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SOURCES OF POLITICAL CONFLICT IN DEVELOPED SOCIETIES
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1.

Is is useful to remember that only ten years ago, there were not
a few analysts of contemporary politics and its social basis who
believed that the end of dramatic political antagonisms had come. For
them, the classical class conflict between Capital and Labour
appeared as the last historical source of intense, and often violent
clashes in the politics of developed societies. Since, in their
opinion, this conflict had been reduced to a peaceful interchange of
minor differences of opinion in a pluralist society, the end of
ideology had arrived. The new society emerging under these conditions
was to be a society of stable progress towards more prosperity and
less unrest. At times, an indication was added to this idyllic
picture of our present and future to the effect that only some
incorrigible intellectuals could continue the search for sources of
political conflict in developed societies.

Perhaps, the Milan meeting of the Congress for Cultural Freedom
in 1955 marks the climax of this interpretation of modern society,
and S.M. Lipset's "personal postscript" to Political Man displays
all the elements of this view. Lipset quotes a Swedish editor as
saying: "Politics is now boring. The only issues are whether the
metal workers should get a nickel more an hour, the price of milk
should be raised, or old-age pensions extended." Lipset himself seems
to agree with his witness, for he states as a "fact that the
fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been
solved: the workers have achieved industrial and political
citizenship; the conservatives have accepted the welfare state; and
the democratic left has recognized that an increase in over-all state
power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solutions for
economic problems." While this process ends ideological politics, it
does not, for Lipset, end all political differences. However, the
remaining differences are minor in substance and mild in their form
of expression, they amount to no more than a regulated clash of

groups. "The democratic class struggle will continue, but it will be a fight without ideologies, without red flags, without May Day parades." If some intellectuals fear that "pressures toward conformity within democratic and bureaucratic society" may become a new source of strain, they are exaggerating their own concerns. "There is reason to expect that stable democratic institutions in which political freedom is great and even increasing (as it is, say, in Britain or Sweden) will continue to characterize the mature industrialized Western societies."

S.M. Lipset is a social and political analyst of considerable stature. Even at the time he saw the possible sources of new conflicts. Yet a number of events in recent years may well have made him wish that he had never written some of the sweeping statements about the great society in which we are living. In Britain, it is believed that at least thirty Nationalists from Scotland and Wales will be elected to the House of Commons in the next general election; regionalism and regional nationalism celebrates unexpected triumphs elsewhere. The coloured people of the United States are not the only underprivileged minority which feels strongly that its problems have not been solved at all. In Sweden, cited as an example of a stable and pacified society by Lipset, the fact that more and more people "opt out" by drink or drugs has become a major reason for concern. It may be suspected that this individual protest against modern society is but another version of what is behind some of the manifestations of student unrest in almost all countries. In any case, the party system has become a dubious vehicle of expressing the "democratic class struggle", and those who suggest today that we may have reached "the end of the party game" are by no means the least perceptive observers of contemporary politics. And all this leaves out of consideration the particular strains inherent in those all too many developed societies in East and West which do not have democratic political institutions, as it disregards the conflicts generated by the relations between societies in the world.

In short, there are many manifestations of conflict in modern societies, some familiar, but most quite unfamiliar. There is moreover a growing sense that such conflicts are likely to grow rather than shrink in intensity. It has become necessary to reconsider such ideas as "the end of ideology", "pluralist society", or "the democratic class struggle" in order to understand the motive

forces of the developed world.

2.

A first point to make in identifying sources of conflict in modern societies is rather obvious. In a word, the old class struggle was about citizenship. As it took its course, more and more people came to enjoy the benefits of equal rights of participation. At the same time, it became evident that in order to realize these rights it takes more than promises written into constitutions. For equality before the law to become effective, there has to be universal suffrage as well; and both remain empty formulae if and when the individual is unable to exercise his rights for social reasons. The social-service state is a necessary implication of the desire for citizenship, and it should be stressed that to the present day there are many people in all developed countries whose social position does not enable them to make full use of their citizenship rights.

Two other implications of this development may be politically even more relevant. One is psychological - although not socially random - in nature. It is neither formal privilege nor social and economic disadvantage that prevents German working class children or children from country places from attending universities and secondary schools in a proportion congruent with the relative size of the social groups from which they come, or with known reserves of ability. The reason is, rather, that there is a great social distance, a distance of information and of motivation, between the world of their families and the institutions of higher learning. A similar case might be made with respect to the relation between several social groups and the institutions administering justice, or even those providing health care. Here, the psychological conditions of effective citizenship are missing, and the attempt to create them becomes the source of new political conflicts.

This is even more evident with respect to the exercise of authority in many institutions, including schools and universities as well as business enterprises, armies and churches. Everywhere, those in dependent or inferior positions demand to be treated as equals in rank, or in any case as citizens who must not be pushed about as they still are today. Often, this demand takes the form of a wish for formal participation in the process of decision-making. In part, the almost universal discussion about new constitutions of

the enterprise, about co-determination in schools and universities,
about lay influence in churches and the "democratization" of armies,
must be seen in this context. Sometimes, those demanding such
participation realize that statutory regulations will not help them
as much as other think, that it is really a change in attitudes and
consciousness which is required here. In this way, the strain
towards modernity becomes one of the fundamental forces in developed
societies today, and one which ties in in peculiar and often dangerous
ways with some other tendencies about which more will have to be
said later.

If the incompleteness of citizenship rights accruing from such
lags of change may be described as psychological, there is one other
implication of modern economic and social development for which this
can certainly not be said, which is indeed strictly economic. This
is the replacement of class inequalities by sectoral disparities of
development. A modern, growth-oriented economy almost by necessity
leads to new forms of privilege. At any given time, certain sectors
of the economy are more favourably off than others; those who by
accident or tradition live on their work in these sectors find
themselves in a very different position from those who do not. If we
look in these terms at the entire field of occupations, the tendency
towards creating sectoral disparities is even more obvious. There
are authors who believe that such inevitable inconsistencies in
development will continue to provide a major basis of political
conflict in the future.

However, both implications of the development of citizenship
rights - the survival of pre-modern attitudes and the emergence of
sectoral disparities - have one feature in common. They concern
relatively minor problems by comparison to the overwhelming strain
caused in the 19th and early 20th centuries by class differences of
life chances - and also by comparison to those major new sources of
conflict which modern developed societies generate today.

3

Politics in so far as it aims at creating and maintaining
citizenship rights for all is characterized by a familiar, yet
frightening paradox. Many of the measures which have to be taken in
order to ensure a minimum of participation are such as to threaten
the very rights which they create. In order to generalize certain

life chances, institutions have to be set up which first restrict the life chances of those who had them already, and later, of those to whom they were newly given as well. In a certain sense, a policy of extending citizenship rights seems almost bound to defeat its own ends.

Giving social substance to the constitutional promise of citizenship means for example, that the individual has to be torn out of traditional and ascribed ties to family and local community, church and place of work. But if we ask ourselves what takes the place of these ties, we soon discover the individual in the new fetters of large organizations which may be self-chosen but are nevertheless productive of new difficulties of participation. In the place of the unquestioned dependencies of tradition there steps the new dependency of those who have to rely everywhere upon large bureaucratized organizations which in themselves are subject to the iron law of oligarchy and which they can control as little as their ancestors were able to control their feudal ties. Equal citizenship means organization, and organization means new restrictions of liberty.

This is not simply an abstract assertion; it can be substantiated by reference to major examples. Effective social chances of participation mean that the individual has to be protected against poverty and need. Protection against need - sickness and old age, accident and unemployment - requires in a modern society the setting up of complex organizations for collecting and distributing funds, varied institutions of social insurance. However these may be organized in detail, they need rules and bureaucracies administering these rules. At the same time, every one of these rules, and even more so their administration, restricts the room for individual decisions: of those compulsorily insured although they would prefer to go other ways; of doctors who become more agents of social insurance institutions and are thereby alienated from the patient and his needs; of old age pensioners who are put at a disadvantage by the rules and others who are put at an equally ondeserved advantage; to say nothing of the many, many hours of waiting, begging, and annoyance in or outside offices. Not the evil intentions of individual officials, but the principle of organization itself renders the individual for whose benefit the organization was set up an object of uncontrolled and possibly uncontrollable agencies.

Is this a necessary development? Are there not other systems

related more directly to the individual? Is it not possible to control the new bureaucracies more effectively? At points such as this the great and the little utopias take off. An ombudsman, supposed to protect the citizen from his administration, may be able to help in the individual case; but he confirms the system precisely by doing so. The same is often true for members of parliament. A more transparent system of social welfare has not been discovered yet for large modern states; it is more characteristic for pre-modern conditions with their emphasis on the responsibility of the family and the community. That modernity, the effective equality of the opportunity for social participation for all, means organization and thus new disenfranchisement is true not only in the realm of social policy. The paradox of citizenship rights and bureaucratization may be found everywhere: a university reform designed to open up universities for new groups requires restrictions of the old and aristocratic principle of academic freedom in favour of more school-like forms and thus again organization: the generalization of the chance to acquire property in land and private homes requires rules and forms of organization which must appear, to the future houseowner, as often unbearable reglementations. Nearly every decision aimed at realizing citizenship rights carries within it the seed for refuting its intention.

This cannot mean that we should renounce such decisions. Citizenship is a necessary condition of freedom without privilege. But it must mean that we see the dangers inherent in such a course. Few have seen these dangers more clearly than Max Weber in his political essays of 1918 on "Parliament and Government in the New Germany", and it is worth quoting him at some length: "A lifeless machine is crystallized human thought. This alone gives it the power to force human beings into its service and determine the everyday conditions of their working life as commandingly as this is in fact the case in the factory. Crystallized human thought is that living machine also which bureaucratic organization with its specialization of trained skills, its delimitation of tasks, its rules and hierarchically ordered conditions of super- and subordination represents. Along with the dead machine it is about to produce that prison (Gehäuse der Hörigkeit) of the future in which people may one day, just like the fellachs in ancient Egypt, be forced to live, if a purely technically good, and that means: a rational administration

and service by officials is for them the final and only value
deciding about the conduct of their affairs. For this is achieved by
bureaucracy incomparably better than by any other structure of
power... An 'organic', i.e. an oriental-Egyptian structure of society,
but by contrast to this: as strictly rational as the machine is,
would then have its dawn. Who can deny that as a possibility this is
held in the womb of the future?"

That there are many who do not, and cannot be expected to share
this gloomy view, is in itself a source of conflict in modern
societies. But even apart from Weber's gloom, the paradox of
citizenship and bureaucracy may well be the point of departure for
those antagonisms which already characterize the developed world.

4.

There are by now as many explanations as there are manifestations
of student unrest, so that even the attempt to add another one to
them has its awkwardness. Still, it seems reasonably well confirmed
by a host of studies of the subject that underneath all local and
specific issues which come to the fore in this process, there is a
deep-seated, and almost desperate protest against the inability of
modern societies to effect change by participation. The "long march
through the institutions" advocated by some student rebels (which in
fact is a march not through the institutions, but along their front
doors in order to place a bomb before every one of them) aims at
opening up what is felt by many to be a Gehäuse der Hörigkeit. It
has often been noted that the vanguard, and indeed the mass of
rebellious students consists of children from middle-class families
who have received a liberal education. This observation far from
refuting the case which I am trying to make here, in fact supports
it. These are young people who in fact enjoy all the perquisities of
citizenship; for them the often incomplete promise of participation
inherent in modern societies is completed; and yet they are the very
people who realize that much of this promise is not going to be
fulfilled. The simultaneous recurrence of the humane dream of
anarchy and the practical inhumanity of violence appear as
step-brothers, if not brothers in this context. Anarchy, a society
in which the power of men over men has been totally abolished, is
the counter-image to bureaucracy; violence, a complete disrespect
for all prevailing rules of the game, is apparently the only way to

upset an established structure and thus begin a process of development which may end in the desired utopia.

I shall leave aside here the question of how desirable an utopia is which upon closer inspection is no more capable of change than the authoritarianism of a bureaucratic society. In terms of analysis, another aspect is more interesting. Weber had, of course, his own remedy against the threat of a future Gehäuse der Hörigkeit; it was, charismatic leadership. Since his direct and indirect influence on the shaping of the Weimar Constitution (with its considerable powers of a directly elected Reich President) was not inconsiderable, he has since been charged with being one of the unwitting pacemakers of National Socialism. However, the dream for charismatic leadership did not remain confined to Nazi Germany. In other, more humane forms it is present in the minds of people, and indeed in the constitutions of countries even today. Possibly, such personalized power is merely another expression of a widespread disenchantment with the blessings of bureaucratized modernity.

I would suggest that the same holds for a number of other phenomena, of which two seem of particular relevance. One is, the amazing recurrence of regionalism at a time at which economic, military and political rationality would seem to tell massively in favour of creating more inclusive social units. Perhaps, the official regionalism of the last French referendum is not the best example here; and the problem of South Tyrol, or Alto Adige, is one sui generis. But the simultaneous revival of the clash between Flamands and Walloons in Belgium, of Scottish and Welsh nationalism, of separatist tendencies among the Jurassiens in Switzerland and the Quebecois in Canada, and similar phenomena in almost all developed countries, raises a difficult problem of political analysis (to say nothing of the more difficult one of political action). Again, I would suggest that one of the major reasons for this movement of regionalism is a deep-seated protest against the disenfranchisement of bureaucratization, a search for the fulfillment of the promise of citizenship, where once again the methods chosen, and even the goals set may be inadequate, but understandable.

Possibly the most inadequate, certainly the most puzzling expression of a sense of disappointment with developed free societies is of a different kind altogether. We know from social analysis that to some extent solidary social action and individual

action are mutually convertible. The Luddites were predecessors of an inclusive Labour movement; and Sombart answered the question "Why Is There No Socialism In The United States?" quite plausibly by reference to the high degree of individual mobility in the country. In a similar way, the multitude of methods of individual escape from a world of apparent satisfaction by liberty and affluence, may be interpreted as an equivalent of the solidary actions of protest by students, or separatists. K. Keniston, the Harvard psychiatrist, has examined the contents of the attaché cases of business executives. Apart from the expected things such as files, or the "Playboy", he found in many quite unexpected things as well, such as ballet tights - dreams of a world which is quite different from the actual world of a continuing rat race of achievement, a tiny pocket of hippiedom in the respectable leather cases of respectable citizens of suburbia. Actual hippiedom, drug-taking, alcoholism, the sexual revolution are so many manifestations of a search for "new styles of life" which is in effect a search for the fulfillment of the promise of modern society.

My thesis is therefore that a wide variety of seemingly unrelated phenomena are in fact expressions of the same protest against the effects of a bureaucratized society. Their immediate political relevance may be uneven, and in part not apparent at all, but it is there in all cases. To some extent, it is a matter of temperament rather than evidence how one interprets these phenomena. There are those who believe that they are but the rearguard fights of minorities before the onset of a new middle age of slavery in affluence. There are others who see in these phenomena the formation of a new political force which represents a swing back to liberty in the great dialectical process of liberty and equality. Considering the size and significance of the groups involved there is clearly much to be said for the latter interpretation; but in order to decide the controversy, we have to look at the other side of the picture, that of the hated "system", first.

5.

It is sometimes claimed today, in view of student unrest and related phenomena, that modern societies are threatened by revolutionary forces "from the left", that they have to protect themselves against the "danger of anarchy". A revival of the demand for "law and order" is held against outbreaks of violence in

universities and elsewhere. While regarded as sinister revivals of historical authoritarianism by those at whom this demand is directed, it is only in part maintained by traditional authoritarian groups bent on maintaining privilege against modernity. In terms of the new and future trends of conflict in developed societies, it is not the Wallaces who demand our attention, but those for whom "law and order" is a necessary condition of a planned, rational process of growth and development towards the year 2000 in the interest of the many, and of a more worthwhile society. So far, we have looked at the "system" in terms of its critics; but there clearly is another side to the medal (although I cannot deny in presenting this side that my sympathies are with the critics rather than the defenders of the New Society).

When Max Weber wrote about bureaucratization he used a fairly simple term to identify a group variously described also as "establishment", as a "power elite", or a "service class". The attempt in modern societies to control change has led to a transformation of the process of decision-making as well as the groups involved. The amateur politician has given way to an increasingly homogeneous group of professionals in a variety of positions: professional politicians, officials, advisers, "accredited" lobbyists and journalists, university professors, assistants in many kinds of places. Various as these positions may be, they do not, paradoxically, include those of top decision-makers. Rather, it is the common characteristic of those holding them that by the definitions of their places in society they are supposed to aid those who ultimately make decisions, to translate the decisions of others into the increasingly complex and scientific language of modern practice, to serve the incumbents of positions of power. However, most of the time these modern servants have no masters any more. While defined as aides, they are in fact rulers. If there are any positions of power beyond this group at all, their incumbents have long got used to defining themselves as part and parcel of the service class. A stratum of expert servants dominates a society bent on finding more "rational" ways of organizing the realm of necessity.

Prevailing ideologies correspond to this fact. There is a widespread belief that we are living in a scientific age, in which the preparation and execution - and in fact, the making _ of decisions must be left to experts who know what things are about. The notion that in principle man is capable of mastering his

environment is based on the belief in the power of knowledge. The institutions of research and of higher learning move to an increasingly central place, because it is in them that the new power is generated. Both in the political organization of society and in that of important social organizations and institutions scientifically trained experts have a crucial place, and defend it by reference to the technical nature of the decisions which have to be made. The question of political goals is rarely raised, indeed it may be pushed aside as irrelevant; it is as if the availability of means is the only relevant issue in potilical debate.

Imperceptibly, the character of politics changes under these conditions. Instead of reasoned decisions, we begin to find the search for adaptations to allegedly inevitable social, economic, demographic and even military developments. Adaptive politics, characteristic of the service class society, means that those who make decisions regard themselves as no more than executors of intrinsic requirements of a "system" which as such is never put in doubt. That there is little room for manoeuvre is one of the persistent claims of politicians of this kind. Their alliance with those servants - scientists, technicians, bureaucrats, ideologists - who promulgate the notion of technical politics is far-reaching and often successful.

For it is clear that there are many people in all developed societies who stand to gain much by a political order aimed at mastering the realm of the necessities of life more rationally. An economic policy of growth, an educational policy of rapid development particularly in higher education, a policy of more effective medical care for everybody, a social policy of effective care for the sick and the old, a military policy of calculable risks - all this both requires a high degree of technical skill among its promulgators, and is to the benefit of the large majority of people. Indeed, there are those theorists of adaptive politics who regret that so little of what would be possible in this direction has so far been put into practice. If there are flaws in the political process of modern societies, they are technical flaws due to the fact that we have not gone far enough in the direction of a "technetronic age". More, not less rationality, organization, expertise, readiness to replace the "pre-modern" political practice of political decision-making in terms of goals by "modern" politics

in terms of knowledge about the course of events, are required. According to such critics, the trouble with our societies is that they are still bound by the egg-shells of the past, and not that they have run into new dilemmas.

The conflict of interest between industrial workers and university students is deep and incapable of solution in these terms. Workers - contrary to many clerical workers - belong to the groups which have a lot to gain from a more scientifically organized society; students, especially those from middle-class families, ask for the place of the individual in such a society, and thus for the fruits of organization. Whichever position one wants to take here, this should not be overlooked: that the "scientific" nature of the technetronic age (to use Brzezinski's terms) or the "verwissenschaftlichte Welt" (to use Schelsky's words) is an assertion no less ideological than say the pre-modern belief that "God made men high or lowly, and ordered their estate". It is possible to put the assumptions of an increasingly technocratic world in question. It is possible to ask for the uses of a more "scientific" organization of society. It is not only possible, but necessary to wonder about the uses of adaptive politics in the sense of an abdication of decision-making as a process with its own, autonomous rationality. It is possible to visualize a modern society which, while it makes use of many of the gains of modern science and technology, nevertheless uses them only in order to pursue certain simple human goals, the pursuit of which may easily require decisions very different, from those advocated by the blind as well as the subtle believers in the politics of adaptation. Perhaps this can best be put by saying that it is possible to be modern, even rational, and yet liberal (in the European sense) as well.

6.

This somewhat impressionistic attempt to identify some of the major sources of conflict in societies which have reached a high degree of economic development under conditions of considerable liberty and widespread citizenship rights, raises numerous questions of practical politics. It would lend itself to argue for a re-consideration of goals (e.g., economic growth - how much and for how long?) as well as means (e.g., political participation - in

which constitutional arrangements?). But perhaps the most worrying conclusion at the moment relates to the political organization of social interests in our modern and highly bureaucratized societies. For there is a sense in which this organization - and, as a consequence, the effect of the "party game" - fails to correspond to the prevailing differences of interest and opinion. At the same time, its inability to transform itself into a more appropriate arrangement may turn out to be the most problematic weakness of democracy in the service-class society.

There are those who feel that modernization has gone far enough, and that the only remedy for an increasingly egalitarian and rationalized society is the defence of those traditions by which men were bound to each other in the past. Reagan, Powell, de Gaulle represent very different political positions, and the latter in particular would certainly not be described correctly as a conservative; but in all these men there is a traditional authoritarian streak which still has a great deal of support even in the most developed societies. In its more extreme forms, this traditionalism may become associated with a demand for more leadership, and for the personalization of power. Here, authoritarianism becomes autocratic - a threat which may be sensed, and even named, in quite a number of countries today. Perhaps, traditional fascism with all its paradoxes of tradition and modernity, may be described as the inherent danger of this position.

There are, secondly, those who believe in the increasing "rationalization" of modern societies, in the rule of experts, and the effective organization of all areas of society. They see the hope of a more worthwhile future in the insistence on the enormous potential of human knowledge and its application to all problems facing man. Somewhere underneath these hopes there is often the Marxian distinction between a realm of necessity and a realm of liberty, and the notion that when the former is regulated most efficiently man is free to enjoy himself in the latter. This too is a political attitude which may lead to more extreme actions. Student unrest, for example, or indeed industrial strikes, slum delinquency, and the like, are threats to a development which is often seen in technical rather than human terms. Indeed, it is in this position that we find some of the elements of a "system" as Weber described it and many young people fear it today - a "system" for which

moreover we have models right before our eyes in the socialist
countries of the East which have for some time become brutally
technocratic societies under the cloak of an increasingly irrelevant
ideology. It is misleading to use the term "fascism", as is often
done today, for this exaggeration of the rationalist position as
well. So long as no better name is suggested here, one might speak
of "systemism", thereby alluding both to the notion of a threatening
"system" and to the preference of its representatives for the
categories of systems engineering.

The third major political position resulting from modern social
developments has its extreme manifestations also. They are, above
all, the utopian dreams of a society without power. But behind such
extreme forms of expression there is the search for a society which
may combine the achievements of modernity with an increase in human
life chances. A new liberalism is at least conceivable; it is indeed
real in a number of countries. Its basis lies in the social
achievements for which liberals in the past have not been responsible,
which were indeed often resisted by them. Its goals however refer to
the threats to human liberty inherent in a social development which
tends to strengthen organization and bureaucracy rather than the i
individual and his life chances. If one takes the position which I
have taken in this paper, the hope of liberty in the developed
societies of the future is dependent on the advance of this new
liberalism.

But the present party system in the free societies betrays
little trace of a clear division along these lines. Almost every
party must be described as a tenuous coalition between at least two
of the forces described here; and if we look at particular decisions,
the coalitions often extend beyond the borders of individual parties.
Radical students and authoritarian professors, autocratic leaders and
modern economists, liberals of an old and of a new school of thought,
and other incompatible groups frequently join forces - out of
tradition, inertia, a misunderstanding of their own interests, or
merely because a reformation of party systems meets with tremendous
institutional difficulties in a society the major problem of which
may be described as that of effecting change. It is a sign of
progress that we have given up the ideology of the end of ideology.
But having done so, we must now raise the questions on which the
future of liberty may ultimately depend: How can we transform the

existing organizations of political conflict into more representative ones? Which rules of the game are capable, under modern conditions, of preventing the success of the extreme manifestations inherent in each of these organizations? And, most important of all: How can we strengthen a policy oriented to the life chances of the individual rather than the efficiency of the whole or the privilege of the few?

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