

reordering of monopoly capital will occur depends on the one hand on the cohesiveness of the capitalist class and its capacity to generate a class politics in the interests of capital as a whole, and on the other, on the strength of socialist movements in the working class and their capacity to organize a class politics capable of transforming decommmodified production in the service of capital into genuinely socialist production in the service of the working class.

Bureaucracy and the State

Our discussion of the historical transformations of the process of accumulation closed with a somewhat speculative discussion of the emergent solutions to the economic stagnation of the 1970s and the new contradictions which those solutions were likely to engender. The central proposition was that the capitalist state was likely to engage in qualitatively deeper forms of intervention into the economy, moving from intervention and planning at the level of market relations towards planning within production itself. Such a transformation in the role of the capitalist state would itself generate new contradictions specifically centred around the politicization of the accumulation process.

Such changes in the forms of state activity in capitalist societies and in the contradictions of accumulation are of crucial importance in any discussion of socialist politics. A number of questions are immediately posed: In what ways do these changes in the role of the state affect the relationship of the capitalist state to class struggle? Do these new contradictions open up new possibilities for the left to use the capitalist state as part of a revolutionary strategy? What implications do these developments have for the classic debate between peaceful, incremental roads to socialism and violent, revolutionary strategies for socialism?

I cannot rigorously answer most of these questions, but I will try to clarify some of the issues involved in answering them. In this chapter I will focus on one specific issue which underscores all of these questions on socialist strategies: the problem of bureaucracy. In particular, I will address the question: how should we understand the relationship between class struggle

and the internal structure of the state?¹ We will explore this question by comparing the analyses of bureaucracy and the state of two influential theorists, Max Weber and V. I. Lenin. In the next chapter we will link this discussion of bureaucracy and the capitalist state to the analysis of class formation and accumulation contradictions developed earlier.

In the summer of 1917, in opposite corners of Europe, two essays were written on the nature of the state, bureaucracy, and politics. One, *Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany*, was written by Max Weber; the other, *The State and Revolution*, was written by Vladimir Lenin. In spite of the obvious differences between the two men—one was a liberal German academician, the other a professional Russian revolutionary—they had certain things in common. Both were men of about fifty years of age whose intellectual lives had been decisively shaped by the work of Karl Marx. Both felt that their ideas on the state were strongly out of favour in the ruling circles of their respective countries. Both wrote their essays in the hopes of influencing political developments. In the immediate years following the publications of the essays, attempts were made to put the ideas of both into practice: Lenin's ideas in the attempt to build socialism after the Bolshevik Revolution, and Weber's in the attempt to create a viable parliamentary democracy in the Weimar Republic.

Both essays deal with many of the same questions, though in sharply different ways and leading to radically different conclusions: How can the state apparatus be controlled? Is it possible for the masses to govern and control the state? What is the relationship of representative institutions to the state bureaucracy in capitalist society? What can be done about the ever-increasing appropriation of power by bureaucrats? What are the consequences of socialism for the nature of the state? These are

1. While there has been a tremendous growth in Marxist theoretical work on the capitalist state in recent years, relatively little has been explicitly focused on the problem of the internal structures of the state. An especially interesting analysis of this question which explicitly contrasts the internal organization structures of the capitalist state with both the feudal state and the socialist state, is Göran Therborn, *What does the Ruling Class do when it Rules?*, London NLB 1978. For an earlier treatment of similar themes developed within the broad framework of the Frankfurt school, see the work of Claus Offe.

issues that are no less important today than half a century ago and are still matters of intense debate.

In the following section, Weber's argument in *Parliament and Government* will be laid out systematically. In a few places material will be drawn from *Economy and Society* (the bulk of which was written before 1917) to elaborate certain points more fully. This will be followed by a comparable presentation of Lenin's argument in *The State and Revolution*. After both Weber's and Lenin's analyses have been presented, the underlying assumptions of both positions will be compared, and the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments assessed.

Weber's Argument

By 1917 Weber was convinced that German politics were being conducted in a totally irresponsible and incompetent manner. As a German nationalist, he felt that it was crucial to understand the sources of this incompetence, for if it were not corrected, Germany "would be condemned to remain a small and conservative country, perhaps with a fairly good public administration in purely technical respects, but at any rate a provincial people without the opportunity of counting in the arena of world politics—and also without any moral right to it." (1462)² After examining the history of German politics in the years since Bismarck, Weber became convinced that "every German policy, irrespective of its goals, is condemned to failure in view of the given constitutional set-up and the nature of our policy machinery, and that this will remain so if conditions do not change." (1384) The critical aspect of this constitutional set-up was the powerlessness of parliament. Weber felt that while significantly strengthening parliamentary institutions would not guarantee a dramatic improvement in the quality of German politics, such a change was essential if there was to be any hope for the future.

This general conclusion concerning the necessity for a strong

2. All page numbers in parentheses in this section refer to the English language edition of *Economy and Society*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, New York 1968. Citations from pp. 1381–1462 are from Weber's essay "Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany: A Contribution to the Political Critique of Officialdom and Party Politics". All other citations are from the text of *Economy and Society*.

parliament was based on a number of propositions about the nature of politics and bureaucracies and the problem of political leadership in "modern" society:

*Proposition 1. With the development of capitalism and the increasing complexity of society, the needs for rational administration expand both quantitatively and qualitatively. As a result, both public and private organizations tend to become more and more bureaucratized.*³

"The decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organization", Weber writes, "has always been its purely technical superiority over any other form of organization. The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs—these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration, and especially in its monocratic form." (973)⁴

3. Weber's formal definition of "bureaucracy" includes the following characteristics:

- (1) [Officials] are personally free and subject to authority only with respect to their impersonal official obligations.
- (2) They are organized in a clearly defined hierarchy of offices.
- (3) Each office has a clearly defined sphere of competence in the legal sense.
- (4) The office is filled by a free contractual relationship. Thus, in principle, there is free selection.
- (5) Candidates are selected on the basis of technical qualifications. In the most rational case, this is tested by examination or guaranteed by diplomas certifying technical training or both. They are *appointed*, not elected.
- (6) They are remunerated by fixed salaries in money.
- (7) The office is treated as the sole, or at least the primary, occupation of the incumbent.
- (8) It constitutes a career. There is a system of "promotion" according to seniority or to achievement or both. Promotion is dependent upon the judgement of superiors.
- (9) The official works entirely separated from ownership of the means of administration and without appropriation of his position.
- (10) He is subject to strict and systematic discipline and control in the conduct of the office. (220–221).

4. By "monocratic form" or "monocracy" Weber means a bureaucratic organization at the top of which is a single individual rather than a group of individuals (a "collegial body").

Bureaucratic forms of organization increasingly characterize private business corporations, churches, political parties, and other organizations in which rational efficiency is important to success. "This is increasingly so", Weber argues, "the larger the association is, the more complicated its tasks are, and above all, the more its existence depends on power—whether it involves a power struggle on the market, in the electoral arena or on the battlefield." (1399) "The future," Weber concludes, "belongs to bureaucratization." (1401)

Proposition 2. As bureaucratization increases, the power of bureaucrats tends to increase, both with respect to nonbureaucratic organizations and with respect to the nonbureaucratic elements of bureaucracies

"The power of a fully developed bureaucracy", Weber writes, "is always great, under normal conditions, overtowering. The political master always finds himself, vis-à-vis the trained official, in the position of a dilettante facing the expert." (991) This progressively increasing power of bureaucracies and bureaucrats grows out of several interconnected characteristics of bureaucratic organization: (1) the practical effectiveness and increasing indispensability of bureaucratic organizations,⁵ (2) the expert technical knowledge controlled by the bureaucrats, and (3) the "administrative secrets" (knowledge about the inner workings of the bureaucracy) controlled by bureaucrats. This last element is especially important. Outsiders are in a weak position not merely because of the technical expertise of the bureaucrats, but because of the bureaucratic control of files, information, and procedures.

Given this constant expansion of bureaucratic power, it is increasingly problematic, Weber argues, whether or not any independent power will be able to control the state bureaucracy. In his discussion of bureaucracy as an ideal type Weber stresses

5. Weber writes: "The rule . . . cannot dispense with or replace the bureaucratic apparatus once it exists . . . [for] if the apparatus stops working, or if its work is interrupted by force, chaos results which is difficult to master by any improvised replacements from among the governed. . . . Increasingly the material fate of the masses depends upon the continuous and correct functioning of the ever more bureaucratic organizations of private capitalism and the idea of replacing them becomes more and more utopian." (988)

that "at the top of a bureaucratic organization there is necessarily an element which is at least not purely bureaucratic. The category of bureaucracy is one applied only to the exercise of control by means of a particular kind of administrative staff." (222) This non-bureaucratic top has an intrinsically political quality since it must deal with the alternative ends that the bureaucracy serves and not merely with the means for accomplishing those ends. With the growing power of the state bureaucracy, Weber argues, there is increasing danger that these political positions will become monopolized by the bureaucrats themselves, resulting in the development of a system of "completely unsupervised office holding". "In view of the growing indispensability of the state bureaucracy and its corresponding increase in power, how can there be any guarantee that any powers will remain which can check or effectively control the tremendous influence of this stratum [bureaucrats]?" (1403) The critical issue in this problem of controlling the bureaucracy is how people are selected to fill these top administrative-political positions, in particular, whether they are bureaucrats selected by behind-the-scenes "unofficial patronage" or professional politicians selected through open, parliamentary struggle.

Proposition 3. If the top administration of the state bureaucracy is in the hands of bureaucrats, then there will be a strong tendency for:

(A) the political direction of the bureaucracy to be irresponsible and ineffective, especially in times of crisis; and

(B) the behind-the-scenes influence of big capitalists in the running of the state bureaucracy to be maximized.

A. "The essence of politics", Weber writes, "is struggle": struggle over ends and the power to accomplish ends. Effective and responsible political leadership consists in knowing how to weigh competing and conflicting ends, how to negotiate compromises "sacrificing the less important for the more important" (1404), how to recruit allies and form coalitions in political battles, and so forth. These skills are arts that require intensive

training. For the political direction of the state bureaucracy to be effective it is therefore necessary that the top administrators be thoroughly trained in this art of politics, and furthermore, that mechanisms exist which hold them accountable for the *political* quality of their administration.

The entire structure and ethos of bureaucracy makes the professional bureaucrat unsuited for such a political directorate. While bureaucrats are highly skilled in techniques of rational execution of programmes, they are almost inevitably incompetent in political skills. This incompetence stems from the nature of bureaucratic responsibility: "An official who receives a directive which he considers wrong can and is supposed to object to it. If his superior insists on its execution, it is his duty and even his honour to carry it out as if it corresponded to his innermost conviction, and to demonstrate in this fashion that his sense of duty stands above his personal preference." (1404)

There is little or no scope for the development of political talents within the bureaucratic ranks, and as a result, career bureaucrats generally lack the capacity for real political leadership: "Our officialdom has been brilliant whenever it had to prove its sense of duty, its impartiality and mastery of organizational problems in the face of official, clearly formulated tasks of a specialized nature. . . . But here we are concerned with political, not bureaucratic achievements, and the facts themselves provoke the recognition which nobody can truthfully deny: That bureaucracy failed completely whenever it was expected to deal with *political* problems. This is no accident; rather it would be astonishing if capabilities inherently so alien to one another would emerge within the same political structure." (1417) The control of the administrative apex of the bureaucracy by bureaucrats thus leads to politically irresponsible and ineffective direction of bureaucratic activity. In times of peace and domestic tranquillity this might not be terribly serious; but when crisis occurs, the results can be devastating.

B. Ineffectiveness and irresponsibility are not the only costs of uncontrolled bureaucratic domination. In addition, Weber argues, it tends to maximize the covert influence of big capitalist interests in the administration of the state. "The big capitalist interests of the present day, like those of the past, are apt, in

political life—in parties and in all other connections that are important to them—to prefer monocracy [instead of collegial control such as parliament]. For monocracy is, from their point of view, more 'discreet'. The monocratic chief is more open to personal influence and is more easily swayed, thus making it more readily possible to influence the administration of justice and other governmental activity in favour of such powerful interests." (283–284) While the influence of large capitalist interests is by no means negligible even where there are strong parliaments (especially, Weber argues, when parties are organized as "political machines" as was common in the United States), those interests attain the most unrestricted scope when bureaucracy is the least controlled.⁶ This combination of a predominance of capitalist influence behind the scenes with irresponsible and ineffective political leadership of the state bureaucracy, Weber felt, characterized Germany from the time of Bismarck. The only way out of this situation, Weber argued, was for professional politicians to replace bureaucrats in the top administrative positions. For this to be possible, a strong parliament was essential.

Proposition 4. "Only a working, not merely speech-making parliament, can provide the ground for the growth and selective ascent of genuine leaders, not merely demagogic talents. A working parliament . . . is one which supervises the administration by continuously sharing its work." (1416)

While Weber feels that only professional politicians can bring effective and responsible leadership to the bureaucracy, he does not feel that politicians are necessarily any more moral or

6. In a typical liberal manner, Weber contrasts the influence of big capital on state policy to a more diffuse influence of a plurality of organized groups. In effect he is saying that to the extent the top of the state apparatus is dominated by the bureaucracy, the interests of big capital will dominate over the interests of "society". It is possible, without doing much violence to the logic of Weber's argument, to recast this analysis in terms of the contrast between the interests of particular capitalists and the interests of the capitalist class as a whole. That is, Weber's argument is equivalent to saying that bureaucratic domination of the apex of the state apparatus tends to generate a preponderance of particularistic capitalist interests over the interests of the class as a whole within the state.

honest than are professional bureaucrats: "The motives of party members are no more merely idealist than are the usual philistine interests of bureaucratic competitors in promotions and benefices. Here, as there, personal interests are usually at stake." (1416) What is of critical importance, Weber argues, is that "these universal human frailties do not prevent the selection of capable leaders." (1416) Politicians can become potentially effective leaders not because they have necessarily better personal qualities than bureaucrats, but because they operate in an institutional context which develops political talents, selects for leadership positions those individuals who most successfully demonstrate those talents, and holds those leaders accountable for the political quality of their actions. If such an institutional context is absent, professional politicians will behave much like bureaucrats who occupy positions of power at the top of the administration. In modern, complex industrial society, Weber insists, the only institution that can accomplish these tasks of political recruitment, training, and accountability is a powerful parliament.

A strong working parliament accomplishes three essential things: first, it provides the institutional means for effectively controlling the unrestrained power of the bureaucracy; second, it generates the talented political leadership necessary for responsibly directing bureaucratic activity; third, it provides the mechanisms for holding that leadership accountable.

A. Administrative supervision. A working parliament's effectiveness in controlling the bureaucracy stems from the active involvement of parliamentary committees in supervising and investigating the activities of various bureaucratic departments: "There is no substitute for the systematic cross-examination (under oath) of experts before a parliamentary commission in the presence of the respective departmental officials. This alone guarantees public supervision and a thorough inquiry. . . . The parliamentary right of inquiry should be an auxiliary means and, for the rest, a whip, the mere existence of which will force the administrative chiefs to account for their actions in such a way as to make its use unnecessary." (1418) Through such investigatory committees, the parliament shares in the work of administration by examining bureaucratic

records, formulating legislative measures to improve bureaucratic performance, adjusting budgets for various departments, and so forth.

B. *Leadership creation.* Parliamentary investigation and committee work is also one of the basic means for developing the leadership qualities of politicians: "Only such intensive training, through which the politician must pass in the committees of a powerful *working* parliament, turns such an assembly into a recruiting ground not for mere demagogues but for positively participating politicians. . . . Only such co-operation between civil servants and politicians can guarantee the continuous supervision of the administration and, with it, the political education of leaders and led." (1420) At the same time, a powerful parliament generates talented political leadership in at least three other ways. First, the sheer fact of power attracts individuals with leadership qualities; a powerless parliament makes a political career uninviting.⁷ Second, not only does power attract leadership talent, but also the process of parliamentary political battles cultivates that talent, particularly the ability to recruit allies and make the necessary compromises to establish a solid following. Third, the "natural selection" of the competitive struggle for power tends to push the more capable leadership into the top positions. In this process, political parties play an absolutely key role. As in all modern mass associations, there is a strong tendency for political parties to become bureaucratized and for the party functionary to replace talented politicians in positions of power. It is only when the stakes of parliamentary struggle are high, when victory brings real power to the party, that this tendency towards bureaucratic ossification is counteracted; a political party cannot afford to keep talented political leadership from rising if it hopes to be successful.

7. "In the face of the powerlessness of parliament [in Germany of 1917] and the resulting bureaucratic character of the ministerial positions, a man with a strong power drive and the qualities that go with it would have to be a fool to venture into this miserable web of mutual resentment and on this slippery floor of court intrigue, as long as his talents and energies can apply themselves in fields such as the giant enterprises, cartels, banks and wholesale firms. . . . Stripped of all phraseology, our so-called monarchic government amounts to nothing but this process of *negative selection* which diverts all major talents to the service of capitalist interests." (1413)

C. *Political accountability.* Finally, strong parliamentary institutions contain built-in mechanisms of accountability. When top administrative positions are filled by bureaucrats through behind-the-scenes deals, there is no way to hold them publicly accountable for their activity: "Unofficial patronage, then, is the worst form of parliamentary patronage—one that favours mediocrity since nobody can be held responsible. It is a consequence of our rule by conservative civil servants. . . . Patronage in this system is not in the hands of politicians and parties, which might be held responsible by the public, but works through private channels. . . ." (1429–1430) Where top positions are filled through open, parliamentary struggles, however, a certain minimum accountability is assured: "The politician, and above all, the party leader who is rising to public power, is exposed to public scrutiny through the criticism of opponents and competitors and can be certain that, in the struggle against him, the motives and means of his ascendancy will be ruthlessly publicized." (1450)

While the accountability that accompanies electoral campaigns does not by any means prevent demagoguery, it does tend to make the demagogue more politically responsible. Beyond electoral accountability, a strong parliament itself has the power (through parliamentary inquiry, votes of no confidence, etc.) to hold the top administrative leadership accountable for its actions. This interplay of competing parties, accountable, elected leadership, and investigative parliamentary committees creates a political structure that, Weber felt, would guarantee a minimum political responsibility on the part of the political leadership.

Weber's expectations about the benefits of a strong parliament were relatively limited. He certainly did not feel that it would automatically create a happy and prosperous society or even solve all of the political ills of industrial society. But he did feel that all other alternative political structures would not even be able to guarantee the minimum political effectiveness of a working parliament. In particular, he argues that for a variety of different reasons, monarchy, (1406) "passive" democracy, (983, 1453) and "active mass" democracy will all inevitably strengthen the purely bureaucratic control of the bureaucracy. The most important of these for the comparison with

Lenin is active mass democratization—the process of expanding in various ways the scope of participation of citizens in political life. Two of the principles of active democratization are: “(1) prevention of the development of a closed status group of officials in the interest of a universal accessibility of office, and (2) minimization of the authority of officialdom in the interest of expanding the sphere of influence of ‘public opinion’ as far as practicable. Hence, wherever possible, political democracy [i.e., active democracy] strives to shorten the term of office through election and recall, and to be relieved from a limitation to candidates with expert qualifications.” (985) The result is that while passive democratization tends to encourage bureaucratization, the principles of active democratization tend to work against bureaucratization.

This might lead one to believe that the most expansive, most “mass” active democratization would provide the best safeguard against bureaucratic domination. No, Weber says. Just as monarchic government cannot possibly supervise the bureaucracy, neither can a truly active *mass* democracy.

By “mass democracy” Weber means democratic states which lack significant and powerful “free representative institutions” (i.e., representative institutions in which the representatives are not narrowly mandated but rather are “free” to engage in political bargaining, struggle, etc.). Such democracies take one of two forms: either they are “direct democracies” or “plebiscitary democracies”. The former Weber feels cannot exist in a large and complex society. They would simply be technically impossible. The closest thing in modern society to direct democracy is “the Soviet type of republican organization where it serves as a substitute for immediate democracy since the latter is impossible in a mass organization.”⁸ (293) Soviet assemblies (as an ideal type) are characterized by imperative mandates, recall at any time, short terms of office, and other characteristics derived from the principles of direct democracy.⁹

8. Whenever Weber discusses “soviets” in *Parliament and Government and Economy and Society*, he treats them as an “ideal-type” organization that adapts the principles of direct democracy to the conditions of modern society. Nowhere does he discuss them as a concrete historical phenomenon or present any empirical data on the actual functioning of soviets.

9. The basic characteristics of direct democracy as elaborated by Weber are: (a) short terms of office, if possible only running between two general meetings of

Weber feels that the prospects for such mandated representative institutions to control bureaucracy are quite limited. Mandated assemblies would work reasonably well, Weber argues, only as long as there were no significant antagonisms between (and within) the representatives’ constituencies. As soon as serious conflicts occur, a mandated assembly would become completely impotent since the representatives would be prohibited from negotiating compromises. They would be forced to return to their constituency to alter their mandated position on every significant issue, thus making effective political bargaining impossible. The result would be a complete paralysis of the assembly and thus an incapacity to supervise effectively the bureaucracy. As soon as the principle of imperative mandates is relaxed, however, the representative ceases to be simply the delegated agent of the electors and begins to exercise real authority over them. The result is that the “soviet” form of direct democracy is transformed into the beginnings of a “parliamentary” system.

Plebiscitary democracy (i.e., formal government through mass votes on issues and leadership) is equally impractical: “The plebiscite as means of election as well as of legislation has inherent technical limitations, since it only answers ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. Nowhere in mass states does it take over the most important function of parliament, that of determining the budget. In such cases the plebiscite would also obstruct more seriously the passing of all bills that result from a compromise between conflicting interests, for the most diverse reasons can lead to a ‘No’ if there is no means of accommodating opposed interests through negotiation. The referendum does not know the *com-*

the members; (b) liability to recall at any time; (c) the principle of rotation or of selection by lot in filling offices so that every member takes a turn at some time (making it possible to avoid the position of power of technically trained persons or of those with long experience and command of official secrets); (d) strictly defined mandate for the conduct of office laid down by the assembly of members (the sphere of competence is thus concretely defined and not of a general character); (e) a strict obligation to render an accounting to the general assembly; (f) the obligation to submit every unusual question which has not been foreseen to the assembly of members or to a committee representing them; (g) the distribution of power between large numbers of offices each with its own particular function; (h) the treatment of office as an avocation and not a full time occupation. (289)

promise upon which the majority of laws is based in every mass state with strong regional, social, religious and other cleavages." (1455) Since real government cannot in fact be conducted through constant referenda and plebiscites, there is a strong tendency for such systems to degenerate into "caesarist" forms of leadership selection: "Active mass democratization means that the political leader is no longer proclaimed a candidate because he has proved himself in a circle of *honoraires*, then becoming a leader because of his parliamentary accomplishments, but that he gains the trust and faith of the masses in him and his power with the means of demagogy. In substance this means a shift toward the *caesarist* mode of selection." (1451)

The critical characteristic of such caesarist leadership (i.e., leadership directly selected by a show of *mass* confidence) is that it is not accountable to a working, powerful parliament. Because of his position of enormous power and prestige, such a leader usually has at his disposal all of the means necessary to guarantee mass support. But in the end, he is little different from a hereditary monarch in his capacity to control the bureaucratic apparatus, and like monarchic government, caesarist leadership tends to generate uncontrolled bureaucratic domination.

The only way out of these impasses, Weber maintains, is through active parliamentary democracy. While in any modern, mass state a certain tendency towards caesarism is inevitable, parliamentary institutions have the capacity to control such tendencies, and in so doing, to control the bureaucracy as well. Neither one-man rule, of either the caesarist or monarchical variety, nor mass rule, of either the soviet or plebiscitary variety, can accomplish this.

Lenin's Argument

The basic question that underlies Lenin's analysis in *The State and Revolution* is quite different from Weber's: How can the state be made to serve the interests of the working class? or alternatively, what is the relationship between the state apparatus and the goals of a socialist revolution? Such questions had particularly poignant implications in the summer of 1917, when the essay was written. The February Revolution had already occurred, establishing a bourgeois "constitutional"

government; the October Revolution was brewing. Such a conjuncture sharply raised a central theoretical issue that has preoccupied much writing and political struggle on the Left for a century: Should the state be considered an essentially *neutral apparatus* that merely needs to be "captured" by a working-class socialist political party for it to serve the interests of the working class, or is the apparatus of the state in capitalist society a distinctively *capitalist apparatus* that cannot possibly be "used" by the working class, and as a result, must be destroyed and replaced by a radically different form of the state?¹⁰ Lenin very decisively takes the latter position, arguing that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is incompatible with the bourgeois state apparatus, and therefore that the capitalist state must be smashed and replaced by new revolutionary "soviet" institutions.

Although much of the essay takes the form of a polemic against the more reformist perspective, Lenin's analysis does contain a fairly coherent theory of the state, bureaucracy, and the implications of socialism for state structure:

Proposition 1. "The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonisms objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that class antagonisms are irreconcilable. . . . The state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another. . . . The state is a special organization of force: it is an organization of violence for the suppression of some class." (267, 268, 280)¹¹

10. These two conceptions of the state are frequently designated the "state in capitalist society" vs. the "capitalist state" theories. The writings of C. Wright Mills, G. William Domhoff, and to a much lesser extent Ralph Miliband fall mainly into the former, whereas Lenin and the French "structuralist" Marxists (Althusser, Poulantzas, and others) fall into the latter. The critical difference between the two centres on whether the state is analysed primarily in terms of who controls it (capitalists, elites, bureaucrats, etc.) or in terms of what kind of a state it is (feudal state, bourgeois state, socialist state, etc.). Of course, there is no necessary reason why the two perspectives cannot be combined.

11. All page references are to the one-volume edition of *Selected Works*, London 1969, unless otherwise specified.

Lenin adopts with very little modification the classic Marxian conception of the state. The state is defined not only in terms of the *means* at its disposal (the control of violence), but also in terms of the *ends* it serves (class domination and suppression of class struggle). This function is characteristic of all states, Lenin argues, including a socialist state; what differs is the class being oppressed and the class which rules. In a capitalist state, the bourgeoisie rules and the proletariat is suppressed; in a socialist state, the proletariat rules and the capitalist class is suppressed. All states imply repression.

Proposition 2. "A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell . . . it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it." (273)

This is the critical part of Lenin's argument. He argues not merely that capitalists happen to control the political institutions of a capitalist society, but also that those institutions are structured in ways which guarantee that control. In particular Lenin views parliament as a perfect instrument for ensuring capitalist domination. This is true for two reasons: First, parliament is an institution that mystifies the masses and legitimates the social order; second, the structure of capitalist society ensures that the bourgeoisie will necessarily control parliament.

A. *Mystification and legitimation.* The central way that parliament mystifies political life, according to Lenin, is that it appears to be the basic organ of power in the society, and thus gives the appearance that the people's elected representatives run the state, when in fact all important decisions are made behind the scenes: "Take any parliamentary country, from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth—in these countries the real business of 'state' is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries and General Staffs. Parliament is given up to talk

for the special purpose of fooling the 'common people'." (296) Lenin argued that parliaments in capitalist society must necessarily be "mere talking-shops" since important state functions are controlled by the executive apparatus (the bureaucracy), and thus they necessarily become sources of political mystification.

B. *Bourgeois control of parliament.* Even if parliaments did have some residual power, they would still be instruments of capitalist class domination because of the direct control of parliament by the bourgeoisie: "[Bourgeois parliamentary democracy] is always hemmed in by the narrow limits set by capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remain, in effect, a democracy for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich. . . . Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, modern wage slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that 'they cannot be bothered with democracy', 'they cannot be bothered with politics'; in the ordinary peaceful course of events the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life. . . . If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy we see everywhere, in the 'petty'—supposedly petty—details of the suffrage (residential qualification, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for paupers!), in the purely capitalist organization of the daily press, etc., etc.—we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor seem slight . . . but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy." (326)

The net result is, according to Lenin, that the masses only get "to decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism." (295)

Proposition 3. Bureaucracy is the basic structure through which the capitalist class rules. Furthermore, bureaucratic organization is suited only for capitalist domination.

Lenin bases this proposition on three arguments: bureaucracy is functional for capitalism; bureaucrats, big and small, are dependent on the bourgeoisie; and bureaucratic organization makes popular control of administration impossible.

A. *Bureaucracy is functional for capitalism.* "The development, perfection and strengthening of the bureaucratic and military apparatus", Lenin writes, "proceeded during all of the numerous bourgeois revolutions which Europe has witnessed since the fall of feudalism." (284) As class struggle intensified with the development of capitalism, the progressive expansion and centralization of the bureaucratic apparatus became necessary:—"in its struggle against the [proletarian] revolution, the parliamentary republic found itself compelled to strengthen, along with repressive measures, the resources and centralization of governmental power. All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor" (282: quoting Marx, from the *Eighteenth Brumaire*).

Finally, the latest stages of capitalist development, Lenin argues, have led to an even greater level of bureaucratization: "Imperialism—the era of bank capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, of the development of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism—has clearly shown an extraordinary strengthening of the 'state machine' and an unprecedented growth in its bureaucratic and military apparatus against the proletariat both in monarchical and in the freest, most republican countries." (286)

Bureaucratization is thus seen by Lenin as a functional response by the capitalist state to the pressures of class struggle which accompany the development of capitalism.¹²

12. Not only does capitalism tend to result in the bureaucratization of bourgeois state institutions, it also tends to bureaucratize working class organizations: "We cannot do without officials under *capitalism*, under *the rule of the bourgeoisie*. The proletariat is oppressed, the working people are enslaved by capitalism. Under capitalism, democracy is restricted, cramped, curtailed, mutilated by all the conditions of wage slavery, and the poverty and misery of the people. This and this alone is the reason why the functionaries of our political organizations and the trade unions are corrupted—or rather tend to be corrupted—by the conditions of capitalism and betray a tendency to become bureaucrats, i.e., privileged persons divorced from the people and standing

B. *Dependence of bureaucrats on the bourgeoisie.* This is most obvious in the case of top bureaucratic positions, since these tend to be distributed as political spoils among the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties. The "restricted nature" of bourgeois democracy guarantees that a revolutionary working-class party would never be able to partake in these spoils and thus could never control the top administrators. Furthermore, Lenin argues, this dependency on the bourgeoisie involves not merely the top echelons of the bureaucracy, but the apparatus as a whole: "In their works, Marx and Engels repeatedly show that the bourgeoisie are connected with these institutions [the bureaucracy and the standing army] by thousands of threads. Every worker's experience illustrates this connection in an extremely graphic and impressive manner. . . . In particular, it is the petty bourgeoisie who are attracted to the side of the big bourgeoisie and are largely subordinated to them through this apparatus, which provides the upper sections of the peasants, small artisans, tradesmen and the like with comparatively comfortable, quiet and respectable jobs raising their holders above the people." (283)¹³

C. *The separation of bureaucracy from the people.* For the working class to become a "ruling class" it is essential that institutions exist through which workers can "rule". Bureaucratic organization, Lenin insists, makes such mass participation impossible. This is a crucial part of Lenin's argument, for it ensures that the sheer existence of bureaucracy tends to further capitalist interests (or, at a minimum, to impede the realization

above the people. That is the *essence* of bureaucracy; and until the capitalists have been expropriated and the bourgeoisie overthrown, even proletarian functionaries will inevitably be 'bureaucratized' to a certain extent." (347) This bureaucratization of working class organizations, in Lenin's analysis, tends to undermine the political strength of the organization and the confidence of the people in their leadership. Such tendencies toward bureaucratization are thus also functional for capitalist interest.

13. In terms of the discussion in chapter 2 Lenin is in effect arguing that state bureaucrats are either directly bound to the bourgeoisie (top officials) or occupy contradictory class locations which link their interests at least partially to the bourgeoisie. Non-bureaucratic employees of the state—transportation workers, postal workers, janitors, etc.—would not be linked to the bourgeoisie in this way.

of working class interests). The key characteristics of bureaucratic organization which separate it from the masses are:

- (1) appointment of officials rather than election, and particularly, the impossibility of recall;
- (2) the high salaries and special privileges of officials, which concretely tie their interests to the bourgeoisie, create an aura of "official grandeur" about them, and place them "above the people"; and
- (3) the restricted quality of bourgeois democracy, which separates legislation from administrative activity and prevents the active participation of the people in either. While the conditions of life strongly impede active participation in democratic politics in general, the separation of legislative activity from administrative activity absolutely prohibits any mass participation in administration.

If Lenin's analysis of the relationship of bureaucracy and parliament to capitalism is substantially correct, then it is clear that these state structures offer little or no possibility of being "captured" and used for the interests of the working class. Even if parliament could be captured by a revolutionary working-class majority and even if that parliament somehow had real power, still, Lenin argues, "it is clear that the old executive apparatus, the bureaucracy, which is connected with the bourgeoisie, would be unfit to carry out the orders of the proletarian state." (304) Thus, if the working class wishes to take power as a new ruling class and organize society in its own interests, it has no other choice than to destroy the old structures and create new ones.

Proposition 4. Socialism requires the complete destruction of bourgeois state institutions and their replacement by a new form of complete democracy or proletarian democracy (or, equivalently, proletarian dictatorship).

What will be the basic principles of these new institutions and how will they differ from the old structures? To begin, let us look at parliament: "The way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but the conversion of the representative institu-

tions from talking shops into 'working' bodies. 'The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time' " [quoting Marx]. (296) The model of this proletarian representative assembly was the short-lived Paris Commune of 1871: "The commune substitutes for the venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion does not degenerate into deception, for the parliamentarians themselves have to work, have to execute their own laws, have themselves to test the results achieved in reality and to account daily to the constituents. Representative institutions remain, but there is no parliamentarism here as a special system, as the division of labour between legislative and executive, as a privileged position for the deputies. We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and must imagine democracy without parliamentarism. . . ." (297)

"Democracy introduced as fully and consistently as conceivable", writes Lenin, "is transformed from bourgeois to proletarian democracy". (293) But as in all democracies, proletarian democracy still constitutes a "state", i.e., an organization of violence for the suppression of some class. Thus, proletarian democracy is at the same time a dictatorship of the proletariat: "Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the money-bags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists." (327)

Administration, meanwhile, would cease to be organized bureaucratically and would gradually become democratized until, eventually, "the whole population, without exception, [would] proceed to discharge state functions." This, of course, would not happen overnight: "Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is a utopia. But to smash the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy—this is not a utopia . . ." (297) This new form of administration would differ from traditional bureaucracy in a number of critical respects,

while in other respects it would be very similar to what Weber would call "bureaucratic" organization. To begin with the obvious differences: "The workers, after winning political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, shatter it to its foundations and raze it to the ground; they will replace it with a new one, consisting of the very same workers and other employees against whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken that were specified in detail by Marx and Engels: (1) not only election, but 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.'" (343)

The last of these three characteristics of socialist administration—mass participation in control and accounting—is clearly the most problematic. Lenin knew that such participation would necessarily be limited initially, but he was convinced that "the accounting and control necessary for this [the smooth running of production] have been simplified by capitalism to the utmost and reduced to extraordinarily simple operations—which any literate person can perform—of supervising and recording, knowledge of the four rules of arithmetic and issuing appropriate receipts." (337) The social conditions for mass participation in administration had also been created by capitalism and would be further developed by socialism: "The development of capitalism in turn creates the preconditions that enable all to take part in the administration of the state. Some of these preconditions are universal literacy, which has already been achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist countries, then the 'training and disciplining' of millions of workers. . . . The possibility of this destruction [of bureaucracy] is guaranteed by the fact that socialism will shorten the working day, will raise the people to a new life, will create such conditions for the majority of the population as will enable everybody, without exception, to perform 'state functions', and this will lead to the complete withering away of every form of state in general." (336, 349)

Underlying this discussion of the possibilities of democratizing administrative control is a sharp distinction which Lenin draws between the roles of *bureaucrats* and *technical*

experts: "The question of control and accounting should not be confused 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." (337) The bureaucratic dimension of bourgeois administration thus centres on the way "control and accounting" are organized rather than on the total organization of the administration. In fact, Lenin regards the non-bureaucratic, technical aspects of bourgeois administration extremely favourably: "At the present the postal service is a business organized on the lines of a state-capitalist monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type, in which, standing over the common people, who are overburdened and starved, one has the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here already at hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalist . . . we shall have a splendidly equipped mechanism, freed 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." (298–299)

This "splendidly equipped mechanism" is the "scientifically trained staff" responsible for the technical work of administration which is quite distinct from the "parasitic" bureaucratic structures of control and accounting. While the latter must be smashed by the working class, the former can be "captured" and used by the workers. The "complete democracy" Lenin stresses so much is limited to a democratization of control, not a democratization of technical expertise as such. The result would be that: "We shall reduce the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid 'foremen and accountants' (of course with the aid of technicians of all sorts, types and degrees)." (298) The democratization is also explicitly not meant to negate all subordination and authority in organization. To begin with, as Lenin says many times: "We are not utopians, we do not dream of dispensing at once with all administration, with all subordination. . . . No, we want the socialist revolution with people as they are now, with people who cannot dispense with sub-

ordination, control and 'foremen and accountants'. The subordination, however, must be to the armed vanguard of all the exploited and working people, i.e., to the proletariat. . . . We, the workers, shall organize large-scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict, iron discipline backed up by the state power of the armed workers." (298)

Beyond the problems of authority inherited from the old order, moreover, Lenin argues, there will always be a certain amount of subordination and authority which is technically determined: "The technique of all these enterprises [large-scale industrial production] makes absolutely imperative the strictest discipline, the utmost precision on the part of everyone carrying out his allotted task, for otherwise the whole enterprise may come to a stop, or machinery or the finished product may be damaged." (342) Finally, the proletarian state would be quite centralized, but it would be a quite different kind of centralism from that of capitalist societies: It would "oppose conscious democratic, proletarian centralism to bourgeois, military, bureaucratic centralism." (301)

Lenin was unwilling in *The State and Revolution* to give more than a very general image of what the structures of a socialist society would be like. He strongly felt that to attempt to construct *a priori* blueprints for the "good" society was a form of utopianism. He argued that the concrete forms of the socialist state would emerge in a dialectical process from the attempt at building socialism: "To develop democracy to the utmost, to find the forms for this development, to test them by practice, and so forth—all this is one of the component tasks of the struggle for the social revolution. Taken separately, no kind of democracy will bring socialism. But in actual life democracy will never be 'taken separately'; it will be 'taken together' with other things, it will exert its influence on economic life as well, will stimulate its transformation; and in its turn it will be influenced by economic development, and so on. This is the dialectics of living history." (320)

Comparisons

There is a very curious combination of close convergences and polar divergences between Weber's and Lenin's analyses of poli-

tics and bureaucracy. The basic starting points of their discussions are quite different: Weber is generally concerned with the problem of the *formal rationality* of political structures and in particular with the factors that contribute to political effectiveness and responsibility; Lenin, in contrast, is much more concerned with questions of *substantive rationality*, with the relationship of state structures to the class *ends* that they serve. Both arguments, however, pivot around a very similar critique of bureaucratic domination and of parliamentary institutions that are purely "speech-making" assemblies (Weber) or "talking shops" (Lenin). Although in *The State and Revolution* Lenin never specifically addresses the problem of leadership effectiveness and responsibility which is so important to Weber, he does agree with Weber that when representative institutions are powerless, the real centre of power shifts to the bureaucracy. Both men agree that this tends to facilitate the political domination of purely capitalist interests. There is even one aspect of the solution to the problem that both Lenin and Weber share: the need to create representative institutions that are active, *working* bodies. But they differ substantially in the overall thrust of their conclusions: Lenin calls for the replacement of bureaucracy and parliamentary representation by "soviet" political institutions; Weber argues that soviets are unworkable and advocates instead the development of powerful, elitist working parliaments. The following comparison will try to illuminate the critical differences in the underlying assumptions about the social world which lead to these different conclusions.

Before examining those assumptions, it will be useful to juxtapose Lenin's and Weber's general arguments. (In order to make the steps in the arguments parallel, the order and form of the propositions have been somewhat changed from the presentation in the two previous sections.)

Weber

1. When parliament is merely a speechmaking assembly, the result is uncontrolled bureaucratic domination, which serves the interests of

Lenin

1. With parliament being merely a talking shop, the real centres of state power are located in the bureaucracy, which is controlled by and

capitalists and produces ineffective and irresponsible political leadership.

2. However, bureaucracies are inevitable and necessary given the conditions of modern technology and production, and the mass scale of the modern state.

3. Since bureaucracy cannot be eliminated, the problem is to create guarantees that will prevent bureaucrats from overstepping their proper place and controlling the political direction of the bureaucracy.

4. It is therefore necessary to develop institutions that will be able to create politically responsible and competent political leadership to direct that supervision.

5. This can only be done through a strong, working parliament which can control the bureaucracy.

serves the interests of the capitalist class.

2. Bureaucracy is not a technological imperative necessitated by modern technology and mass administration; it is a specifically *political* imperative for the stability of capitalism and the domination of the bourgeoisie.

3. In a capitalist society it is inevitable that representative institutions will be mere talking shops designed to fool the people; nothing can prevent the bureaucracy from being the real centre of power in advanced capitalist societies.

4. If socialism is to be established, institutions must be created that make it possible for the working class to be organized as the ruling class and that will make the masses politically sophisticated, class conscious participants in state administration.

5. This can only be accomplished by smashing parliament and bureaucracy and replacing them by a dictatorship of the proletariat organized in working assemblies and soviet administration.

The assumptions underlying these two trains of reasoning will be discussed under four general headings: (1) the determinants of organizational structure; (2) the nature of the state and politics; (3) organizational structure and accountability; (4) contradictions and the limits on the possible.

The Determinants of Organizational Structure

One of the serious difficulties in comparing Weber's and Lenin's conceptions of the determinants of organizational structure is that they use terms such as "bureaucracy", "technician", and "official" in quite different ways. In part, these different usages reflect merely semantic differences, but in important ways they also reflect theoretical differences.

Lenin differentiates between three basic organizational functions—policy-making, control-accounting, and "administration"—in his analysis of bureaucracy and the state, whereas Weber makes the distinction between only two—policy-making and administration.¹⁴ We will leave the discussion of policy-making to the next section (on the nature of the state) and focus here on the implications of Lenin's distinction between technical-administrative functions and accounting-control functions.

Throughout his analysis of bureaucracy, Lenin stresses the distinction between "bureaucrats" and "technicians". The former role corresponds to the control and accounting functions in organizations; the latter, to the technical-administrative functions. Weber does not ignore the issue of control and accounting in his discussion of bureaucracy, but he does not regard them as a distinctive function in the same way that Lenin does. Nowhere, moreover, does Weber emphasize the distinction between technical and bureaucratic roles in bureaucratic organizations. Control and accounting are partially absorbed as an integral part of the administrative func-

14. I am using the word "administration" here in a way that does not entirely correspond to either Lenin's or to Weber's usage, although it is closer to Lenin's. Lenin uses the expression "administration" to describe that aspect of public bureaucracies that would be left when bureaucrats would be replaced by officials elected by the people. I will use the term as a general expression to describe the function of executing policies or carrying out orders formulated by the political directorate.

tion of carrying out policy and partially absorbed in the function of policy-making itself.

This problem of the control and accounting functions in bureaucratic organizations bears directly on the question of the determinants of organizational structure. Both Lenin and Weber agree that those structural characteristics most closely related to the technical-administrative function are substantially determined by the technological and material conditions of modern society. But unlike Weber, Lenin does not feel that the control and accounting functions are determined in this same way. While the technical features of production may have become increasingly complex with capitalist development, Lenin argues that the strictly control and accounting functions "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". (294) In capitalist society these intrinsically simple functions of control and accounting are in the hands of bureaucrats, "i.e., privileged persons divorced from the people and standing above the people" (347), not because it is *technically* necessary or efficient, but because it is *politically* necessary for the bureaucratic apparatus to be effective in controlling the proletariat. This separation of officials from the people is further mystified by the "official grandeur" of bureaucratic positions, which has led most workers to *believe* that they would be incapable of participating in administration. Finally, the factual absence of any participation by the people in politics has meant that these skills, even though fundamentally simple, have not been cultivated in most workers. The result is a pervasive mystification of the entire apparatus of the state. Weber, needless to say, disagrees strongly with Lenin. He feels that the administrative tasks of the bureaucracy—including the control and accounting activities—are extremely complex and that the masses are in fact incapable of effectively performing them.

The Nature of the State and Politics: Elite-Organization vs. Class-Structure

The different assumptions that underlie Lenin's and Weber's conceptions of the state are reflected in their very definitions of

the state. Weber first defines the notion of "organization" and then defines the state as a special kind of organization.

organization: "A social relationship which is either closed or limits the admission of outsiders will be called an organization when its regulations are enforced by specific individuals: a chief and, possibly, an administrative staff." (48)

political organization: "A 'ruling organization' will be called 'political' insofar as its existence and order is continuously safeguarded within a given territorial area by the threat and application of physical force on the part of the administrative staff." (54)

the state: "A compulsory political organization with continuous operations will be called a 'state' insofar as it successfully upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order." (54)

Weber then makes the important following elaboration: "It is not possible to define a political organization, including the state, in terms of the end to which its action is devoted. All the way from the provision for subsistence to the patronage of art, there is no conceivable end which *some* political association has not at some time pursued. From the protection of personal security to the administration of justice, there is none which *all* have recognized. Thus it is possible to define the 'political' character of an organization only in terms of the *means* peculiar to it, the use of force." (55) At the core of this definition of the state, therefore, there is an individual—the chief—and his staff which have at their disposal a distinctive kind of means—the monopoly of the legitimate use of force. Under certain circumstances the "chief" might be a group of people—a collegial body—but it is *never* a "class". Together the chief and his staff constitute an elite which controls this special kind of organization and uses it for a wide variety of purposes.

Lenin's notion of the state also centres around the use of force but it differs from Weber's definition in two central respects:

First, *the state is assumed to serve a specific function*, the suppression of class struggle and the maintenance of the domination of the ruling class (whatever that class might be). An institution or structure which did not serve such a function could not be a state in Lenin's analysis.

Second, *the state is conceived more as a "structure"* than simply

an organization controlled by an elite.¹⁵ Of course, in many ways Lenin also conceives of the state as a special organization and frequently he discusses the concrete "connections" between the bourgeoisie and the state, the specific ways in which they influence it and control it. When Lenin discusses the state in these terms, he is not particularly inconsistent with Weber's usage. What is different is that Lenin also sees the state as an apparatus that by its very structure supports the domination of a particular ruling class. What is most important to Lenin about the "policy-making function" is not primarily the concrete individuals who make the policies, but rather the class whose rule is guaranteed by the structures within which those policies are formulated.

In short, Weber's concept of the state centres on the ways in which *elites* control a particular kind of *organization*; Lenin's conception of the state centres on the ways in which *classes* rule through a particular kind of *structure*.

Organizational Form and Accountability

The difference between an elite-organizational and a class-structural conception of the state bears directly on Weber's and Lenin's treatments of the problem of powerless parliaments and bureaucracy. Weber sees the powerlessness of parliament and the resulting uncontrolled domination of the bureaucracy as fundamentally an *organizational and leadership problem*, the only solution for which is the creation of a special organizational form—a strong working parliament. Whether or not such a strong working parliament will exist in a particular situation Weber largely attributes to contingent historical circumstances, to the actions of great men and the accidents of great events. In the case of Germany, the potential for the development of a viable working parliamentary organization

15. "Structure" is a much broader and more complex notion than "organization". Lenin, of course, does not formalize his concept of the state in these terms and thus would not have had the occasion to define "structure". The important point in the present context is that when the state is regarded as a "structure", it is no longer conceived of as a tightly bounded instrument (organization) which can be "controlled"; rather, it is conceived of as a complex network of institutions, organizations, and social relationships, or, to use Nicos Poulantzas's expression, "the organizing matrix behind institutions". (See *Political Power and Social Classes*, London 1973, p. 115n.)

had been severely damaged by the anti-parliamentary policies of one statesman, Bismarck.

Lenin sees the issue very differently. Parliaments are powerless and bureaucracies tend to be the site of the "real work of government" not because of some particular organizational failure, but because of the *structural requirements* of the stable domination of the capitalist class. Especially, in the "age of imperialism", when class struggle has become particularly intense and working class political parties potentially very strong, the bourgeoisie cannot rely on representative institutions to guarantee its rule, and thus it has tended to turn increasingly to the "executive" as the primary structure of class domination. The problem is not that parliamentary committees are not strong enough, that certain parliaments lack the formal constitutional right of inquiry, or that any particular statesman adopts strategies that undermine the stature of parliament. The problem is that parliament has ceased to be functional as an organ of class domination (but not as an instrument for legitimation—thus the maintenance of parliaments as "talking shops") for the bourgeoisie, and as a result, over a period of time, class conscious political leaders of the capitalist class have taken steps to see to it that parliamentary power has been reduced. From Lenin's perspective, therefore, the particular policies of a statesman like Bismarck, or the organizational failures of a particular kind of parliament should be understood as the *occasion* for the ascendancy of bureaucratic domination, but not as the crucial *cause* of that ascendancy.

Given Lenin's analysis of the causes of the powerlessness of parliaments and of bureaucratic domination, he sees the solution not in terms of organizational reform designed to cultivate effective leadership, but rather in terms of revolutionary change in the underlying class structure of the society (i.e., replacing the bourgeoisie by the proletariat as the ruling class). This does not mean that organizational structure is unimportant to Lenin. He spends a great deal of time, after all, saying how the specific structures of the capitalist state are incompatible with working class rule. But he treats those organizational characteristics as conceptually subordinate to the question of the class structure as such. Organizational structure becomes a kind of intervening variable that stabilizes and

generalizes the rule of a particular class, that rule being rooted in the basic class relations of the society. As a result of this emphasis on the class determination of organizational structure, Lenin never systematically deals with the problem of organizational accountability. The problem of accountability is solved for Lenin not by creating special organizational devices for controlling leadership, but by transforming the class structure within which any organizational form will operate. The assumption is that without such a transformation, no organizational form whatsoever could create a political leadership responsible and accountable to the working class, and that once the question of class domination is practically dealt with, the solution to the specifically organizational problems will be relatively straightforward.¹⁶

In Weber's analysis, Lenin's formulation is quite inadequate. Classes as such cannot rule; only individuals and small groups can actually run the state. At best such elites can formally be the representatives in a general way of a "class" and govern "in its name".¹⁷ What is decisive for the character of a society to Weber is much less which class the elite represents than the organizational structure of domination with which it governs. What matters most in modern society, whether capitalist or socialist, is the enormous power of the bureaucracy, and the most important political issue is whether or not organizational

16. This subordination of organizational issues to class structure creates an important asymmetry in Lenin's analysis. Because Lenin can observe the organizational consequences of bourgeois class domination, he can in considerable detail attack those organizational structures and show how they would be incompatible with proletarian rule. But since proletarian class domination does not yet exist, he cannot observe the organizational consequences of that class structure, and thus he is forced to remain quite vague about what those organizations would look like: "That is why we are entitled to speak only of the inevitable withering away of the state, emphasizing the protracted nature of this process and its dependence upon the rapidity of the development of the higher phase of communism, and leaving the question of the time required for, or the concrete forms of, the withering away quite open, because there is no material for answering these questions." (333)

17. Weber's position on the question of "class rule" is similar to that of Karl Kautsky, who insisted that a class "can only dominate but not govern." Lenin totally rejected such a position. In *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Lenin wrote: "It is altogether wrong, also, to say that a class cannot govern. Such an absurdity can only be uttered by a parliamentary *cretin* who sees nothing but bourgeois parliaments, who has noticed nothing but 'ruling parties.'"

forms will be created to contain that bureaucratic domination. In short, unless the organizational problem of accountability is solved, it matters little which class formally dominates. Lenin argues the exact opposite: unless the problem of class rule is solved, it matters little whether or not leadership is formally accountable.

The Meaning of Contradictions and the Limits on the Possible

Weber and Lenin suffer from complementary forms of theoretical underdevelopment, which have critical consequences for their ultimate conclusions. To state the contrast in somewhat simplified terms: Weber has an elaborate theory of organizational contradictions, but an underdeveloped theory of social contradictions; Lenin has a relatively developed theory of social contradictions, but a limited theory of organizational contradictions.

This theoretical underdevelopment has two critical consequences in Lenin's analysis. First, in Lenin's analysis of capitalist society, there is a partial fusion of his critique of capitalism as such and a critique of complex organizations. Bureaucratic organization is condemned because it serves capitalist interests in a capitalist society. While this may be true—even Weber says as much—it does not follow that this constitutes a criticism of bureaucracy as such. Without a theory of organizations, a theory of the internal dynamics and processes of organizations, it is not possible to see which criticisms should be directed at the distinctively capitalist context of bureaucracy and which should be directed at the bureaucratic structures themselves. While Lenin is probably correct that such a theory of internal, organizational processes can be understood only in the context of an analysis of class relations, his critique of capitalist organizational structures suffers from not developing such a theory.

Second, in Lenin's analysis of socialism there is virtually no analysis of the internal contradictions of soviet structures of organization. Lenin certainly does see conflict *between* soviet institutions and the "remnants" of capitalist society, but he does not see any contradictions *within* the organizational structures

of soviets themselves. Lenin felt that the main threat to the viability of soviet organization came from the tendencies towards bureaucratization surviving from bourgeois society. In his analysis, two processes were seen as potentially counter-acting these bureaucratic pressures: (1) The vanguard party of the proletariat would actively assume the leadership role in building soviet institutions. The party would struggle against bureaucratic elements and would directly intervene in state activities to strengthen the participation of the masses in state administration. (2) As soviet organization became more and more pervasive, it would tend to inhibit the growth of bureaucracy. Since direct democracy and bureaucracy are antithetical principles of political organization, Lenin implicitly reasons that as the former becomes stronger and expands, the latter will necessarily become weaker and decline.

Weber would have sharply disagreed with Lenin's model of soviet organization in two main respects. First, he would have questioned the possibility of any political party being capable of operating in ways to strengthen soviet institutions. While the "vanguard party" might be formally committed to such intervention, Weber would argue that unless the leadership of the party were somehow systematically held accountable for their actions, there would be no guarantee that they would not themselves undermine soviet institutions. This would be especially likely since, like all mass organizations in modern society, the party itself would, in Weber's view, inevitably become bureaucratized. Second, Weber would strongly differ with Lenin's view of the relationship of direct democracy to bureaucratic growth: far from reducing bureaucratic tendencies, soviet institutions and all other forms of direct democracy (or plebiscitary democracy) in fact tend to increase bureaucratization. Thus, there is a fundamental contradiction in soviet organization, Weber would argue: on the one hand, soviets increase workers' formal participation in government and make the state seem much more democratic; on the other hand, soviet institutions would significantly increase bureaucracy, thus reducing substantive democracy and the real power of the working class.

Lenin never really provided a systematic answer to the first criticism, at least not in *The State and Revolution*. His fundamental belief was that the vanguard party, in which he had

enormous faith, would in fact function as a positive force for building soviet institutions, but he provides little reasoning to support this belief. In a curious way, the vanguard party occupies a position in Lenin's analysis parallel to the working parliament in Weber's: The party is an elite organization led by professional revolutionaries trained in the art of politics and capable, after the revolution, of providing firm leadership of the state apparatus in the interests of the proletariat. The critical problem is the lack of an adequate theory of the mechanisms which produce and reproduce this "leadership" capacity. For Weber the problem was fairly simple: the competitive political struggle of competing parties within a working parliament provided the structural mechanism whereby such a parliament could generate the necessary leadership to control the bureaucracy. Lenin never develops as specific a notion of precisely how the party would fulfil that role and of what mechanisms would keep the party responsive to the working class.¹⁸

Against the second criticism Lenin does have an implicit defence which rests on two assumptions: first, a belief in the essential simplicity of the control and accounting functions of administration and the capacity for the average worker to manage such functions; second, a belief that it was only the control and accounting functions, not the "purely technical" functions, that posed a serious threat of bureaucratic anti-democratic power. If both of these assumptions were correct, then it would be reasonable that literate workers, organized in democratic soviets, could gradually take over the control and accounting functions of administration and thus check the tendencies towards bureaucratization. If either assumption is incorrect,

18. Calling the Party the "vanguard" and proclaiming its leadership role does not help to articulate the real mechanisms which substantively tie it to the working class as a class and make the Party a vehicle for meaningful working class rule. Ralph Miliband has formulated this serious problem in Lenin's writings well: "What is the relationship between the *proletariat* whose dictatorship the revolution is deemed to establish, and the *party* which educates, leads, directs, organizes etc.? It is only on the basis of an *assumption* of a symbiotic, organic relationship between the two, that the question vanishes altogether; but while such a relationship may well have existed between the Bolshevik Party and the Russian proletariat in the months before the October Revolution, i.e., when Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution*, the assumption that this kind of relationship can ever be taken as an automatic and permanent fact belongs to the rhetoric of power, not to its reality." See "The State and Revolution", *Monthly Review*, Vol 11, No 11, 1970.

however, then Weber's criticisms would have to be taken more seriously.

The first assumption has a certain face validity to it. Given a general spread of education among workers, a shortening of the work week as a result of production for use instead of exchange and a general ideological commitment for mass participation in such control and accounting functions, it is at least plausible that such activities could be organized eventually in a genuinely democratic manner. While the immediate conditions for such democratic control of control and accounting might have been extremely unfavourable in Russia in 1917—because of mass illiteracy, the small size of the working class, the difficulty in shortening the work week to provide time for politics, etc.—nevertheless the longer term prospects were potentially much brighter.

The second assumption—that experts do not pose a threat of bureaucratic usurpation—is more problematic. Weber's basic argument is that the purely technical expert, by virtue of his necessary control over information and knowledge, his familiarity with the files, etc., is in a strategic position to appropriate power. Certainly the Chinese experiences of the conflict between "reds" and "experts", in which there have occurred strong tendencies for technical experts to encourage the growth of bureaucracy, reflects the potential forces for bureaucratization that lie within what Lenin considered to be the purely technical aspects of administration. While it is still an unresolved question whether or not a revolutionary, mass democratic control of the proletarian state is possible, the organizational problems and contradictions of such control are considerably more complex than Lenin acknowledged.¹⁹

Let us now look more carefully at the theoretical one-sidedness of Weber's analysis. In some ways Weber is much more slippery than Lenin. Lenin was a political militant. He was interested in highlighting points polemically, not in cov-

19. Lenin might have been correct that pure experts do not pose much of a direct threat of usurping political power. However, because of their positions of control over information, they may potentially be able to undermine or neutralize the political initiative of the working class. In this sense, they have considerable negative power—power to obstruct. This could create a sufficient political vacuum to allow bureaucrats proper to assume a much more important political role.

ering all his tracks for potential scholarly critics. Weber was an academician, who skilfully qualified most of the theoretical claims which he made. While Lenin almost entirely ignored the theoretical problems of organizational contradictions, Weber was careful at least to touch on everything. His problem is generally less one of absolute omissions, than of the relative emphasis and elaboration he gives various theoretical issues. In particular, his analysis lacks a developed conception of social contradictions within which organizational processes occur. This affects Weber's analysis in three inter-related ways.

First, Weber tends to ignore or minimize the relationship of the growth of bureaucracy (and the development of the state apparatus in general) to class struggle in capitalist society. Weber's basic model of bureaucratic development centres on the need for rational, predictable administration for capitalist enterprises to be able to make efficient calculations in their production decisions. The central variable which underlies the explanation is the need for *rationality*. Lenin emphasizes the need in capitalist society for the bureaucratic *repression* of class struggle. Both of these models are developmental and dynamic rather than static, since both of them predict a progressively increasing level of bureaucratization in capitalist society. The difference is that Weber's model describes a harmonious rationalization process, while Lenin's depicts a contradictory social control process. Without denying the validity of Weber's insights, his model clearly represents a one-sided understanding of bureaucracy and the state.

Second, the absence of an elaborated theory of social contradictions raises serious questions about Weber's notion of "responsible" and "effective" political leadership. Weber sets out his argument as if political responsibility, effectiveness and competence are purely technical questions concerning the means rather than the ends of political life. Such political effectiveness, Weber argues, requires political leaders to have certain special skills that enable them to pursue competently whatever political goals they and their party are committed to. However, "responsibility" and "effectiveness" have very different meanings depending upon the total social structure in which that leadership operates. To be a "responsible" and "effective" political leader in the context of parliamentary politics in a

capitalist society *necessarily* implies furthering the *substantive* goals of capitalism by accommodating oppositional forces to the requirements of capitalist social order. This is not because of the malevolence of such party leadership, and it is not because of the purely internal tendencies towards bureaucratization and oligarchy within political organizations. Rather, it is because of the essential content of the processes of political effectiveness and responsibility, given the constraints of operating within the structural framework of capitalist institutions.

As Weber stresses, to be an effective political leader in a parliamentary system means to know how to negotiate compromises and form political alliances. This means that a "responsible" leader must refrain from pursuing demands and goals that are non-negotiable. Once a particular bargain is reached, he must uphold it and try to prevent his constituency and party from undermining it. Leadership effectiveness thus requires the acceptance of political goals that are compatible with the functioning of the existing social order. This does not mean, of course, that change is prohibited, but it does constrain change within limits determined by the structures of capitalist society.

Effectiveness and responsibility are thus not "neutral" dimensions of technical, formal rationality; they intrinsically embody certain broad political orientations. In fact, it can be said that the more responsible and effective the leadership of political parties (of the right and the left) is, the more they will orient their political activity towards consensus, negotiation, compromise, and accommodation, i.e., the more solidly will their goals fall within the limits of system-compatibility. Effectiveness and responsibility thus become transformed into manipulation and mystification.

The easy answer to these objections would be to deny the existence of real social contradictions in a capitalist social order. For if unresolvable class antagonisms do not exist, if there really does exist a potential for genuine social consensus, then the compromises and bargains negotiated through parliamentary politics could be conceived in terms of a purely technical political effectiveness. Although there are parts of Weber's writings that seem to approach this pluralist image of a fundamentally harmonious social order, he more generally

acknowledges the existence of social classes with antagonistic and even irreconcilable class interests. Given this acknowledgement of real class divisions, Weber's plea for responsible, effective political leadership becomes a programme for stabilizing and strengthening capitalist hegemony.

Third, even aside from the question of the meaning of leadership effectiveness and responsibility, Weber's solution to the problem of bureaucratic domination in capitalist society—the creation of strong parliamentary institutions—tends to minimize the relationship of parliamentary institutions to class domination. While Weber does say that a weak parliament is functional for capitalist interests, he definitely does not say that parliaments are weak because of capitalist class domination. They are weak because of weak parliamentary traditions, constitutional obstacles, the policies of particular statesmen, rather than because of the basic requirements of capitalist domination. At best in Weber's discussion of parliaments, such social contradictions are treated as background variables; they are never systematically integrated into his analysis.

Just as Lenin's "solution" in effect abstracts the problems of constructing socialism from the real organizational contradictions of soviet institutions, Weber's "solution" abstracts parliamentary institutions from the social contradictions of capitalist society. While it might be true that a strong working parliament would be an effective check on bureaucracy if such a parliament could exist, it seems highly questionable that such an institution is possible given the contradictions of advanced capitalist society. Weber, of course, was very pessimistic about the long-term durability of parliaments. His pessimism, however, was always based on the organizational problems faced by parliaments when confronting the ever-expanding bureaucracy; he almost never discussed the relationship of parliamentary power to the general social contradictions in capitalist society.

Elements of a Synthesis: Class Struggle and Organizational Structure

Lenin never believed that a socialist revolution would instantly demolish bureaucratic structures. To imagine such an immedi-

ate transformation was, he always insisted, utterly utopian. However, Lenin did not anticipate the durability of bureaucratic structures after the revolution, and he certainly did not expect to see a widening rather than a narrowing of the scope of bureaucracy. In the Eighth Party Congress in 1919, Lenin acknowledged the problem of persistent bureaucracy. "We have been hearing complaints about bureaucracy for a long time," he wrote; "the complaints are undoubtedly well-founded". After briefly discussing the relative success in the debureaucratization of the judicial system, Lenin then went on to explain: "The employees in the other spheres of government are more hardened bureaucrats. The task here is more difficult. We cannot live without this apparatus; every branch of government creates a demand for such an apparatus. Here we are suffering from the fact that Russia was not sufficiently developed as a capitalist country. Germany, apparently, will suffer less from this because her bureaucratic apparatus passed through an extensive school, which sucks people dry but compels them to work and not just wear out armchairs, as happens in our offices."²⁰ Several years later, in a letter concerning the reorganization of the council of people's commissars written in 1922, Lenin seemed much more despondent about the problem: "We are being sucked down by the rotten bureaucratic swamp into writing papers, jawing about decrees, drawing up decrees—and in this sea of paper, live work is being drowned."²¹

How did Lenin explain this persistence of bureaucratic forms and the difficulty of their eradication? Two themes underscore most of his accounts of the problem: (1) the low level of *culture*

20. *Collected Works*. Vol 29, Moscow 1965, p. 182.

21. In this letter Lenin went on to suggest what should be done about the bureaucratic morass: "work out written regulations for the bringing forward and consideration of questions, and check not less than once a month, you personally, whether the regulations are being observed and whether they are achieving their object, i.e., reduction of paper work, red tape, more sense of responsibility on the part of the People's Commissars, replacement of half-baked decrees by careful, prolonged, business-like checking-up on fulfilment and by checking of experience, establishment of personal responsibility (in effect, *we have complete irresponsibility at the top . . .*") *On the Soviet State Apparatus*, Moscow 1969, pp. 331–332.

Ironically, in Weber's terms Lenin's suggestions amount to an intensification of bureaucratic structures, especially in the injunction to establish written regulations and regular check-ups on their application. It should also be noticed

and education of the Russian masses;²² and (2) the low level of *economic* and industrial development of the Soviet Union.²³ Nowhere, to my knowledge, does Lenin emphasize the specifically *political* dynamic at work in the reproduction and extension of bureaucratic structures in the post-revolutionary state apparatus.

We thus have a curious irony: Lenin correctly understands that bureaucratic organizations are not technically necessary, but rather are socially generated by the political imperatives of class domination; yet, his explanations of continuing bureaucracy after the revolution are primarily in terms of economic and ideological (cultural) factors, not political ones. Weber, on the other hand, saw bureaucracy as strictly technically-economically necessary, but saw the solutions to the "problem" of bureaucracy in exclusively political terms. While one might

that in this letter Lenin bemoans the *irresponsibility* of the top of bureaucratic offices, much as Weber criticized the irresponsibility of the top levels of the Prussian bureaucracy.

22. For example, in his discussion of bureaucracy at the Eighth Party Congress, Lenin contrasts the *legal* obstacles to direct democracy in the bourgeois republics with the *cultural* obstacles in the Soviet Republic: "We can fight bureaucracy to the bitter end, to a complete victory, only when the whole population participates in the work of government. In the bourgeois republics not only is this impossible but *the law itself prevents it . . .* What we have done, was to remove these hindrances, but so far we have not reached the stage at which the working people could participate in government. Apart from the law, there is still the level of culture, which you cannot subject to any law. The result of this cultural level is that the Soviets, which by virtue of their programme are organs of government *by the working people*, are in fact organs of government *for the working people* by the advanced sections of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole. Here we are confronted by a problem which cannot be solved except by prolonged education." *Collected Works*, Vol 29, p. 183.

23. Aside from frequent general references to the "low level of development", Lenin makes the following specific reference to economic conditions and bureaucracy in his pamphlet "The Tax in Kind": "The evils of bureaucracy are not in the army, but in the institutions serving it. In our country bureaucratic practices have different economic roots [from those in bourgeois republics], namely, the atomised and scattered state of the small producers with their poverty, illiteracy, lack of culture, the absence of roads and *exchange* between agriculture and industry, the absence of connection and interaction between them." At the end of the essay he suggests that trade and exchange relations would help to alleviate bureaucratic evils: "Exchange is freedom of trade; it is capitalism. It is useful to us inasmuch as it will help us overcome the dispersal of the small producer, and to a certain degree combat the evils of bureaucracy; to what extent this can be done will be determined by practical experience." *Collected Works*, Vol 32, p. 351.

be able to explain this absence of a political discussion of bureaucracy in Lenin after the revolution in terms of the political conditions and struggles which he faced, nevertheless, the absence of such an analysis leaves his theory of bureaucracy seriously incomplete.

What we need to do, therefore, is to link more systematically the social-economic determinants of bureaucratic structure to the political determinants. The model of determination in Figure 4.1 attempts to lay out the basic shape of these relationships. Of particular importance in the present context are the diverse ways in which the forms of political class struggle are linked to the social-economic structure, the political organizational capacities of classes and the bureaucratic structure of the state. First, the forms of political class struggle are structurally limited by the underlying social-economic structure, and structurally selected by the organizational capacities of classes and the structure of the state apparatus. Secondly, political class struggle transforms the social-economic structure, political capacities and the structure of the state itself. Finally, the forms of political struggle mediate the relations of determination between the social-economic structure, political capacities and the structure of the state. Most importantly in the present discussion, this means that depending upon the nature of these struggles, the effects on state structures of the same underlying social-economic conditions will be different.

In terms of this heuristic model, Weber's analysis can be seen as primarily examining the linkages on the outside of the diagram. Weber paid particular attention to the ways in which social-economic conditions (or more precisely, technical-economic conditions) set limits on the structure of the state (rationalization and bureaucratization in response to the technical needs of industrial society); and the ways in which the political organizational capacities (the strength and vitality of parliamentary institutions) selects specific kinds of bureaucratic structures from within those limits (greater or lesser control of the bureaucracy by responsible, political leadership). Lenin was also concerned with the relationship of the social-economic structure to the structure of the state apparatuses (capitalist class domination produces bureaucratic administration), but he was much more interested than Weber with the

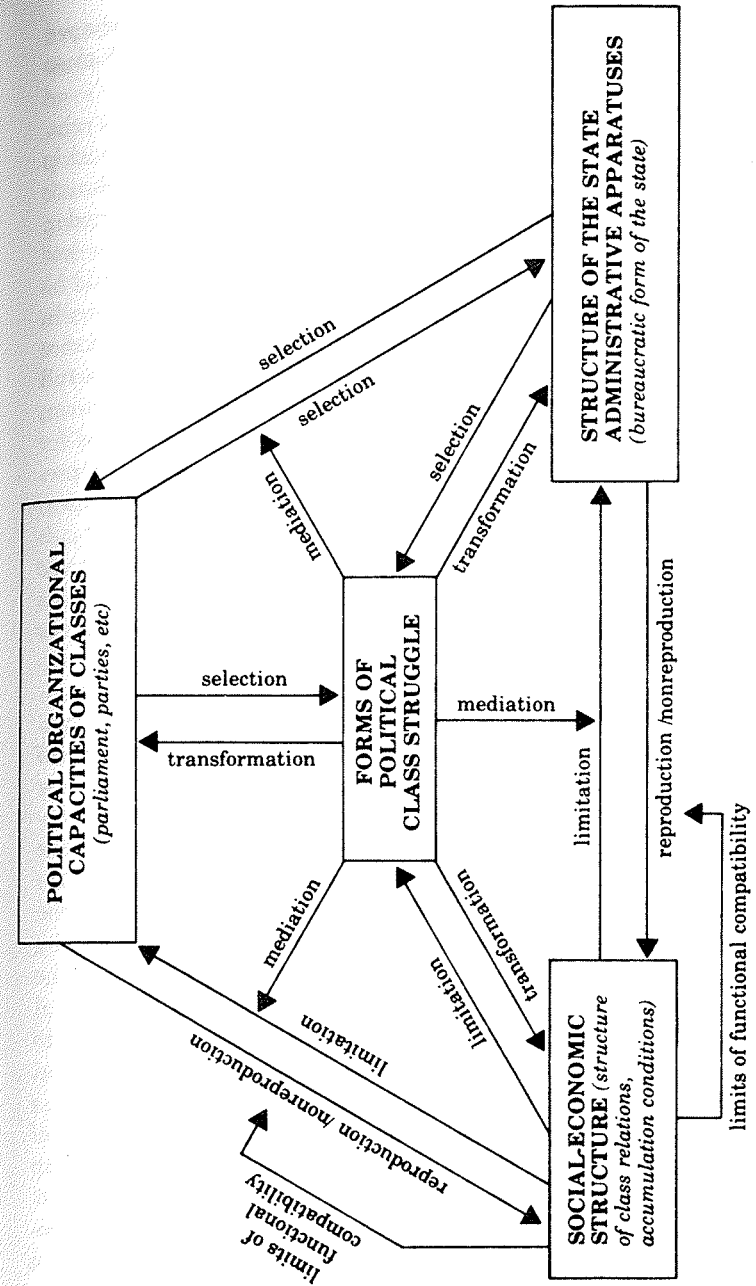


Figure 4.1 Model of Determination of the Bureaucratic Structure of the State Apparatuses

inside of the diagram: the ways in which class struggle is shaped by social and political structures and the ways in which class struggle transforms those structures.

Neither theorist, however, explicitly grappled with the relationship of mediation in a systematic way. It is this relationship which is particularly important in understanding the resilience of bureaucratic organization in the post-revolutionary period in the Soviet Union. Lenin was absolutely correct that the low cultural and economic level of Russia meant that it would be impossible immediately to destroy bureaucratic structures in the state, and that as a result it was of tremendous importance to create the economic and ideological preconditions for a full transition to socialism. What Lenin underestimated, however, was the importance of creating the political preconditions for the control of bureaucratic structures. In the terms of the present discussion, this would have meant specifying how political struggles could mediate the relationship of economic and cultural conditions to state structures and thus affect the shape and strength of those inevitable bureaucratic structures. To the extent that Lenin saw the problem in political terms, it was mainly as a "selection" problem: i.e., how the party might intervene in various bureaucratic organizations to improve the quality of their administration, to eliminate excesses, etc. (see footnote 20 above). He did not see this problem primarily in terms of a genuine political mediation process.

If this is the correct way to pose the problem of the relationship of political struggle to bureaucratization, then the question is: what kind of mediation was necessary? What forms of political struggle could have had the result of reducing the pressures towards bureaucratic expansion generated by economic and social conditions? What developments in the post-1917 period were most decisive in shaping the political mediations which actually did occur? Without pretending to have an adequate answer to these questions, it can be said that the progressive erosion of intra-party democracy as well as inter-party competition (i.e., the prohibition on the formation of intra-party factions and the abolition of all parties other than the Bolsheviks) were among the key developments in this process of political mediation. A deeper form of proletarian democracy would not have eliminated bureaucracy; and it would not

necessarily have guaranteed that the bureaucracy which continued to function would have been more efficient. But it would have changed the political terrain on which that bureaucracy was reproduced, by creating a broader mass of politically trained and sophisticated workers. This is not to say that such choices *could* have been made by the young Soviet Republic given the enormous pressures which it confronted. It might well have been utopian to attempt a thorough-going proletarian democracy in the 1920s. But whatever the causes of the choices which were made, the longer term consequence of the specific political mediations which historically emerged after the Revolution was to reproduce and strengthen bureaucracy and to undermine the political capacity of the working class.

This is the fundamental truth to Weber's analysis: bureaucratic power feeds on the political incapacity of non-bureaucrats and reinforces that incapacity. In his analysis, the pivotal category of non-bureaucrats was the parliamentary elite, and thus he was preoccupied with the problem of how to develop their political capacity. Within Marxist theory, the critical category of non-bureaucrats is the working class. The decisive question is, therefore, how to develop and strengthen the political capacity of this class, i.e., how to forge strong and meaningful social relations among workers at the political level. This can only be accomplished through the direct participation of workers in political struggles and political organizations—which means that after a socialist revolution, it is essential that the institutions of proletarian democracy be constantly defended and deepened.

In the following chapter we will examine what such political mediation means in contemporary capitalist societies.