

# Political Sociology

The CONTEMPORARY ESSAYS Series

*Selected Essays*

GENERAL EDITOR: LEONARD W. LEVY

Edited by  
Lewis A. Coser



HARPER TORCHBOOKS  The Academy Library  
Harper & Row, Publishers  
New York, Evanston, and London

## POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Compilation, Notes, and Introduction  
copyright © 1966 by Lewis A. Coser.

Printed in the United States of America.

All rights reserved.

First edition: HARPER TORCHBOOKS, 1967,  
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.,  
10 East 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10022.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 67-10672.

## Contents

1. INTRODUCTION *by* Lewis A. Coser 1
  2. THE FIELD OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY  
*by* Reinhard Bendix & Seymour M. Lipset 9
  3. SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE RULING CLASS  
*by* Raymond Aron 48
  4. MASS SUFFRAGE, SECRET VOTING AND POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION *by* Stein Rokkan 101
  5. POWER AND COMMUNITY STRUCTURE  
*by* Peter H. Rossi 132
  6. THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AS AN ECOLOGY  
OF GAMES *by* Norton E. Long 146
  7. THE ROLE OF ECONOMIC DOMINANTS IN  
COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURE  
*by* Robert O. Schulze 167
  8. SMALL BUSINESSMEN, POLITICAL TOLERANCE  
AND SUPPORT FOR MCCARTHY  
*by* Martin Trow 181
  9. SOCIAL CLASS AND BRITISH POLITICS  
*by* Mark Abrams 204
  10. POLITICIZATION OF THE ELECTORATE IN FRANCE  
AND THE UNITED STATES  
*by* Philip E. Converse & Georges Dupeux 216
  11. PROSPECTS FOR THE NEW NATIONS: TOTALITARI-  
ANISM, AUTHORITARIANISM OR DEMOCRACY?  
*by* Lewis A. Coser 247
- SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 272

discusses some of the institutional dynamics which are likely to shape the political face of the new nations of Asia and Africa.

It is to be hoped that these modest samples will whet the reader's appetite for more. The ample footnotes to the present offerings might guide him to other work.

## 2. The Field of Political Sociology

Reinhard Bendix & Seymour M. Lipset

*EDITORIAL NOTE: Professors Bendix's and Lipset's authoritative introduction to and survey of the field of Political Sociology hardly needs comment. Both authors, jointly and separately, have done yeoman's service in introducing the subject in American sociology and in legitimizing it. Their contributions to political sociology are of the first order.*

*Professor Bendix was born in Europe and his familiarity with several European cultures and their languages has allowed him to range widely and to eschew the ethnocentrism and parochialism that so often hamper American scholars. In addition his broad knowledge of history has allowed him to pursue comparative studies both in geographical space and in historical time.*

*Professor Lipset has made major contributions to the analysis of the internal structure of political and union organizations. He has likewise been one of the foremost students of comparative political behavior. Like Bendix, he has ranged widely in his research on a variety of contemporary societies, though never oblivious of the historical roots of present-day problems. While his earlier work was, perhaps, more deeply influenced by Karl Marx and Robert Michels, more recently he has been under the spell of Tocqueville.*

*Most of the themes and intellectual traditions discussed in this essay have preoccupied the authors in their own substantive work. Hence this is not a routine introduction and summary; it should be taken rather as a summing up of the intellectual heritage and tradition of the authors.*

A generation ago it was still fashionable to debate whether or not sociology was a general or a special social science.

Today, specialization of empirical research has progressed so far that the remaining "generalists" are few in number, while ever new fields of "special study" are added to the discipline. Political sociology is one of these recent additions. The label is perhaps more novel than the field, since many classic studies in political sociology, such as those of Tocqueville, Bryce, Michels and Weber, came before this period of specialization. But the name was adopted to designate a series of studies which came into prominence in the early 1930s and which reflect the social and political upheavals brought about by the Communist revolution, the rise of Fascism and the second world war.

## I

A résumé of the studies which come under this general heading might be written as an essay in the sociology of knowledge. Political sociology may be said to comprise several lines of inquiry as well as several methods of investigation:

1. Voting behaviour in communities and in the nation (attitude and opinion research);
  2. Concentration of economic power and political decision-making (documentary evidence, mathematical models);
  3. Ideologies of political movements and interest groups (documentary evidence, content analysis);
  4. Political parties, voluntary associations, the problem of oligarchy and the psychological correlates of political behaviour (documentary evidence, attitude and opinion research, psychological testing, etc.);
  5. Government and the problem of bureaucracy (documentary evidence, attitude and opinion research, etc.).
- Though hardly delimited from one another, each of these lines of inquiry may be said to have a distinct intellectual history.

In the United States, studies of voting behaviour probably owe their initial impetus to certain developments in

sampling technique, questionnaire construction and interviewing, which had taken place in the field of market research, especially that sponsored by the radio industry. In Western Europe studies of voting behaviour were undertaken somewhat earlier and with a special emphasis upon voting as an index of regional differences in social structure. The chief concern of these studies has been to elucidate the social conditions of different types of electoral participation (or non-participation), in order to reveal the social processes underlying democratic institutions. Though little theoretical work has been done in connexion with studies of voting behaviour, it may be suggested that their chief impetus stems from an "interest theory" of political behaviour and goes back ultimately to the Marxian theory of class consciousness. For the effort to relate voting trends to various regional, ethnic, occupational and economic sub-groups of the population has a rationale only if it is assumed that these groupings are also interest-constellations of a certain if varying cohesiveness, so that changing voting trends may be said to result from the relation between changing issues and interest-constellations that are more or less enduring. To be sure, considerable refinements have been developed with regard to our understanding of the formulation and transmission of ideas. But these refinements have not altered the basic concern of voting studies with the social bases of political diversity in democratic societies. And special topics such as the extent and implications of non-voting show also that scientific knowledge is sought out of a concern with the survival of democracy.

Two other lines of inquiry in political sociology are closely related to the intellectual perspective of voting studies. First there are studies of the concentration of economic power. In the 1930s and early 1940s these were undertaken on the assumption that economic power was the independent and political decision-making the dependent variable. Since then this approach has been refined, as it was realized that political decisions were not a mere by-product of economic interest, but rather involved



judgements of strategy, and that these judgements were frequently oriented towards combining a maximum of profit and power with ensuring the stability of the society over time. And this recognition has led in turn towards the use of mathematical models in the analysis of decision-making, since the impossibility of simultaneously maximizing two values such as power and stability suggested the idea of a calculus of logically possible combinations between two or more values. Still, these refinements have not altered the rationalistic assumption which underlies an "interest theory" of political behaviour. While it is recognized that a calculus of strategies has the limitations of a normative model, little headway has as yet been made towards an empirical study of decisions which could be compared with the model.

The reason is, perhaps, that the other line of inquiry, the study of ideologies, has not undergone a comparable development. Interest in ideologies also originated in the Marxian theory of class consciousness, which sought to analyse the relation between the manifest beliefs of social groups and the more or less strong predisposition of such groups to accept other beliefs under changing historical conditions. The attraction of the Marxist theory depended upon its prediction of historical change. For if the future of contending social classes is known, then it is possible to predict the ascendance of latent over manifest beliefs, and the analysis of ideologies consequently becomes a political assessment of their retarding or advancing function. But if the future of history is not known, then the analysis of ideologies becomes a study of particular social groups and their belief-systems, the relation of which to the social and economic position of such groups is an empirical question. And as yet there are few studies which have related the empirical study of ideologies to an empirical study of political decision-making.

While the study of voting behaviour, of economic power and of ideologies may be said to derive from an "interest theory" of politics, the sociological study of political move-

ments has been largely a by-product of recent social changes in the distribution of power. During the nineteenth century, political parties were studied primarily as institutions which reflected and formalized the participation of established elite groups in the political process. Since the end of the nineteenth century, many political parties have changed from organizations of notables to organizations of the masses. And this change has made the intellectual perspectives of the sociologist and social psychologist more relevant than they had been. For as the masses have come to participate in party organizations, their relation to the active minority or oligarchy has come to be a matter of concern. The widespread apathy of the many appeared to place the great power of the mobilized masses into the hands of the few. This was the theme of Robert Michels' classic analysis, *Political Parties*, first published in 1911, though by studying the German social democrats Michels emphasized manipulation much more than mobilization. This concern with the rule of the few has been modified considerably in response to the rise of fascist mass parties. To be sure, there was as much (or more) rule by an oligarchy in Italian and German fascism as there had been in the Social Democrat Party. But fascism succeeded in mobilizing the masses, whereas the social democrats did not—and did not want to, either. Consequently, interest shifted to an analysis of the social and psychological factors which appeared to facilitate this mobilization of the masses. No amount of research on the power of oligarchies could fully answer that question. Instead, psychological analyses of "national character", and especially of the "authoritarian personality", sought to reveal why oligarchic manipulation had in fact been successful. Likewise, sociologists have sought to account for such manipulation by the ruling few, especially by their exploration of politics in relation to the emergence of a mass society.

Studies of institutions may be seen as yet another response to these challenges of the recent past. If political parties were examined because of a concern with the aristo-

cratic or oligarchic tendencies in society, governments and other hierarchic institutions came to be examined because of a concern with the bureaucratic tendencies in modern history. This preoccupation with bureaucracy arose also because nineteenth-century optimism had neglected it altogether, or had regarded it as an obstacle which political reforms would remove. But by the beginning of the twentieth century neither neglect nor easy optimism seemed appropriate any longer. First, studies of bureaucracy in government and industry were undertaken on the assumption that organizations could be made into models of efficiency by scientific study and appropriate reform. Subsequently, it was discovered that such organizations (and indeed the devices for increasing efficiency) had built-in sources of inefficiency, and studies were devoted to their analysis. These studies have revealed that the efficiency and inefficiency of hierarchical organizations are the product of internal politics as well as of formal organization and of the relation of both to the larger social and political environment. Hence, the analysis of institutions has moved from a concern with the rational or irrational aspects of bureaucracy to the study of the particular, external and internal conditions that affect decision-making and the more or less efficient achievement of stipulated goals.

These different lines of inquiry have elicited a great deal of interest, especially during the years following the second world war. We recognize, of course, that the studies we have grouped constitute a great variety of intellectual interests, reflecting the changing historical scene and changing political preoccupations. Nevertheless, we think these may be grouped under the general heading of "political sociology", and the sketchy survey just given suggests that this is because of the intellectual background which these studies appear to have in common. Though shorthand characterizations necessarily oversimplify, it appears to us that the common denominator of studies in political sociology consists in a refined "interest-theory" of political behaviour and in a political commitment to the values of democratic

institutions. Political sociology so far lacks a theoretical framework. A clear formulation of what appears to be a tacit consensus among Western scholars interested in political sociology may, therefore, serve a useful purpose.

## II

We begin by noting that the concern of political sociologists with the place of self-interest in social life runs counter to the major intellectual trends of the day. Though the issues involved are highly complex, the contrast can also be put quite simply. A scholar who emphasizes self-interest thereby commits himself to the view that uncertainty and deliberation play an important part in social action. During the last twenty years or so this view has been challenged under the combined influence of psychoanalysis, which emphasized the role of the unconscious, of emotional involvement, and of ego defences, and of sociology and anthropology, which emphasized that man's behaviour in society is largely the result of social norms and reciprocal expectations. As a consequence of this reorientation, it has been suggested that the nineteenth-century view of self-interest as an important determinant of conduct was hopelessly out of date. In particular it has been pointed out that self-interest could not really explain conduct, for what a man regarded as in his interest depended upon his judgement, and that judgement depended in turn upon the ego defences, social norms and reciprocal expectations which together made up his personality and his group life. Thus, self-interest tended to be dismissed as a surface phenomenon and scholars were admonished to address themselves to the "real" determinants of human conduct. As so often in the history of ideas, important new insights and a valid shift in emphasis have overshoot their mark, leading to the premature dismissal of previous insights and emphases. Political sociology illustrates this point, for the scholarly inquiries grouped under this heading appear to have continued the analysis of self-interest in political behaviour, while the

weight of academic opinion dismissed self-interest as an epiphenomenon.

An emphasis on "self-interest" does not (or should not claim to) explain human conduct. The term is useful, rather, because it designates conduct as "maximizing" and as "calculating" without specifying the particular values whose maximum attainment is calculated. Thus, the neurotic is maximizing and calculating when he (in the words of Kenneth Burke) brings his most pious offerings to the altar of his misery,

weaving about it the very texture of his self-respect, developing an entire schema of motivations above this central orientating concern, profoundly stressing certain values and rejecting others according to their fitness for this integrative work, and clinging to the structure all the more passionately since, if it began as the *cause* of his distress, by the time the patient has finished building, it has become his only bulwark against distress.<sup>1</sup>

We cite the case of the neurotic personality in order to make it clear that by self-interest we refer to the maximizing and calculating effort of an individual, not to the efficiency and success of that effort. The same considerations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to a person as a social participant. Not self-interest, it has been said, but the social norms and the expectations of others "really" determine a man's conduct. In a recent study of *The American Business Creed* it was pointed out that many tenets of that creed, as for example the ideas on a "balanced budget", could be explained, not in terms of the economic interests of the business community, but by the strains arising from the conventional optimism of American business men as they face the ineluctable uncertainty of business decisions.<sup>2</sup> Since the norms demand optimism and business men are expected to take risks in the face of uncertainty, business

1. Kenneth Burke, *Persistence and Chance*, New York, New Republic Inc., 1936, 170 p.

2. See Francis X. Sutton, *et al.*, *The American Business Creed*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1956.

men seek release from this strain by blaming the government. The study in question mentions many such subtle inferences, and there is probably some truth in all of them, though anti-governmentalism could also be interpreted as a fairly simple response to the dilemma created for business men who seek government assistance and attempt to avoid government control. Yet, in responding to these strains or dilemmas, business men and their spokesmen still pursue their interests, as *they interpret them*. And although their interpretations sometimes deviate from what their interests as defined by a purely rational calculus would be, it is still true that business men seek to maximize the advantages of their position and that they do so deliberately.

This emphasis on self-interest, rightly understood, has important theoretical implications. The political sociologist has a legitimate subject-matter only if political decisions are the end-product of the conflicts and strategies which characterize political life as this is generally understood in democratic societies. It is to be noted that this possibility is denied if politics is treated as an epiphenomenon in the sense that the ideas and actions of men are thought to be determined in the long run by the changing organization of production or by the "collective representations" of their society. Yet many empirical studies in political sociology treat politics as a partially independent variable, and it may be useful to relate this approach explicitly to the familiar emphasis on the social determinants of conduct.

In the past, efforts to conceive of the individual as a mere product or "conditioned reflex" of his society have run into persistent difficulties. When Marx predicted the future revolution because of the increasing class consciousness of the working class, he rested his case on the assumption that in the long run the social and psychological pressures engendered by changes in the capitalist organization of production would create a united proletariat. While Marx recognized the great diversity of interests among workers in the short run and the crucial importance of political action, he never quite reconciled this recognition



with his long-run prediction. But many of his followers neglected this dual emphasis and used the long-run prediction alone as the basis for their confident view that the class-consciousness and political actions of men in society "corresponded" to their class position—if not now, then in the near future. Deviations from that model were readily dismissed as instances of "false consciousness". A similar vulgarization seems to have occurred with reference to the work of Emile Durkheim. In his study of *Suicide* Durkheim had concluded that for the people of each social group there is a collective force impelling them to self-destruction.<sup>3</sup> This formulation sought to stress the coercive aspect of conduct in society, but Durkheim's followers disregarded this theoretical intention and its implicit limitations. Instead they advanced the view that "the individual is socially assigned to a status and occupies it with relation to other statuses. When he puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect, he is performing a role . . ." <sup>4</sup> In this view, society is an external force which compels the individual to act in a predetermined way.

Yet the specifications and even the inconsistencies of the great writers are often more telling than the surface consistency of their disciples. The ideas and actions of workers in capitalist society do *not* follow simply from their position in the organization of production, a point which Marx emphasized when he distinguished between workers as a class in terms of the objective conditions of their daily lives and workers as a class which had developed an awareness of its position in society and of its political mission for the future. Similarly, it is misleading to think of the individual as occupying a given status in society and of playing a corresponding role, and the difficulty is not removed by the admission that the individual occupies many status positions and plays many roles. For ideas and actions do *not* simply follow from the social positions of the individual,

3. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*, Glencoe, The Free Press, 1951, 299 p.

4. Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man*, New York, Appleton-Century, 1936, p. 114.

a point which Georg Simmel emphasized when he discussed the multiplicity of each individual's group affiliations.

As the individual leaves his established position within *one* primary group, he comes to stand at a point at which many groups 'intersect' . . . The security and lack of ambiguity in his former position gives way to uncertainty in the conditions of his life. . . . It is true that external and internal conflicts arise through the multiplicity of group-affiliations, which threaten the individual with psychological tensions. . . . But it is also true that multiple group-affiliations can strengthen the individual, and re-enforce the integration of his personality.<sup>5</sup>

This insight into the uncertainty of multiple group affiliations is of considerable importance for political sociology, which is interested in the "calculating" and "maximizing" aspect of social action. Each individual is faced with a variety of formal demands and social expectations, and that variety increases with the number of status positions which he occupies or to which he has become sensitized. Take the case of a Negro woman physician employed by a State Department of Health. As a physician she is oriented in one way, as a woman in a profession dominated by males she reacts in another way, as a member of a minority group in a third, as a government employee in a fourth, and so on. The logical consistencies or incompatibilities of those several orientations should not be confused with those which are experienced psychologically, and it is uncertain what line of action she may regard as in her interest in case a decision is required. But the inherent incompatibilities of group affiliations probably do not require such a decision very often, and the individual is consequently able for the most part to sustain the latent uncertainties and conflicts to which he is exposed. The political process becomes relevant at this point. For the Negro woman physician it represents an opportunity to participate in collective action in order to maximize her rights as a Negro, as a woman, or as

5. Georg Simmel, *The Web of Group-Affiliations*, Glencoe, The Free Press, 1955, p. 141-142.

a physician. And for the organized groups in society it represents the opportunity to appeal to her as a Negro, or as a woman, or as a physician and to increase their weight in the community to the extent that they succeed in enlisting her support.

These considerations make it clear that the social status of individuals or groups does not determine their political behaviour, important though status is as a condition which makes political behaviour intelligible. Nevertheless, this assumption of determinism is implicit in the many studies which have analysed the political process in terms of *who* the leading contenders are, rather than in terms of *what they do*. For example, Robert Brady's analysis of peak associations among the giant corporations of several countries purports to show that such associations are the antecedent of fascism, because in each country the leading officials of these associations turn out to be corporation executives and because a "radicalism of the right" is assumed to serve their interests.<sup>6</sup> Floyd Hunter's study of a *Community Power Structure* shows that the leading business men of the community make most of the crucial decisions, but he does not tell us what these decisions are or to what extent they serve the interests of this elite or perhaps the interests of the community.<sup>7</sup> C. Wright Mills' study of *The Power Elite* again demonstrates the concentration of decision-making in the hands of a small elite of business executives, government administrators, generals, and others; and he infers from this fact that the policies of this elite are tantamount to a manipulation of the public in the interest of the elite—regardless of the content of these policies!<sup>8</sup> Finally, the power elites of various countries have been analysed in a whole series of studies, which appear to be based on the assumption that a knowledge of the persons composing these elites (their

6. Robert Brady, *Business as a System of Power*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1943.

7. Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure*, Chapel Hill, University of N. Carolina, 1953.

8. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956.

social origins, education, occupational careers, etc.) is illuminating by itself.<sup>9</sup> The paradox of these and similar studies is that—regardless of their intellectual antecedents—they tacitly subscribe to an elite theory of political behaviour which assumes that the high status of an individual or group is a sufficient basis for making inferences about how that individual or group will seek to maximize the advantages accruing to them. To know who these power-wielding individuals are is thought to be sufficient; it is a secondary matter to inquire into how they use their power. That they will do so in their own interest is self-evident, and the nature of that interest is inferred from the status which they occupy. Hence, social and economic status rather than the competing strategies of the political struggle are regarded as the sufficient causes of political decisions.

But politics is not an epiphenomenon, in our judgement. By analysing the social determinants of political behaviour we should not inadvertently explain away the very facts of political life. Political sociology must concern itself, therefore, with the *actions* of men who occupy positions of power as well as more generally with the politically relevant actions of people at large. The strategies of powerful individuals or groups are of course difficult to study, for well-guarded secrecy gives the participants an important advantage, and those directly involved in the struggle for power shun or fear the detached observer who has no stake in the battle. Even at the level of the individual it is difficult to study his choice among the alternatives of his multiple group affiliations. Because of these difficulties analysis usually starts with expressed policies or manifest choices, such as are documented in collective bargaining contracts, in the policies of governmental agencies, or in voting behaviour. Since political behaviour is conceptualized as a choice among the alternative orientations of each status position, analysis has the task of explaining the alternatives which

9. H. D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner, C. E. Rothwell, *The Comparative Study of Elites*, Stanford University Press, 1952 (*Hoover Institute Studies*), and the other publications in this series.



were available before the choice was made. Such explanation is based on a comparative knowledge of social structures, and inferences based on such knowledge can only claim a proximate validity with reference to large numbers of individuals—and they are necessarily judgements after the fact. An example will make this clearer.

Generally speaking, power is one concomitant of wealth. However, the kind of wealth possessed by an individual will affect the power which is at his disposal as well as the subjective orientation which will guide him in exercising it. In this respect a typical problem arises in the upper classes of many societies, when the men of new wealth demand the social recognition and political power which appear commensurate with their economic position, while men of old wealth oppose these demands and if need be intensify the social and political exclusion of the *nouveaux riches*. But while the problem is a recurrent one, it has many possible solutions. Among these two may be said to be basic: the *nouveaux riches* react to the experienced tension of their position either with increased radicalism or with increased conservatism in accordance with the alternative suggested by the proverbial "if you can't fight them, join them". The political radicalism of the French *bourgeoisie* during the eighteenth century is an example of the first, the political and especially the social accommodation of the German *bourgeoisie* to the ruling nobility and bureaucracy in the late nineteenth century is an example of the second. Yet these are *post hoc* judgements, and comparative analysis of analogous cases as well as abstract considerations suggest that the political choices involved are not that simple and neat. For the men of new wealth must balance the dangers to their own position which are implicit in radical demands, against the social and political opportunities lost if they seek to "join" the men of old wealth rather than fight them. Implicitly or explicitly, such choices involve strategic judgements which depend upon the image which men have of their position in the Great Society as well as upon a more or less realistic assessment of the available opportuni-

ties. The recent American experience of the support of Senator McCarthy by some Texas oil millionaires is a case which illustrates this mixture of ideology and realism. For the Senator combined his attack upon Communists with an attack upon upper-class, old-family Americans of Anglo-Saxon ancestry whom he accused of being communists or at least fellow-travellers. As men of new wealth the Texas oil millionaires were probably attracted by both appeals, which combined the defence of property against radicalism with an attack upon the social and political pretensions of the established upper class. But as men who judge their opportunities they were ready enough to drop the Senator when it appeared that he had overplayed his hand. In a case like this we gain insight into the relations between status determinants and political choices by first classifying the Texas millionaires as *nouveaux riches*, by attributing to them as a group the tensions typically experienced in status positions like theirs, and finally by examining the empirical evidence to see what actual choices these men have made.

The task of political sociology is, therefore, to analyse the status structure of a society in terms of the abstract or logical possibilities of decision-making and to compare these possibilities with the actual decisions made.<sup>10</sup> In this way we conceive of the status-systems of societies as more or less "open-ended" in the sense that individuals in these systems respond to the typical tensions of their situation with various strategies of argument and action which are designed to define or redefine that situation in a manner which they regard as advantageous to themselves. These strategies are not necessarily successful. As often as not they will be met with counter-strategies of other individuals who have a positive interest in maintaining the existing definitions of the status system. This struggle over role

10. We speak of abstract or logical possibilities because we can judge these only on the basis of an approximate classification of a given status position and on the basis of comparative historical evidence which illustrates the *range of possible* responses to such a status position.

definitions is illustrated strikingly by the process of "Sanskritization" in the Indian caste system:

The agents of Sanskritization were (and are) not always Brahmins. In fact, the non-twice-born castes were prohibited from following the customs and rites of the Brahmins, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Brahmins were responsible for this prohibition as they were the privileged group entrusted with the authority to declare the laws. . . .

[But] in spite of . . . certain obstacles, Brahmanical customs and way of life did manage to spread not only among all Hindus but also among some outlying tribes. This is to some extent due to the fact that Hindu society is a stratified one, in which there are innumerable small groups which try to pass for a higher group. And the best way of staking a claim to a higher position is to adopt the custom and way of life of a higher caste. . . .

Though, over a long period of time, Brahmanical rites and customs spread among the lower castes, in the short run the locally dominant caste was imitated by the rest. And the locally dominant caste was frequently not Brahman. It could be said that in the case of the numerous castes occupying the lowest levels, Brahman customs reached them in a chain reaction. That is, each group took from the one higher to it, and in turn gave to the group below.<sup>11</sup>

It is illuminating that this description of reciprocal conflicts over status and role definitions should originate in the society which is characterized by the most thorough-going institutionalization of status differences of which we know. Nor is it accidental that this insight arises from the Indian experience. For the caste system tends to make every conflict over status differences and role definitions a group conflict, because the ritual barriers which divide the sub-castes make for a built-in solidarity among the individual members of the sub-caste. Such buttresses to in-group solidarity do not exist in modern Western societies. In their

11. M. N. Srinivas, "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization", *Far-Eastern Quarterly*, August, 1956, pp. 481, 482-483. Cf. also the corresponding analysis of this process in historical perspective in Max Weber's discussion of "Hinduization". See *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1921, vol. II, pp. 8-21, 33-45.

absence it is frequently advantageous for individuals in similar status positions to form solidary groups which engage other groups in struggles, now open, now tacit, over the "rights and duties" of their status. But what appears advantageous is not always possible, and it is the special task of the political sociologist to analyse the social conditions which facilitate or hinder deliberate group formation for this struggle over status definitions.

Accordingly we postulate that societies are characterized by unresolved tensions among the groups comprising them as well as by a basic consensus concerning the rules of the game which govern the ever-recurring and ever-proximate efforts to resolve these tensions—although it must be remembered that the rules of the game may also be changed. Specifically, societies are characterized by status distinctions and a division of labour which involve tensions between individuals and groups who seek their position as relatively advantageous and who seek to defend and increase their advantages, and other individuals and groups who see their position as "too low" or as disadvantageous and who seek to come to terms with this experience by escape, by accommodation, or by conflict. Political sociology has the specific task of analysing the tensions and cleavages which arise from the social and economic order of society; and it should do so on a comparative basis in order to show from what range of abstractly available alternatives given political choices have been made.

These considerations add up to a theoretical defence of political sociology. The continued preoccupation with self-interest as a dynamic factor in society appears justified to us, because societies are *not* closed systems, and we do not think it wise to assume the opposite in order to facilitate theory construction. It is clear, on the other hand, that the studies grouped under the general title "political sociology" lack unity except for the basic assumptions we have sketched above. In the long run it will be necessary to work towards such unity, and to relate the "interest theory" of social action to other theories of action in order to establish



a theoretical framework for political sociology as an integral part of sociology *sans phrase*. We shall not attempt the construction of such a framework in an introduction . . . ; yet this theoretical lacuna is a challenge, and in what follows we shall suggest certain considerations which appear to us relevant for any future attempts at filling this gap.

### III

One step in this direction is to ask whether the diverse studies cited . . . possess an underlying unity of subject matter. We think they do, though our effort to make this clear cannot be more than tentative at the present time. Like political science, political sociology is concerned with the distribution and the exercise of power in society. Unlike political science, it is not concerned with the institutional provisions for that distribution and exercise, but takes these as given. Thus, political science starts with the state and examines how it affects society, while political sociology starts with society and examines how it affects the state, i.e. the formal institutions for the distribution and exercise of power.

This division of interest between the two fields of study was much clearer during the nineteenth century than it is today. It has become blurred as political scientists have become concerned with "who gets what, when and how", and as political sociologists have become concerned with the analysis of formal organizations. But the rationale for the division of labour has remained. For the intellectual impetus for the two lines of inquiry stems from the political scientist's sense for the "real" significance of formal, legal institutions and from the political sociologist's sense for the "real" significance of the "natural" coalescing of interests in and through the collective actions of men in society.

To bring order into a field of rapidly growing intellectual interest, we think it profitable to pay close attention to the major lines of inquiry suggested by the classic writers

in political sociology. By relating their preoccupations to the major substantive areas of empirical research a trial balance may be attempted. A survey of nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical experience and intellectual development reveals four problems or issues which may be designated by the catch-phrases "class conflict", "consensus", "oligarchy" and "bureaucracy". Inquiry into each of these problems has given rise to a voluminous literature. Yet this proliferation tends to obscure an underlying intellectual convergence between studies of class conflict and of consensus on the one hand, and studies of oligarchy and of bureaucracy on the other. These paired terms may be seen as shorthand designations of the principal lines of inquiry which characterize political sociology and we will comment on them briefly.

### Class Conflict and Consensus

The idea of class conflict is principally related to Karl Marx's emphasis upon the "material basis" of society. As we suggested earlier, the plethora of Marx critiques has not diminished the importance of this insight. For our purposes its main point is that the economic organization of every society provides conditions for a unity of interest and action wherever individuals find themselves in the same or similar social and economic positions, and also for diversity of interest and conflict wherever groups thus united face each other in opposition. In its modern, sociological usage this idea is divorced from the Marxian theory of history according to which the organization of production is the long-run or "ultimate" *determinant* of a country's intellectual and political life. Instead of regarding collective actions in some final sense as an inevitable product of common economic interests, political sociology emphasizes the fact that the interaction among individuals occupying the same economic position is also conditioned by cultural, social-psychological and situational determinants. These condi-



tions intervene between the economic position of individuals and their collective actions, making the latter less predictable than Marx would have us believe. These intervening conditions modify—though they do not nullify—the impact of economic self-interest on conduct.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Marxian position was challenged by conservatives who deplored the emphasis on self-interest as a constructive factor in history and who argued that the intensification of conflict which Marx saw as the way to the new millennium, was in fact the prelude to social disintegration. These critics were concerned above all with the idea that every society and body politic required a degree of cohesion or consensus without which the values embodied in them could not survive. But the point of interest here is that consensus was idealized as against conflict. Liberal pluralism with its view that the adjustment of conflicts will enhance the wealth and welfare of nations, and Marxism with its view that ultimately a revolution is needed to resolve the issues which make conflicts under capitalism inevitable, were here opposed by the view that these benign results were impossible without social cohesion and that the conflicts leading to these results undermined that cohesion.

From the vantage point of today this great intellectual controversy of the nineteenth century is perhaps more significant for what each side omitted than for what each made explicit. The Marxian emphasis on the ultimate significance of conflict leads to a neglect of the specific conditions of social cohesion—even where these are relevant for the Marxian theory. Marxism is satisfied rather with broad assertions concerning the material conditions of bourgeois or proletarian class-consciousness, and wherever consciousness does not “correspond” to these material conditions it is declared to be “false” and hence subject to change due to long-run historical necessity. All social cohesion arising from factors other than the organization of production (such as local or national traditions, ethnic homogeneity, cultural ideals) is treated as a phenomenon

of secondary significance.<sup>12</sup> Exactly the reverse is true of the conservative outlook. Its emphasis on the ultimate significance of cohesion also leads to a neglect of the specific conditions of social cohesion, one of which is that conflicts within societies marked by cohesion are kept within limits. Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century conservatives were satisfied with broad assertions concerning societies as functioning wholes and wherever the lack of cohesion was evident, as in rapidly changing industrial societies, this was accordingly interpreted as indicating a decline of civilization. Thus, all evidence of cohesion within the context of conflict (such as the class-solidarity to which Marx referred, or the agreement on rules of the game characterizing the conflict-ridden relations between labour and management) was treated as a phenomenon of secondary significance, if indeed it was examined at all.

Clearly, the two perspectives are supplementary, rather than mutually exclusive. They were made to appear incoherent during the nineteenth century by being incorporated in theories of history. Every observed fact was “extrapolated” in accordance with certain philosophical assumptions. Thus, the Marxist looked at all collective actions based on common economic interests as merely the preliminaries of an ultimate conflict, just as the conservatives looked at all evidence of conflict as merely the preliminaries of an ultimate decline. Up to a point, both of these perspectives are very useful, and have been used at least implicitly in much of the literature. For it is certainly

12. An amusing illustration of this neglect of inconvenient facts is contained in the 1870 resolution of the General Council of the First International, which was probably written by Marx personally. The resolution begins with the sentence “Although the revolutionary initiative will probably come from France, England alone can serve as the lever of a serious economic revolution. . . .” Apparently, Marx was not even aware of the fact that such a statement implicitly questioned his whole theory of history, which predicated the future political revolution upon antecedent changes in the economic substructure. The resolution is reprinted in Karl Marx, *Letters to Dr. Kugelmann*, New York, International Publishers, 1934, p. 106.

true that the differential position of people in the economic structure of industrial societies is a major basis for the formulation of common interests and hence for collective political actions. And it is also *possible* that the resulting conflicts may lead to a revolutionary overthrow of the society, though—contrary to Marx—this becomes less probable as industrialization is developed successfully, for Marx was not aware that successful industrialization could lead to increased social cohesion. The class conflict as he envisaged it is therefore only the extreme form which the ordinary conflicts among interest groups may take under very special conditions. Similar statements may be made with regard to the conservative perspective. It is quite true that the materialism of industrial societies has destroyed many cultural values and that the reliance on self-interest and on individualism has jeopardized many ideals and institutions tending to safeguard the unity and solidarity of societies. And it is certainly *possible* that the resulting changes may eventuate in a “decline of civilization”, although, contrary to the conservative perspective, this is again less probable as industrialization is developed successfully, because in that case new ideals and institutions arise in place of the old, and different forms of social cohesion may therefore become viable. The decline of civilization envisaged by the conservatives is only the *extreme* form which the transformation of values and institutions may take under very special conditions.

We will indicate briefly how these intellectual perspectives are reflected in the investigations of political sociology. For the political sociologist has taken over from the nineteenth century the analysis of collective actions based either on common economic *interests* or on a cultural and institutionally reinforced *consensus*. Much of the study of political behaviour has been concerned with specifying the conditions under which members of social classes support or oppose the movements congruent with their social class. In a sense, if we ignore the normative assumptions inherent in Marx's description of the term, one could say that the

analysis of class factors in the political struggle is the problem of true and false consciousness. That is, a considerable part of sociological research actually deals with those factors which increase or decrease the likelihood that a man will support the political movement linked with his class. Under this topic we would include:

1. Voting studies. These specify the elements which are associated with party support. They deal with the effects of factors such as varying status, type of work, property ownership, unemployment or insecurity, community social structure, social mobility, exposure to cross-class experiences, on the propensity of people to identify themselves with or against their class politically.
  2. Studies of political participation. These have thrown a great deal of light on the linkage between participation and class position, and have made manifest the ways in which the normal operation of the social structure serves to weaken the political effectiveness of movements based on the lower class by reducing the involvement in politics of their potential followers.
  3. Public opinion and attitudes. Analyses in this field have outlined a number of consistent variations in the values and attitudes of different classes, making understandable some of the political behaviour of these groups which is not directly tied to interest. For example, the lower classes while liberal (leftist) in their attitudes on economic issues, tend to be less liberal on non-economic issues, e.g. civil liberties, race relations, immigration policy, and so forth.
- One difficulty with much of the research which seeks to analyse the determinants of political cleavage is that the researchers too often deal with the relationship of specific variables to a given political event in a single country. Viewed cross-nationally, however, we find a considerable amount of variation in single relationships. For example, upward mobile people in the United States (the middle-class sons of workers) tend to be more conservative than those



who have inherited high social status. However, in a number of European countries such as Sweden, Finland and Germany, the upward mobile are more radical than the stable individuals. Among workers in Germany and Sweden, the better paid and more skilled are more likely to be class-conscious, and vote social democratic or communist, than those who are less well paid and less skilled. In Britain, the United States and Australia, however, the lower-paid and less skilled prove better supporters of left parties than do the upper strata of the working class. Teachers and physicians tend to be on the right in Germany, while as compared with other professionals, they are rather on the left in France and Britain. Workers probably have a lower rate of electoral participation than middle-class people in the United States and Britain, while they have a higher rate in France and in a number of German and Australian cities. We cite these variations to suggest that a *comparative* analysis of political behaviour will be especially helpful in elucidating the effect of different cultural and institutional environments upon groups which—nominally at least—occupy a similar social and economic position in modern industrial societies.

Important as these cultural and structural variations are, they should not be permitted to obscure the pervasive effect of economic interest upon the political process. Every study of the social basis of political movements in the several countries of Western civilization indicates that the parties represent distinctive strata. Despite the great and complex diversity of historical conditions among the "Western" countries, three main political tendencies stand out in all of them: the left, based on the working class, the conservative right, based on the more privileged strata and institutions, and the centre, based on the middle classes, especially the self-employed. Each of these three tendencies in the modern world has two expressions, one democratic and the other extremist and authoritarian. On the democratic side are the social democrats on the left, conservatives on the right and liberals in the centre. In crises,

and in unstable societies, the social strata backing the democratic movements tend to develop an extremist reaction. The workers turn to Communism, the conservative and upper-class strata turn to a traditional authoritarianism of the right, and the middle classes, the classic base of the centre, back Fascism. It is a real paradox that this evolution of the twentieth century appears to make good Marx' prediction of an ultimate class conflict and the conservatives' prediction of a cultural decline, but that nevertheless this phenomenon is not readily assimilable to either theory. For these movements have occurred in backward as well as in industrialized countries; instead of being the outgrowth of class conflict, they are in effect protests against it; instead of reflecting a decline of social cohesion, they represent a sudden, if perhaps momentary, rebirth of it. But the main point is that any all-embracing political system of whatever label destroys the cohesion which holds modern societies together—contrary to the Marxist who ignores that cohesion, and contrary to the conservatives who deny its existence. It is for this reason that the intellectual legacies of the nineteenth century can no longer suffice as the basis of political sociology. For mass-organization refers to a type of political behaviour which cannot be explained adequately either by the coalescence of economic interests or by the consensus based on cultural traditions. The study of totalitarianism must concern itself, therefore, with just those extreme eventualities which the nineteenth-century Marxists *and* conservatives conjured with, but failed to analyse: the breakdown of that cohesion, that politics of the possible, which the class conflict and consensus of industrial societies had always presupposed.

We turn now to the second major theme of political sociology.

### *Bureaucracy and Oligarchy*

If the concern with class conflict and consensus arose from nineteenth-century preoccupations, the interest in bureauc-

racy and oligarchy is a typical twentieth-century phenomenon. The reasons for this shift of emphasis are clear. The problem of "consensus" had arisen from a preoccupation with the disruptive consequences of the Industrial Revolution and of the change from absolutist to democratic regimes; the problem of "class conflict" had arisen from a preoccupation with the dynamics of change in an industrial society. Under these circumstances "bureaucracy" was not a problem to be studied, but an evil to be fought. Conservatives claimed that governments arbitrarily interfered with the organic growth of society, while liberals and radicals maintained that they interfered, equally arbitrarily, with the natural rights and the basic liberties of the people. Similarly, oligarchy was not a problem to be studied—indeed it was not seen as a problem at all. For the conservatives who gloried in the romantic imagery of an estate society, all government was a rule of the few. Their ideal of government was a rule by a superbly endowed aristocracy which represented the traditional estates and was naturally superior to the levelling tendencies of democracy. And for the radicals who glorified in the spontaneity of the people, all existing governments were arbitrary usurpations of power which must be overcome by organizations of the people. In this conflict between usurpation and spontaneity it appeared as if "oligarchy" was always the problem of the government in power, but not of the organizations opposing that government.

Several prophetic thinkers of the nineteenth century questioned these naive assumptions. Among them Alexis de Tocqueville stands out today as perhaps the most penetrating analyst of the autocratic tendencies which are implicit in the demand for equality; and the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, is also now well known for his profoundly pessimistic views concerning the dictatorships which would arise from the quest for democratic institutions. But neither Tocqueville's prophetic insight nor Burckhardt's more personal apprehensions were widely appreciated. Instead, the problems of bureaucracy and

oligarchy became of serious intellectual concern in the courses of the great socialist debate. In the first volume of *Das Kapital* Marx dismissed the critics of socialism with the statement that the "enthusiastic apologists of the factory system have nothing more damning to urge against a general organization of the labour of society than that it would turn all society into one immense factory". And in his famous pamphlet *State and Revolution* Lenin suggested that most bureaucratic and oligarchic evils which beset government under capitalism would be eliminated under socialism, because most state functions "have become so simplified and can be reduced to such simple operations . . . that they will be quite within the reach of every literate person". Neither Marx nor Lenin believed that bureaucracy and oligarchy presented a problem in the socialist society of the future.

But other socialists disagreed vehemently. In his famous letter of repudiation Proudhon had challenged Marx's autocratic manner in an eloquent plea against a socialism which would overthrow an old autocracy only to introduce a new dictatorship. And many decades later Rosa Luxemburg wrote her impassioned critique of the Bolshevik revolution in which she accused Lenin of having deserted the cause of freedom. "The whole mass of the people must take part in [the government]. Otherwise, socialism will be decreed from behind a few official desks by a dozen intellectuals". Clearly, Proudhon and Luxemburg saw the issue and Marx and Lenin did not; but while this debate helped to focus public attention on the problems of bureaucracy and oligarchy in modern society, its polemic emphasis was unfavourable to a systematic consideration.

It is not surprising that such a consideration was initiated on the European continent, with its prevalence of absolutist governments, rather than in England or the United States, where the problems of bureaucracy and oligarchy tended to be considered in a pragmatic rather than a theoretical fashion. In this field political sociologists have taken much of their inspiration from the work of two German scholars,

Max Weber and Robert Michels. The two men were well acquainted personally. Weber was principally concerned with bureaucracy in government and in economic enterprises, while Michels was for the most part concerned with oligarchy in voluntary associations. Both were preoccupied with the perennial recurrence of aristocratic or oligarchic tendencies in society. Both had a penchant for a tough-minded appraisal of the contemporary political scene. In their view, class struggles could only occur through the instrumentality of formal organizations, and the great striking power of modern governments and armies made the question of popular consensus a distinctly secondary phenomenon. For them the question was how the instrumentalities of power—governmental bureaucracy and party organizations—affected the distribution and exercise of power. We shall comment briefly on each man's work and on the main lines of inquiry in political sociology which may be related to that work.

Max Weber was in part a disciple of the historical school in economics whose most prominent spokesman, Gustav Schmoller, was well known for his history of Prussian administration. Politically as well as academically Schmoller represented a scholarly tradition which identified itself closely with the monarchy and its officialdom, and which viewed the latter as an embodiment of morality and efficiency. Perhaps Weber used this perspective when he formulated his ideal type of bureaucratic rule which was characterized by thorough professionalization and a maximum of technical efficiency. On this basis he developed a conceptual framework in which each characteristic of bureaucratic administration was contrasted with its personally arbitrary counterpart under a system of patrimonial administration. Weber then used this framework to interpret the relation between the political structure, the economy and the major status groups in different civilizations, as for example in his studies of China and India. He also used this typology to interpret the massive process of bureaucratization which had accompanied the rise of absolutism and

of democracy as well as the development of modern industry. In his view, modern bureaucratic government was technically superior to other forms of administration, such as those obtaining under charismatic or traditional authority. But he was much concerned lest the preoccupation with administrative efficiency (such as prevailed among German scholars in the late nineteenth century) be permitted to obscure the threat to individual freedom implicit in that efficiency. And he was alarmed by the tendencies of the German bureaucracy which used its privileged position in order to transmute problems of political statesmanship into supposedly routine, administrative questions to the great detriment of constructive political action as well as of administrative impartiality. These comments make it clear that Weber's work in this field had a twofold emphasis.

He characterized his general analysis of bureaucracy as "purely formal and typological" and he used it principally in a comparative and developmental context. His main thesis concerning the bureaucratization of government and industry has proved very fruitful. Historians, political scientists and sociologists have produced a large number of studies which have examined this process of bureaucratization. Some of these studies have been cast in the framework of a national administrative history such as the great work of T. F. Tout; others have followed Weber's precedent by developing a comparative approach as in the work of C. J. Friedrich or Otto Hintze; still others have examined some part of this process in detail, as in the many studies of civil service reform or of the changing structure of the modern business corporation. There are many telling examinations of non-bureaucratic governmental structures comparable to Weber's ideal type of patrimonialism, such as Leroy-Beaulieu's classic study of the Tsarist regime or the growing literature on the structure of government under the Chinese dynasties. Also relevant in this general context are the increasing number of studies which focus upon the governmental structures of pre-literate societies (such as the writ-



ings of Fortes, Gluckman, Schapera and others on Africa) or upon the special administrative problems arising from the contact of cultures (as Lord Hailey's African survey or Furnivall's studies of colonial government in South-East Asia). Naturally, this varied literature is not always directly indebted to Weber's work. But it may be useful to consider it in this context, because these numerous studies have in common an interest in the relations between social structure and the formal organizations of government and economic life, and this emphasis is conspicuously lacking in the literature on public administration and on economic institutions.

The special impact of Weber's work on the study of bureaucracy has been due largely to his clear formulation of an ideal type, which has proved especially useful in developmental studies. Weber himself never confused such "bench-mark devices" with detailed case studies. His own political analysis of the German bureaucracy showed, for example, how its methods of recruitment systematically favoured some, and discriminated against other segments of the population, and thus reinforced the petty conceit of the officials in their dealings with the public. The German officials were in his estimation very far removed from their own vaunted ideal of administrative impartiality, since they constantly dabbled in politics despite their notorious ineptitude for the demands of political life. Indeed, Weber believed that any concrete study of bureaucracy in action must be pre-eminently the study of a struggle for the power to make decisions, since officials remain outside such struggles only as long as they remain "ideal-typical" as the impartial, technically proficient executors of policies handed down to them. That they do not remain "ideal-typical" in this sense and the reasons why they do not do so, have been important subjects of study since Webster's time.<sup>13</sup>

13. For a brief review of some studies which reflect this emphasis see S. M. Lipset, "Political Sociology, 1945-55", in: Hans Zetterberg, ed., *Sociology in the United States*, Paris, Unesco, 1956, p. 53-55.

We should add that studies of large-scale organizations have derived their inspiration also from others than Max Weber, though it is noteworthy that in recent years there is growing evidence of a coalescence of intellectual traditions and interests. In the 1920s the famous Hawthorne studies were initiated by the late Elton Mayo, who was principally indebted to the work of Emile Durkheim. These studies have been followed by a very large number of others which have concerned themselves with the conditions under which the participants in large-scale organizations deviate from the blueprint of their rights and duties as these are formally stipulated. Most of these studies have dealt with the many ways in which primary groups, by informally developing and enforcing a consensus of their own, have helped to further or to obstruct the achievement of managerial goals. And in consequence much attention has been given to the "human relations approach" which would solve the personnel problems of middle management. The managerial orientation of this approach has often been commented on, but it may be that in recent years a slight, but important, shift of emphasis has occurred.

Several studies have appeared which make it clear that the managerial approach to human relations is yet another factor which must be considered in an analysis of modern, large-scale organizations, particularly because there is considerable discrepancy between "human relations practice" and "human relations ideology". Moreover, empirical research has moved on from the examination of factories and government agencies to such other organizations as prisons, hospitals, business offices, churches, and military organizations. As a result, it has had to broaden its perspective to encompass a great variety of managerial goals which are not as readily measurable as productivity. And while it is hazardous to generalize in this field and at this time, it is perhaps fairly close to the mark to say that the study of organizations has become "politicized". Outside of such strictly hierarchical organizations as business, government, and the army it is perhaps easier for all concerned to admit

openly that each organization encompasses not only different levels of authority but also different views of the organization's purpose. Until recently such differences in outlook were confined to the well-known conflicts between labour and management, between privates and officers, and between government administrators, politicians and the public. But it has become evident that many organizations in fact institutionalize conflicts among their several managerial echelons. Hospitals could not function without administrative and medical staffs; universities must have administrators as well as faculty; department stores must have buyers as well as administrative executives; modern prisons and mental hospitals include among their staff custodians, welfare specialists, teachers, doctors and psychiatrists. In this view of organization the "trained incapacity" of the specialist and the vested interest of different administrative units become indispensable for the proper functioning of the organization, an asset as well as a liability. For the goals and procedures of organizations are formulated and reformulated by individuals in administrative units, whose ideas frequently clash and who compete with each other for recognition and advancement. Hence, management has the task of properly utilizing conflicts as well as of eliminating them where they become too disruptive. In this perspective, politics in the sense of competition for power does not stop at the door of organizations, and managerial strategies within organizations are properly seen as continuous with the managerial efforts to maximize the advantages of organizations with reference to competitors outside.

But if internal competition and conflict are seen as a necessary concomitant of many hierarchical organizations, it should also be stated that internal politics in the democratic sense is conspicuously absent from many voluntary associations. This absence of politics points to the rule of the few, the problem of oligarchy, and that brings us to the work of Robert Michels. The intellectual antecedents of Michels' concern with the oligarchic tendencies of political parties have again a distinctly Continental origin. Whereas

Weber was concerned with the suffocation of German political life under the combined impact of Bismarck and an overweening bureaucracy, Michels was principally interested in exposing the facts behind the sham battles of political controversy. In particular, Michels pointed out that under universal suffrage the interest of all political parties in electoral victories had produced a major hiatus between what party spokesmen believed and what they could say in public. Aristocratic landowners who really regarded themselves as a born ruling class and the people as a dangerous rabble had nevertheless to profess democratic sentiments when they appealed to the voters. The spokesmen of German liberalism had endeavoured to reform the monarchy and to reconcile it with democratic principles, but at each step on the road they had recoiled from the dangers of socialism implicit in an extension of the suffrage. And this same contradiction also applied to the revolutionary parties, which professed aloud their opposition to oligarchic rule only to adopt such a rule in fact in their own organizations. "The study of the oligarchical manifestations in party life is most valuable and most decisive in its results when undertaken in relation to the revolutionary parties, for the reason that these parties, in respect of their origin and of their programme, represent the negation of any such tendency, and have actually come into existence out of opposition thereto."<sup>14</sup> In pursuing this line of inquiry Michels showed that direct popular control over political parties was technically impossible, especially since parties are fighting organizations which require internal discipline in order to succeed. The people, moreover, shun the burdens which direct government would impose; they tend to be apathetic, and they need leadership. The leaders, on the other hand, seek to perpetuate themselves in office, their position in the party makes it relatively easy for them to do so, and attempts to restrict their autocratic use of power and their continuation in office usually fail.

14. Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, Glencoe, The Free Press, 1949, p. 11.



If we accept Michels' formulation of the problem, we are faced with the fact that modern democracies do not constitute a government by the people. Instead, this form of government consists of conflicts of power among oligarchic organizations, with the result that the average citizen exercises his rights of citizenship only in the sense that he chooses among alternatives presented to him by these competing oligarchies. It is to be noted, however, that in this view oligarchic rule in private government means that the leaders pursue their own interests and do not represent the interests of the members. Although political sociologists have so far only touched upon the interrelation between the organizational imperatives and the representativeness of voluntary associations, there are many theoretical problems and questions of fact which remain to be dealt with.

Like Michels a number of other writers have been preoccupied with the discrepancy between the democratic form and the oligarchic facts of voluntary associations. They have documented in detail the existence of central administrative control by the leaders, and the absence of political opposition and of membership control. But by virtue of this preoccupation with the factors responsible for the existence of oligarchic rule, such studies have neglected the possible variations of political life within political parties and other associations. By limiting himself to the European social democratic movements Michels also limited himself to one specific form of oligarchy. In their various writings, Maurice Duverger, Sigmund Neumann and others have shown, on the other hand, that there are significant variations in the organizational structure of different political parties. For example, the two major political parties in the United States differ greatly from the social democratic pattern which served Michels as a model, in that they lack central control at the national level and possess comparatively little centralization even at the state level. Moreover, factionalism is replete in America and turn-over in party control is fairly common, presumably because the American parties are parties of "notables" ac-

tive especially during electoral campaigns rather than mass parties with a permanently functioning organization. But while recent studies have done much to correct Michels' monolithic view of oligarchic tendencies in political parties, studies of private government still continue to stress these tendencies. There are many studies which show that trade unions are controlled by oligarchies, but next to none which concern themselves with the considerable range of variation in the internal government of trade unions within as well as between different countries.

The problem of oligarchy apart, there still remains the question of representatives. The extent to which leaders are free to deviate from the interests of their members varies considerably. For example, the United Mine Workers of America is probably one of the most oligarchic or dictatorial unions in the world. But although its leader, John L. Lewis, is a Republican politically, he has nevertheless adopted union tactics whose militancy is more marked than that of the miners' unions in some other countries, which are under the leadership of communists or left-wing socialists. Such a discrepancy between political conservatism and tactical militancy—just like the opposite combination, say, between the political radicalism and the tactical conservatism of the German Social Democratic Party—are hardly illuminated by further studies of the "iron law of oligarchy," although in both cases the organizations were ruled by leaders who perpetuated themselves in office. It is clear, therefore, that by itself oligarchy does not determine the actions of the leaders, and this may be related in turn to the considerable variations in the methods of internal control, all of which are compatible with "oligarchy". Thus, organizations representing large masses, such as veterans' organizations, farm groups, trade unions and certain types of political parties will vary among themselves, and they will also differ as a group from the organizations of large business corporations or of the various professions. Does the fact that manufacturers' associations are governed by self-perpetuating oligarchies have the

same consequences on their representative character as similar political forms in a trade union or a political party? There is some evidence to indicate that, even with reference to the same type of organization, the official leadership tends to represent the membership in one country, but is unrepresentative of it in another.<sup>15</sup> What is clearly called for in this field is a number of comparative investigations amplifying and extending the theory of organizational government.

### *Comparative Studies in Political Sociology*

Although comparative studies do not constitute a separate subject matter, their importance is so great that we comment on them separately. Like the other inquiries of political sociology, the comparative study of political systems has a long intellectual history. In that mixture of ethical speculation and empirical observation which is called "political theory" it constitutes in fact one of the oldest fields of study. Yet the antecedents of political sociology are of much more recent date. An empirical approach to comparative political analysis came to the fore during the nineteenth century when many European intellectuals raised questions about the success of democracy in the United States, the capacity of England to work out a viable compromise between aristocratic traditions and democratic tendencies, and the failure in these respects of most Continental countries. Many reasons were cited to account for these differences: the United States lacked a feudal tradition, England had a long history of compromises between central and local powers, the American frontier involved

15. According to a study conducted for the British Medical Association (BMA), the rank and file of British doctors has a much more favourable attitude towards state medicine than the officials of the BMA. On the other hand, Oliver Garceau's study of the American Medical Association tends to show that the officials of the organization have changed their policies over the years, on the whole taking a line midway between the more radical and the more reactionary state societies.

large parts of the community in the process of government, the tradition of local autonomy in England and America encouraged voluntary associations to perform many functions which elsewhere required government action, and so forth. The work of Alexis de Tocqueville was perhaps the finest result of this line of inquiry. And it is well to remember that de Tocqueville developed his remarkable insight into the despotic possibilities inherent in democracy by writing about American society in terms of its likenesses and contrasts with France.<sup>16</sup>

In the hands of a genius like Tocqueville the comparative study of politics tended to become systematic, but most similar studies of the time were merely descriptive and eclectic. During the nineteenth century only Marxism provided a systematic theory of comparative politics, and even a century later it is still fruitful to use this theory as a point of departure. Briefly put, Marxism identified democracy with the class interests of the bourgeoisie in a capitalist economy. In a democratic political system these interests could be pursued without much interference by the government. The interest in free trade made also for an interest in a free political system, especially where aristocratic landowners opposed both, for in that case the bourgeoisie could consistently pursue its economic, its social and its political interests all at the same time. Marxists contended further that the bourgeois interest in democracy necessarily waned wherever the working class became organized sufficiently to become a serious rival for political power. Hence, democracy failed in the countries in which the bourgeois fear of the workers exceeded the bourgeois interest in free institutions. In the Marxist scheme of history, the working class necessarily took over from the bourgeoisie the struggle for democratic institutions. As an

16. "In my work on America . . . though I seldom mentioned France, I did not write a page without thinking of her, and placing her as it were before me. . . . I believe that this perpetual silent reference to France was a principal cause of the book's success." See the letter to Kergorlay (19 October, 1843) in Tieknor & Fields, 1862, vol. I, p.342.

interpretation of the development of such countries as France, Germany, Italy and Russia, this has much to recommend it. But in recent years increasing attention has been devoted to what Marxism failed to take into account; for it is noteworthy that the theory applied least to the country on whose historical experience Marx principally relied for his evidence: England. Clearly, the working class became less radical politically in the country which was farthest advanced economically. Radicalism, in other words, was a concomitant of economic backwardness; also of a world-wide diffusion of ideologies, the acceptance of which in the receiving countries was not an outgrowth of their class structures, though it often had a major impact on these class structures. If this be conceded, then it becomes necessary to reconsider the relation between the changing class structure of societies undergoing industrialization and the development of nationalist sentiment, for which there is obviously more place in history than in Marxism. We note that today a great deal of thinking and research along these lines is under way—this topic alone would require a separate report, it being an exceedingly important area of comparative study in political sociology.

Another dimension has been added to that study by the rise in recent decades of new political mass-movements. In their efforts to grapple with this phenomenon many scholars have become concerned once more with the relation between political systems and the underlying social structure. Recalling the earlier emphasis upon the role of consensus in society, some theorists have suggested that societies are particularly vulnerable to totalitarianism if their internal social structure fails to provide the citizens with a widespread network of secondary organizations. In the absence of such organizations and their countervailing power we get, they say, a *mass society* in which individuals are not involved in the political system and consequently helpless before the power of the government and of mass organizations like totalitarian parties. Accordingly it is suggested that such secondary organizations exist in the

Anglo-Saxon countries, but were absent from pre-Hitler German society or nineteenth-century Tsarist Russia. Whatever its merit, this approach is obviously related to the theory of political pluralism which enjoys considerable vogue among British and American political theorists. It is also related to the consideration that democratic institutions are viable only as long as a society is characterized by certain shared values, especially those supporting adherence to the rules of the game in a political democracy. Such consensus is in turn likely to be related to the absence of basic cleavages among the different classes and regions of a country.

The concern with comparative studies in political sociology does not involve theoretical perspectives which differ from those employed in the study of a single political system. Scholars in this field must always ask what are the factors which cause variations in the style and organization of political life in different countries, or in the same country over a period of time. Underlying this question is the assumption that political systems—like family systems, industrial organizations, and others—are interrelated with other aspects of the social structure, so that it should be possible to analyse the co-variation among several such aspects. But it is well to remember also that comparative studies tend to emphasize the varied political possibilities which have been realized in structurally similar situations. These studies therefore help to emphasize that element of leeway for “maximizing and calculating” actions which make politics an “art” and the study of political sociology a challenging intellectual enterprise.