the state was regarded as having a great deal of room in which to transact the business of the ruling class. However, for someone interested in Marxist analyses of bureaucracy, the question of precisely what view Marx had of the relationship between classes and bureaucracies is not very important. For even on the most complicated 'orthodox' accounts of this relationship, bureaucracy still, except in brief situations of crisis, serves classes, at least 'in the last instance'. If one's concern is with those who actually or potentially call the tune, and if one believes that, however strong or intelligent they might be, monkeys cannot replace organ grinders, then one has little cause to be concerned with them. Marxists have had a great deal to say about economic classes, and, more recently, much to say about the nature of the links between classes and the state. Only in extremis, however, have they turned their full attention to analysis of the state and of officials.

A second result of the Marxist emphasis on classes is evident in the writings of those Marxists, such as Trotsky and the new class theorists, who have paid special attention to bureaucracy. Their worry is that if monkeys really do appear to have supplanted organ grinders, then perhaps they really are organ grinders. Thus Trotsky, the new class theorists, and the theorists of 'state capitalism', notwithstanding their many disagreements, are involved in the same, somewhat limiting enterprise.
They are not concerned to question whether major social and economic changes must be associated with the rule of mass social groupings, or whether only one kind of social grouping can cause such changes. The special emphasis which they give to phenomena such as the growth in numbers and importance of bureaucrats, managers, or technocrats, then, stems ultimately from the same source as Marx's relative lack of emphasis on such phenomena: the conception of history as basically the arena of class struggles.

It is unfortunate that so much Marxist discussion of bureaucracy has been directed along one or other of these two rather narrow paths. On the one hand, the assumption that bureaucracies must serve the interests of a ruling class is untestable in many of the forms in which it is presented, and particularly in Engels' reliance, popular once again, on 'the last instance'. Where it is presented in testable form, there is no reason to believe that it is true. One might, of course, often discover that bureaucracies serve the interests of economically dominant classes, and Marx's analysis of Bonapartism shows brilliantly how this might be the case even when it is not immediately apparent. But there is no reason to assume it: other plausible analyses of Bonapartism, for example, which give more weight to strictly political reasons for Louis Napoleon's success, are possible,¹ and, more generally, the claim that bureaucracies are typically obliged to serve economically powerful classes is less axiomatic than many Marxists appear to believe. Though Karl Popper simplifies a little, his conclusion remains apposite:

He [Marx] and the Marxists see economic power everywhere. Their argument runs: he who has the money has the power; for if necessary, he can buy guns and even gangsters. But this is a roundabout argument. In fact it contains an admission that the man who has the gun has the power. And if he who has the gun becomes aware of this, then it may not be long before he has both the gun and the money.²

On the other hand, insistence on the pre-eminence of classes and the need to identify a ruling class, is something of a straitjacket even when attempts are made to accommodate the importance of new social groups. As I argued with regard to Trotsky and the new class theorists, social groups whose importance is obvious and fairly novel, such as 'bureaucrats', 'managers' and 'technocrats', can often be taken, through a 'redirection' of the Marxist focus on social classes, to constitute a new ruling class in situations where their importance is not equivalent to power, and where more traditional, quite unSaint-Simonian forms of power, such as sacking, gaoling, imposition of exile, or execution, retain their effectiveness.

The first half of the twentieth century has in a real sense been dominated by bureaucrats; their numbers and functions have grown at unprecedented rates. The second half of this century, at least in industrially developed societies, dependent as they are on planning, technology and science, is likely, as Saint-Simon predicted, to be dominated by wielders of technical expertise. However, neither of these groups is particularly well characterized as a ruling class; in both cases Weber's distinction between indispensability and power is crucial. Stalin's 'bureaucrats', I have argued, resembled a quivering jelly, rapidly being devoured, more than they resembled a coherent class, and though they did, in Weber's sense, exercise Herrschaft der Beamten, they were not capable of Beamtenherrschaft. More generally, though bureaucracies have always been involved, no bureaucracy by itself has ever modernized or industrialized a 'developing country' - and yet this is arguably the most important social process of the last two centuries. Nor do the skills of technocrats necessarily ensure them power. Indeed, Michel Crozier has argued persuasively that such power as they have is a peculiarly chancy and precarious asset:

... The invasion of all domains by rationality, of course, gives power to the expert who is the agent of this progress. But the expert's success is constantly self-defeating. The rationalization process gives him power, but the end results of rationalization curtail this power. As soon as a field is well-covered, as soon as the first intuitions and innovations can be translated into rules and programs, the expert's power disappears.

As a matter of fact, experts have power only on the front line of progress - which means they have a constantly shifting and fragile power. We should like to argue even that it can be less and less consolidated in modern times, in as much as more and more rationalized processes can be operated by non-experts. Of course, experts will fight to prevent the rationalization of their own tricks of the trade. But contrary to the common belief, the accelerated rate of change that characterizes our period makes it more difficult for them to resist rationalization. Their bargaining power is constantly diminishing.

The distinction between indispensability, or at least usefulness, and power is analytically of the first importance, though there are, of course, many instances where these assets reinforce each other. In many contemporary societies, however, relatively small groups of political leaders have succeeded in harnessing the power which modern bureaucracies afford, without ceding this power to the bureaucrats themselves, or wielding it primarily in their interests. Confronted by the unprecedented growth and importance of 'bureaucrats' and 'technocrats', it is easy to underrate or obscure the extraordinary power which certain political elites have been able to amass, particularly in this century and particularly in some of the societies which have most stimulated new class theories. For the twentieth century is not merely the era of 'the bureaucratization of the world'; it is also the century of totalitarian 'movement' regimes, which rely, certainly, on the skills

of experts and on the routines of bureaucrats, but are in no way subordinate to them. In the past sixty years, the world has witnessed examples of unparalleled use of political power, exercised through but also over bureaucracies. Pace Hannah Arendt, this is as true of the Nazis' domination of German 'bureaucrats' as it is of Stalinism.

In both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union a group of political leaders, in part characterized in terms of its ability to employ and direct bureaucrats for political goals, had power which, apart from defeat in war, was unchallengeable by anyone or any group outside the leadership. In both cases, bureaucrats were a vital instrument, and source, of the elite's power. But just as Trotsky was wrong to attribute Stalinism to 'the bureaucracy', so in Germany, as Stephen Miller has pointed out, it may be that the routine administration of murder is more horrible to contemplate than the massacres of barbarian hordes, but Jews and Gypsies were murdered because the 'final solution' was the chief item on the Nazi agenda, not because Germany was knee-deep in bureaucratization.


2. Stephen Miller, *op.cit.*, p.207. Though those who consider it crucial to identify the 'ruling class' of a society are particularly prone to underestimate political elites, they are not alone. As I mentioned above (pp.138-39), Weber too at times ignored his distinction between power and indispensability. Burin appears unaware that Weber made such a distinction, but he is nonetheless right to criticize Weber's exaggerated estimate of the political importance of technical expertise. "The 'political master,'" he said, "finds himself in the position of the 'dilettante' who stands opposite the expert". And with an eye on none other than Frederick the Great, he added that "the absolute monarch is powerless opposite the superior knowledge of the bureaucratic expert." Applied to 18th century absolutism such a statement may be debatable. Applied to the dilettante Hitler, whose contempt for experts as men was only matched by the success with which he used them as his tools, it becomes absurd. (*op. cit.*, p.43.)
In this century, precisely because of the enormous growth in the size, power and pervasiveness of the modern bureaucratic state, that state has become a crucial source of power for those who can control it. This is generally true, but it is especially important in those societies where a party has gained a monopoly of political power, and the independent power of social classes and of other potentially 'constraining' forces, such as parties, parliaments, the press, trade unions and an independent judiciary, has been, at least for a period, effectively destroyed. One problem, and an important one, is how such a political monopoly comes to be attained. A history of 'oriental despotism' is clearly helpful, but it is not essential. Once a monopoly has been attained, however, a quite separate issue arises: what scope for independence and for influencing the subsequent course of history does such a monopoly allow? The experience of recent decades is that it allows very great scope indeed, and that where this scope has been realized, bureaucrats are likelier to be the servants of rulers - perhaps officious and often brutal servants - rather than rulers themselves.

To point to the extreme power of leaders of a one-party state - power which is especially pervasive where the economy is state-owned - is not to suggest that this power is unlimited. Convergence theorists and latter-day Saint-Simonians are thus correct in pointing to the tensions which can develop between strict political control and the imperatives of administration and technical innovation. But the existence of tensions does not guarantee the mode in which they will be resolved or, indeed, that they will be resolved at all. Lenin recognised such tensions, but little was done to ease them. The post-Stalin leadership of the
USSR has similarly had to grapple with problems which the much vaunted 'scientific and technical revolution' poses for Party control.\(^1\) The pressures are obvious and acute, but there is, to say the least, no secular trend toward the supplanting of the Party by technical experts and administrators. Indeed the peremptory manner in which the CPSU's 'leading role' and administrative prerogatives were reasserted in the light of alarm at the Czech events of 1968,\(^2\) is an instructive reminder of the power of political leaders in societies where external constraints are few.

Questions about the interrelations between political elites, bureaucrats and social classes are exceedingly complex, and cannot be answered at an abstract, supra-historical or supra-social, level or by imprecise invocations of the 'relative autonomy' (how relative? how autonomous?) of politics. In some societies, such as eighteenth and nineteenth century England, social classes enjoyed a great deal of independence from political leaders and bureaucrats, and dominant classes provided the personnel of political and bureaucratic leadership, and maintained considerable political authority. In other societies, such as the 'Oriental despotisms', political rulers faced few societal constraints from outside the polity. In Russia, for example, from the Mongol invasion onwards, it was the state which was central, and social strata

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were subservient to it. According to Wittfogel, lack of internal balance of forces, within these 'states[s] stronger than society' typically resulted in a 'cumulative tendency of unchecked power', and in personal autocracy.¹ Eisenstadt has analysed a very wide range of 'historical bureaucratic polities' and though in these societies the polity had considerable autonomy, the interplay between rulers, bureaucrats, and social strata led to extremely varying results.² Bureaucrats vied repeatedly, on the one hand with political rulers, and on the other with social strata, religious groups, local notables and so on. In a passage which sounds almost platitudinous, but is in fact a programme for detailed research, Eisenstadt points out:

> the bureaucracy's political orientations in a centralized bureaucratic political system can be fully understood only in connection with the bureaucracy's status and function in the social structure, and its relation to the constellation of political forces within that structure ... Also we have observed that the social and political conditions affecting in any society, the development of the political orientations of the bureaucracy were not fixed; rather, they tended to change according to the relative strengths of the social forces and the outcome of the political struggle among them.³

These reminders of the obvious are not without contemporary relevance.

In all contemporary states - 'pluralist' and 'totalitarian', 'developed' and 'developing' - the importance of bureaucrats is too manifest to be insisted on or denied. Compared with other social groups, bureaucrats stand in a very special relationship to the wielders of political power. Bureaucrats enable such power to be exercised. Though political power might grow 'out of the barrel

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³ Ibid, pp.292-93.
of a gun', it can no longer be exercised over substantial periods of time without professional executors and administrators. In both modern and 'modernizing' states, governments do more than ever before, and few political decisions can be carried through without the activity of large number of officials employed by administrative organizations.

Bureaucrats interpret directives and translate them into regulations; they give effect to political decisions and enforce them. Moreover, bureaucrats do not merely transmit orders from rulers to ruled; they affect considerably the decisions actually taken and the results these decisions ultimately have. High-level bureaucrats commonly delimit the 'options' among which leaders choose, and the range of options presented will frequently be related to the interests and preferences of other bureaucrats. The very fact that bureaucrats have been called upon to perform such a wide range of functions has its own consequences: bureaucracies have established procedures and routines which limit the ways in which decisions will be carried out, and, indeed, the sorts of decisions which can realistically be made. In most bureaucratic states, bureaucracies have sought to resist attempts to change their procedures, reduce their numbers, or abolish established departments. In modern states they have been highly successful in this. As Robert Brown has pointed out, 'large, complex, centralized bureaucracies are so organized as to defend themselves -

1 See S.N. Eisenstadt, op. cit., esp. at pp.159-72.
2 For a fascinating account of one such 'success', see Leslie Chapman, Your Disobedient Servant, (London, 1978).
maintain certain of their properties in a steady state - by various administrative devices against both external and internal disruptive forces'.

None of this should be surprising, and it should not be ignored given the extraordinary increases in the size and scope of operations of bureaucracies, the difficulties of supervising many of their activities, and the amount of negotiating and 'mediating' between elites and representatives of social groups, which bureaucrats do. However, analysis of these activities is not necessarily furthered by using the fairly blunt instrument of class analysis. The existence of systematic and institutionalized hierarchy within existing bureaucracies, about which the young Marx wrote perceptively, often makes it difficult to talk sensibly about the 'interests' of a bureaucracy en bloc. Moreover, individual departments, particularly those involved in social welfare services, often distinguish sharply between their own interests, or those of their 'clients' and those of their superiors, and in the modern 'welfare states' this tendency is unlikely to diminish. On the other hand, particularly where bureaucratic recruitment is open to a wide range of social groups, the existence of regular procedures for promotion through the hierarchy makes internal power struggles quite unlike, and to a considerable extent unrelated to, conflicts of class. In any event, in societies with long- and well-established traditions of professional service, bureaucracies, like armies, will often be extremely reluctant to supplant political leaders, and will, as Weber noted, continue 'impersonally' to serve while political leaders supplant each other.

Twentieth century social and political theory will be unable to ignore bureaucracies. It is not evident, however, that theory will gain a great deal either from assuming that bureaucrats inevitably stand in the shadow of social classes, or from a determination to show that bureaucrats cast just such shadows themselves.

(ii) Bureaucracy and Administration

Emphasis on the context in which bureaucracies operate has not merely influenced the attention which Marxists have given to bureaucrats; it has also influenced Marxists' treatment of administration and administrative organizations. Certainly, in order to understand the development, nature and consequences of organizational forms, it is necessary to attend, not merely to organizations themselves, but to the environments in which they exist and have to operate. This point has been readily appreciated by other macro-sociologists, such as Weber, whose interest, like that of Marx, has not been in bureaucracies for their own sake, but in the role which they play in economics, politics and society. The point has, after some delay, filtered through to 'mainstream' organization theory. Contemporary organization theorists have shown, for example, that an organization's environment has potent effects on the amount and quality of information available to organizational decision-makers, on relative effectiveness of different sorts of administrative structures and strategies, on the resources available to the organization, and on much else besides.  

Organizations, it is now being increasingly stressed, are 'open' rather than 'closed' systems; few writers are any longer surprised that an attempt to approximate the Weberian ideal type of bureaucracy in, say, Turkey or Iran might lead to 'dysfunctional', or at least unexpected, consequences.¹

Yet, as Weber insisted so strongly, context is not all. Administrative institutions, like legal ones, are not infinitely malleable, and if one is obliged to handle many complex tasks efficiently and on a large scale, the administrative options available are not unlimited. However, when one seeks to address administrative questions, one is faced with the fact that, as a Danish political scientist has recently observed:

Marxism lacks a theory about the inner structure of organizations, and about the relationship between this structure and the efficiency of organizations. Marxism is first and foremost a theory about external conditions, i.e., material and structural political conditions on which organizations are dependent. If we concern ourselves with a detailed analysis of organizations, Marxist theory, as it has traditionally been formulated, does not give us many useful starting points.²

At first sight, this claim might appear extraordinary, and false. After all, in their repeated criticisms of 'bureaucracy', Marx and Lenin were not referring only to officials, but were attacking governmental institutions and forms of organization. In his first attacks on Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx was not merely interested in those who held government posts, but was concerned to analyze the institutional sources of their behaviour, such as

1 See especially the articles by Presthus which are cited in the bibliography. It remains true, however, that 'even analyses from an explicitly open-systems point of view tend to take the social and political context of organizations for granted ... the organization theory literature has so far paid scant attention to the characteristics of organizations in socialist and non-Western ("developing") countries'. (Fred W. Riggs, 'Organizational Structures and Contexts', Administration and Society, vol. 7, 1975, p.151).

hierarchy. Similarly, when Marx and Lenin insisted that the proletariat must 'smash' the state, they insisted that this 'bureaucratic' state must be replaced by institutions of an altogether different kind. They clearly believed that such institutional re-arrangement would have important consequences. Marx always believed that communist society would have no need for bureaucracy, and, at least, after 1871, he was convinced that bureaucratic institutions could and should be replaced by non-bureaucratic ones soon after the proletarian revolution. By mid-1917 Lenin's thought had undergone a similar development.

One could argue on the basis of these writings that Marx and Lenin, on the one hand, and Max Weber, who is obviously not open to Abrahamsson's criticism, on the other, were in fact all addressing similar problems; they merely came to different conclusions. On this view, Marx, and Lenin during 1917, could be regarded as 'optimists' about the dispensability of bureaucratic institutions, while Weber was a pessimist. The difficulty with this view is that it ignores the enormous gulf between the questions which Marx and Lenin were prepared to ask about organizations, and those which Weber considered important. Weber did not merely arrive at different answers to problems which he, Marx, and Lenin considered worth solving; he insisted that there were intractable problems in contemporary society, about which revolutionary Marxists had nothing useful to say. These problems would, Weber believed, not disappear after a Marxist seizure of power, but, on the contrary, would be accentuated.

One perennial concern of critics of bureaucracy has been the relationship between administrative organizations and officials to their ostensible controllers. This had been a concern
of Mill and of Weber and it was almost the sole focus of Marx's comments on administrative institutions. Marx was convinced that contemporary bureaucratic institutions served the interests of the bourgeoisie. After 1851, he decided that existing institutions would not be amendable to control by the proletariat. The anti-bureaucratic measures which he endorsed and advocated in *The Civil War in France* were all intended to enable first the proletariat, and later the whole community, to control its functionaries. Lenin's advocacy of institutional revolution in *The State and Revolution* was, similarly, almost totally addressed to the problem of rendering officials responsive and accountable to the community - though, perhaps to allay Kautskyite fears, Lenin insisted that post-revolutionary administration would be a very simple matter.

Marx's and Lenin's concern - to ensure that administrators were firmly controlled by their rulers - is, of course, an important one. However, as Weber, and for that matter, Mill, were well aware, there is no *a priori* reason to believe that the form of organization which allows maximum popular control will also be adequate to the tasks it is called on to perform. There is, for that matter, no *a priori* reason to believe that it will be inadequate; that is an empirical matter which can only be resolved by investigation, comparative analysis and theoretical reflection. However, it is just this which is completely lacking in the attempts of Saint-Simon, Marx and Lenin to show that administration in the new society would be conducted
completely differently from government in the old.¹

Of course, after the Russian Revolution, Lenin's enthusiasm for 'proletarianization' was subordinated to, though not extinguished by, a strongly Weberian insistence on the importance of administrative imperatives, the role of expertise, the internal requirements of effective administration. In itself this is not proof that Weber or Lenin were correct in believing in the superiority of Prussian models of administrative organization or, in Lenin's case, the 'Taylor system': their choices bear obvious traces of the epoch at which they lived, and they may both have been wrong. They were correct, however, to emphasize that even, or especially, after a socialist revolution

¹ One might have expected Goran Therborn's new book, *What does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?*, to represent an advance in this respect. Therborn is determined to examine organizational forms: he confesses that 'Marxists have devoted unbelievably little systematic attention' (p.26) to problems of state organization, and that 'we are still only at the beginning of a Marxist study of the state' (p.33). Unfortunately, Therborn's only interest in organizational forms is a strictly orthodox one: to show 'the class character of the organizational form of the state' (p.144). He says nothing about possible sources of organizational differences, either within or outside organizations, other than class relations. Yet, class relations were not the only things which might affect organizations that changed between, for example, feudalism and capitalism. Furthermore, Therborn's insistence that, unlike Western, capitalist, administration, Soviet administration is 'a genuinely working-class technique of organization ... which constitutes the specific technology of the proletariat as the ruling class, that is, of the socialist state' (p.56) is dubious, to say the least. One is reminded of Robert Miller's comment on Soviet reception of work by the Polish administrative theorist, Starościk: It [Starościk's book] clearly differentiates between the nature and problems of socialist and capitalist administrative systems, arguing that the principles of the latter are not applicable to the former. This orientation is undoubtedly congenial to Soviet specialists, who are visibly embarrassed by the extent to which they have to borrow from the Western literature in conceptualizing the new approaches to administration.

governments of mass societies will face a range of complex tasks to perform and that the administrative alternatives open to them will be profoundly influenced, and limited, by that fact. Lenin's difficulty was that he did not recognize it sooner.¹

Just how limited these alternatives are, remains controversial. Some light is shed on these matters by related controversies among organization theorists, the vast majority of whom begin with Weber's ideal type. It has become clear that not all of the characteristics of the type are as closely interrelated as Weber appears to have believed. Nor does close approximation to this 'package' necessarily lead to enhanced organizational performance. Many writers have argued that organizations most like the ideal type are best suited to, and likely to be found in, mass administration involving large routinized workflows and operating under relatively predictable conditions. They are not as well suited to tasks requiring flexibility and innovation, and/or not involving large flows of work. For these second sorts of administration, it is argued, organizations should permit more leeway for improvisation and personal responsibility; minimize the number of fixed rules; de-emphasize the principle of hierarchical authority in favour of decentralization, team-work, and only conditionally activated lines of communication; define the individual's area of competence and responsibility less strictly; and emphasize personal authority (expert or functional authority), personal relationships, and personal commitment to the organizational goal.²

¹ The most recent Chinese group of leaders appears to be coming to realize it. The slogan, 'it doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice' is vintage, post-1917, Leninism.

It has also been suggested that the increasing importance of skilled professionals in late-industrial and now post-industrial societies, works to subvert rigid hierarchies of administrative authority. One of the first writers to emphasize this consequence of professionalization was Talcott Parsons, who suggested that Weber's type included fundamental contradictions between the elevation of knowledge and specialization on the one hand, and of legal-rational authority and rules, on the other. According to Parsons, the 'professionalization' of modern organizations was leading to a different form of administration, one where instead of a rigid hierarchy of status and authority there tends to be what is roughly, in formal status, a "company of equals", an equalization of status which ignores the inevitable gradation of distinction and achievement to be found in any considerable group of technically competent persons.¹

On the basis of this and similar arguments, William Delaney has suggested that a model of the 'postbureaucratic' type of administrative organization should be developed, at least for 'contemporary American and, possibly, other highly industrialized societies'.² Some more recent work has been devoted to developing such a model. Writers such as W.G. Bennis³ and Robert Brown⁴ have drawn attention to the effects of contemporary rapid social change, of automation and of computerization on organizational structure, and particularly on the future of hierarchical authority.

⁴ Robert Brown, op. cit.
Blau and Meyer argue that

the advanced technology of the twentieth century
necessitates information feedback and specialized
skills, which are incompatible with an authority
structure resting on blind obedience to orders
issued through a chain of command. As a result,
authority becomes depersonalized, and impersonal
mechanisms of control displace old-fashioned
discipline and command authority, thereby mitigating
one of the least pleasant aspects of work in bureaucracies.

According to Brown, existing hierarchical structures may well
disappear, to be replaced by

'extended families' of inter-connected and self-
programming computers under whose direction automated
machines would carry out all the routine tasks created
by large work flows ... teams of specialists, and
their associated administrators would deal with the
remaining tasks.

In these circumstances, Brown suggests, the concept of bureaucracy
in its Weberian sense will have little work left to do.

The fact that Weber's ideal-type has been subjected to
criticisms and modifications such as these is not in itself
remarkable. Given the rapidity of change in this century, it is
more remarkable that his formulation has retained its influence
for so long. Even if the ideal type had to be rejected, Weber's
writings would remain of central importance for our purposes.
Their importance transcends the specifics of the ideal-type, just
as the importance of Marxism transcends the analytical difficulties
of class analysis. One invaluable legacy of Marxism is the
attention it draws to social and economic forces which social
and political theory cannot afford to overlook. Weber's writings,
similarly, focus attention on some of the fundamental activities,
constraints and imperatives of our time, which theorists and

1 P.M. Blau and M.W. Meyer, *Bureaucracy in Modern Society* (New
revolutionary ideologists ignore at their peril.

Moreover, the ideal type itself has far from lost its usefulness. Whatever else it has seen, our century has witnessed an unprecedented growth of massive organizations dealing with large and continuous work flows. In relation to many important organizations, such as civil services, armies and mass production industries, the ideal type is of direct and continuing relevance. Not only has this been the case hitherto, but, as Blau and Meyer observe:

In many ways, undoubtedly, bureaucracies will continue to conform to the Weberian model. Division of labor and specialization are if anything becoming more intense; rules, regulations, and organizational codes will continue to proliferate; efficiency will be stressed (if not achieved) no less than before.

It is not clear how soon or how easily bureaucratic mass administration will give way to a computer-centred, specialist-dominated, 'postbureaucratic' type. The changes which Bennis and Brown envisage will not occur immediately or universally: they will face considerable resistance from within and outside existing bureaucracies, and in many societies they simply will not be technically feasible for a very long time to come. Brown's projections are in part based on Miller's account of Soviet plans for a nationwide, computerized Automated System of Control (A.S.U.), which has received strong Party backing, even though it promises to narrow the Party's room for arbitrary political intervention. It is therefore worth keeping in mind some impediments to the realization of this scheme, which Miller notes:

A number of obstacles remain, to be sure. For one thing, the designers of the system have probably oversold its technical capacity to deliver what is expected of it, especially in view of the present

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state of the computer arts in the U.S.S.R. For another, the political and intra-bureaucratic rivalries over control of the system and its functions are formidable. Finally, there is a distinct possibility that political conservatives in a post-Brezhnev era will decide not to go through with the full programme so as to protect their threatened decision-making prerogatives.¹

Finally, there is one important element of what I have called the Weberian 'challenge' to socialists, which survives criticisms of his ideal type. One can, I think, distinguish between two forms of this challenge - a 'strong' and a 'weak' form. Weber was committed to both forms, but we need not be, and not every effective criticism of the former need affect the latter at all. The 'strong' form is the claim that the 'bureaucratic' type of organization is indispensable in modern society because it is, other things being equal, always the most rational type from a technical point of view, ... the needs of mass administration make it today completely indispensable. The choice is only that between bureaucracy and dilettantism in the field of administration.²

It is this claim which organization theorists have been most concerned to test, and there is no doubt that Weber was committed to it. However, not all of his criticisms of socialist prophecies rest on this claim. Often he singled out one feature in particular of modern administrative organizations which distinguished them from others and made them particularly 'inescapable': their dependence on professional officials with 'rational specialization and training'.³ Thus the 'first thing with which socialism also must reckon' is 'the necessity of a long training in skills, always

² Esq, vol. 1, p.223, quoted above at p.124.
³ See above, p.128.
increasing specialization and management by a skilled officialdom shaped in this way. The modern economy can be managed in no other way'.

Some of the most telling criticisms of Weber's ideal type rest on the weaker position which I have outlined: hierarchy of authority within organizations will not endure, it is argued, precisely because of the increasing importance of skilled professionals. While strains within Weber's conception are revealed by these observations, this should provide little consolation for the subjects of this thesis. If the weak position is correct, there is no reason to believe that organizations designed to accommodate specialists, whatever their internal arrangement, will be any easier to control or eliminate than bureaucracies. Indeed, notwithstanding their more 'democratic' internal structure, 'postbureaucratic' organizations will present considerable obstacles to democratic, or other, forms of control. Such obstacles, I have argued, are not necessarily insuperable. However, since 'the actual scope for mass participation in a computerized management system is virtually nil', if such organizations do come to predominate we might once again be threatened with 'the delusion as if administration and political governing were mysteries, transcendent functions only to be trusted to the hands of a trained caste'.

1 'Der Sozialismus', pp.497-98, quoted above at p.135.
Hitherto I have discussed Marxist social and political theory. I have argued that characteristic patterns of thought can be identified among the writers I have discussed, and that these patterns derive from several of the centrally important categories and theoretical presuppositions of Marxist social theory. But to end an account of Marxist attitudes to bureaucracy here would really be to stage Hamlet without the prince. For, like Saint-Simonianism, Marxism was not simply social theory; it was also prophecy; indeed, it was the most influential prophecy to come out of nineteenth century Europe.

In the second part of this thesis, I emphasized that Marx's prophecy, like Saint-Simon's, was full of strains and internal tensions; many of these strains and tensions were 'actualized' by the Bolshevik revolution. In particular the revolution, and Lenin's post-revolutionary writings and experience, revealed two distinct kinds of strains. The first kind resulted from comparison between the hopes and predictions of Marx, and what ultimately took place in the Soviet Union. This gap between Marxist prophecy and Soviet practice is of course not necessarily a 'falsification' of Marxism. Many Marxists have attempted, with greater or lesser success, to distinguish Marxism from the Bolshevik experiment, by arguing, in brief, that the latter was the wrong revolution, undertaken in the wrong place at the wrong time. This argument raises many questions concerning the relationship of Marxism to the Bolshevik seizure of power, and of Marxism to backwardness - questions which I do not propose to discuss here. A second kind of strain, however, which was already evident in Marx's own writings, is internal to these writings and is thus
less easy to dismiss. For this is the tension, to which I have frequently referred, *between* several of Marx's own fundamental goals, as well as between those of his successors such as Lenin and Trotsky. Moreover, as we have seen, Saint-Simon manifested and ignored similar ambivalences in his own thought.

In some revolutionary theories, coyness about the existence and possible consequences of enduring administrative imperatives would be less curious than it is in Marxism. Like the judge in an aria competition who awards the prize to the second competitor immediately after having heard the first, a revolutionary might seek to overthrow an existing government or social order, though he had no confidence that its successor would be much superior. One might accuse such a revolutionary of irresponsibility, but his vision of the future would not necessarily be incoherent. However, there *is*, as we have seen, a basic incoherence in Marxist attitudes to administration in post-revolutionary society. Marxists have always insisted that post-revolutionary society will be immeasurably superior to contemporary society, and one extremely powerful Saint-Simonian strand in Marxism is its insistence that a major element in this superiority will be its superior *competence*, the efficiency and good husbandry, which will distinguish the organization and management of post-revolutionary society. Bureaucratic 'parasitism' together with the capitalist 'anarchy of production' will both be at an end. On the other hand, another source of the appeal of Marxism has been its vision of a society without government. Not merely Marx, but Saint-Simon, who considered administration an integral part of productive activity, and the great Marxist organizers, Lenin and Trotsky, all shared an apparent inability
to see the potentially 'bureaucratic' consequences of their hopes, and the impediments which these consequences would raise to the achievement of other socialist goals. They all manifested and ignored similar ambivalences in their thought. Any attempt to account for these deepseated and sustained ambivalences must, in the nature of the case, be conjectural; it does not, however, seem to me fanciful to pay attention to what might be called revolutionary metaphorics.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I sought to indicate that attacks on bureaucracy have been more often than not, of a completely undifferentiating sort. Critics of bureaucracy have rarely bothered to be precise about exactly what target they were aiming at, or to discuss whether, as Mill insisted, bureaucracy might be useful in some contexts and for certain purposes, although harmful elsewhere. This was especially true of those critics who believed that a social revolution was necessary and inevitable. In revolutionary critiques, bureaucracy stood doubly condemned: loathsome and oppressive in itself, and the instrument of a hated ruling class. Given the 'holistic' way in which bureaucracy was appraised and condemned, it would have taken a major effort of will and thought, to appreciate, and then to insist, that some at least of the characteristics of bureaucratic organization stemmed from administrative imperatives which would equally confront pre- and post-revolutionary societies. Such an effort was not often undertaken by nineteenth century revolutionaries. Instead, the most common metaphor for bureaucracy was that of a 'parasite'. Saint-Simon saw existing officials as purely parasitic; Marxists again and again resorted to metaphors of parasitism and disease when discussing bureaucracy in capitalist
society, and Trotsky resuscitated these metaphors in his attacks on Stalinist bureaucracy. Such metaphors combined well with these thinkers' faith in the cleansing and *purifying* force of revolution, to allow certain problems to *dissolve*. Saint-Simon and Marxists believed that many institutions in existing society would survive in the society of the future; indeed they *relied* on the survival of industry to form the basis of that society. But only useful, important, and *healthy* forms of activity were to survive. Like a highly effective and selective cancer treatment the Revolution would leave the healthy elements of existing society unscathed, but would consume and destroy its diseased parts. Prominent among these would be the dreadful parasite, 'bureaucracy'.

In fact, compared with administrators of earlier times, contemporary bureaucrats do much more and on the whole do it better. Given the extraordinary twentieth century inflation of demands for benefits *from* the state, for economic and social rights as opposed to merely political ones, demands which Marxists and other socialists have done so much to mould, bureaucrats and specialized administrative organizations are no more parasitic than arms and legs. Some writers might object to this extension of activity on, for example, *laissez-faire* or anarchist grounds. Marxists, as we have seen, are not in a good position to do so.


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