

CHAPTER 21

TECHNOBUREAUCRATIC IDEOLOGY

If the technobureaucracy constitutes a new class in contemporary capitalism, if a new relation of production - the organization - has emerged, side by side with capital, and defined a new social class, this class must have a corresponding ideology. More broadly, consistent with the new technobureaucratic class and in conjunction with the traditional capitalist, liberal, individualistic culture and ideology, there must exist a technobureaucratic cultural system.

Culture is the product of all human activity, the product of work, of art and of the intelligence of men and women in every moment throughout the ages. Culture embraces the economic, political, recreational, artistic, scientific, religious and ideological activities of society. The culture of modern industrial society is basically a capitalistic culture, but, to a great extent, is also a technobureaucratic culture. Actually, it is a capitalist-technobureaucratic culture. It is not only the economic system, based on big corporations and a powerful regulating state apparatus, that has assumed technobureaucratic characteristics, nor is it only the political system that can no longer be understood without considering the role of technobureaucrats. To the extent that today the new technobureaucratic middle class has a decisive role in economic, social, political and cultural affairs, society as a whole is no longer purely capitalist, but is also technobureaucratic. Beliefs, values, art and entertainment in contemporary technobureaucratic capitalism have gained clear technobureaucratic connotations.

Technobureaucratism represents the crystallization of rationalistic ideas and actions which define the modern world. It is the sum total of the whole technological, economic and social revolution which has been taking place throughout the world since the Commercial Revolution and especially since the Industrial Revolution within the framework of an utilitarian rationalism. In the words of Theodore Roszak:

By the technocracy, I mean that social form in which an industrial society reaches the peak of its organizational integration. It is the ideal men usually have in mind when they speak of modernizing, up-dating, rationalizing, planning (1969: 5).

Understood in these terms, statism or technobureaucratism is an essential part of modern civilization. Although essentially dynamic, since it is based on technological development, it is also identified with the status quo, with the preservation and culmination of the existing culture, be it predominantly capitalist, as in almost the whole world today, or predominantly statist, as in the Soviet and Chinese models. In prior chapters, we have looked at the emergence of a new social class - technobureaucracy - and of a new mode of production -

technobureaucratism. In this chapter, we will look at the ideology which naturally serves to legitimate the corresponding social relations of production.

1. The "End of the Ideology" Proposal

The first postulate of technobureaucratic ideology is that it, is not in fact, ideological. In the second half of the twentieth century we should have finally reached the end of the era of ideology. Ideologies of both the left and the right no longer make sense as they lack scientific and technical bases. There is no reason, the technobureaucrats say, for us to waste time in sterile argument about ideologies. Ideologies, whatever they may be - liberalism or interventionism, nationalism or colonialism, totalitarianism, spiritualism, egalitarianism, fascism - are all emotional and irrational, manifesting interests and passions. They are neither scientific nor technically based.

The technobureaucrats say that this kind of political behavior is no longer feasible. Today the advances of science and technology are so great that it is possible to govern nations according to scientific and technical criteria. These are not enough, according to pragmatic criteria. Ideologically neutral technical experts, utilizing exclusively technical and scientific criteria, quantitatively demonstrated whenever possible, are at our disposal to assist in making decisions. Governing is not a political question; it is a technical one. It is the rational and precise analysis of economic and social problems, using available technical expertise to tell us what we should do. To discuss, for example, whether we should distribute more or less of the national revenue, whether there should be more or less freedom, whether some particular economic activity should be managed by the state or by private ownership, whether the vote should be by district or not, whether the currency should be devaluated, if the arts should receive more or less financial support, whether education should this direction or that direction - all these problems can be resolved according to technical criteria.

Well aware of the capacity of the historical Marxist method for unmasking ideologies, technobureaucrats very cleverly maintain that they have no ideology. However, it is obvious that this position is untenable. Its foundations are as much or more ideological as any other. The simple affirmation that any political problem can and should be technically resolved is in itself an ideological proposition. Affirming that we have reached the end of ideology is eminently ideological. Finally, what criteria will technobureaucrats adopt to make their technical decisions? Is it their intention to make decisions without taking values and objectives into consideration? Obviously this is not

the case. So it is important for us to determine the fundamentals of technobureaucratic ideology.

2. Rationalism

One of the reasons that technobureaucrats have attained some degree of success in their attempts to be viewed as neutral, as well as in their efforts to show that ideology has come to an end is the fact that technobureaucratic ideology is extraordinarily widespread. It pervades all sectors of modern life. It adapts itself to the old ideologies in conflict, blends with them and permeates them. Moreover, it coopts them. Unwittingly, both capitalists and communists, the old left and the conservatives have become victims or defenders of technobureaucratic ideology (the difference is unimportant). It is so widespread, so pervasive, the values of modern industrial society having reached such a degree of consensus in nations that are developed or underdeveloped, capitalist or communist, eastern or western, that technobureaucratic ideology almost escapes notice.

Yet a slightly more careful analysis of the question begins to unmask this ideology. This will only be possible if we also approach it critically. It will be very difficult to recognize technocratic ideology if criteria are not available which enable us to analyze the question from the outside.

Technobureaucratic ideology is first and foremost rationalistic. It is the fruit of rationalism, its most perfect expression, its fully developed form. So it behooves us to define our understanding of rationalism.

Rationalism is the dominant ideology of the modern world. It has its origins in the Greek philosophy of Aristotle, but finds its first and greatest spokesman in Descartes. Starting with this French philosopher at the beginning of the seventeenth century, almost all the great philosophies until the end of the nineteenth century have been rationalist. Bacon, Hobbes, Hume or Locke in England, Spinoza in Holland, Descartes, Rousseau, Voltaire or Comte in France, Kant, Hegel, Marx or Weber, in Germany, William James in the United States, all share a rationalist vision of the world.

Rationalism is the philosophy which places reason as the only legitimation of knowledge. It is opposed to tradition and revelation as other possible sources of knowledge. Beyond believing that everything can be understood, that the world's mysteries can be solved through the use of human reason, through research and scientific analysis, rationalism places its hope for the world in the development of human reason. We cannot make an extensive

analysis of rationalism. It is sufficient to bear in mind that it is intimately related to the emergence of the bourgeoisie and capitalist system in the modern world. Since capitalism is a more rational social system than feudalism, it needed the legitimation of rationalist ideologies, such as liberalism and individualism, to become dominant.

Capitalism is more rational, to the extent that, following Max Weber, we conceive of a rational act as a deliberate act, aimed at a defined objective and adopting adequate means to obtain that objective. In these terms, commercial capitalism, that emerged in the sixteenth century, is much more rational than the feudal system, as it defines profit as the goal to be reached by deliberate economic activity. Industrial capitalism in turn, represents progress in relation to commercial capitalism. It defines productivity or technological progress, to be achieved in the market, as the most adequate, most rational means for attaining the goal of maximizing profit. That is why the great ideologists of capitalism, from Adam Smith to the great nineteenth century liberal thinkers like Stuart Mill and Tocqueville, were all rationalists.

But Marx's critique is also eminently rational. The socialism proposed by Marx takes its legitimation from the fact that it intends to be even more rational than industrial capitalism. The fact that socialism would be more egalitarian, more just, is not the basic reason for socialism being more rational. It is more rational mainly because it is more efficient, because the basic objective is no longer profit but maximum production. And the basic criteria for obtaining this maximum production is efficiency through rational, well-organized administration and planning, rather than market competition which is often chaotic and irrational.

3. Efficientism

Although defined by philosophers, the origins of rationalism are basically economic. Rationalism derived from the need to legitimize modern capitalist society, as opposed to traditional society. In technobureaucratic capitalism, it has assumed a decisive ideological role in an efficientist or utilitarian form. The basis of contemporary rationalism is essentially utilitarian and economic. Something is rational if it is economic, and it is economic if it is efficient.

The utilitarianism which is characteristic of technobureaucratic rationalism is clearly evidenced by the basic political goal of technobureaucratism: efficiency. The first and most important objective of the bureaucratic system is economic efficiency, the maximization of results in

relation to the productive resources employed, increased productivity from workers, managers, machines and natural resources. For the technobureaucrat, a rational act is synonymous with an efficient one. If a rational act is that which is consistent with the goals to be attained and an efficient act is that which maximizes results in relation to a determined effort, then a rational act and an efficient act are synonymous with technobureaucratic ideology. The criterion for the rationality of an action is in its economic efficiency, its utility.

This belief is so deeply rooted in modern society that it is difficult to imagine another concept of rationality. Economic efficiency, the maximization of the production of goods and services, given a limited quantity of productive resources, sums up the modern world's entire aspiration to rationality and expresses its materialistic meaning. In practice, economic objectives are placed above all others. It is difficult for the common man and particularly for the technobureaucrat, to imagine any other values exist which perhaps might be more important, such as liberty, love, beauty, truth, justice and personal fulfillment.

The key criterion for bureaucratic activity is efficiency. The goal of every action is improved efficiency or productivity, is economic development, or an increase in per capita production. It does not matter if the resulting income is distributed more or less justly. Income distribution is only significant to the extent that it contributes to economic growth. In these terms, an egalitarian distribution of income may eventually prove inefficient and will thus be rejected. In the same way, an excessive concentration of income will make the creation of a domestic market difficult, and so is also undesirable. For each economic or social situation, there should be an optimal distribution, that is to say, an efficient distribution of income which permits the maximum rate of economic growth.

4. Subordinated Values

This does not mean that the technobureaucratic ideology of modern industrial societies does not allow for other values. They are recognized, but only as subordinate to efficiency and economic development. However this subordination is not made explicit. The technobureaucrats hate discussing values. They are pragmatic, defining themselves as such (Bresser-Pereira, 1989). A dread of ideologies constitutes part of their own ideology. Yet in a subtle and typically technobureaucratic manner, without ever affirming that one set of values is more important than another they make them all dependent upon efficiency and economic development. The method is simple. It is summed up

by stating that all other political aims which mankind might choose to attain depend on economic growth. Economic development is the independent variable which will determine not only the level of well-being, but also the degree of freedom, security, social justice and beauty which exist in a society. Democracy would only be possible in advanced industrial societies. Equality of opportunity increases as the level of economic development increases. The beauty and grace of the environment depend on architectural and landscaping projects. The arts are developed as economic development takes place.

To prove these hypothesis, partial regression analyzes are made between per capita income and the attainment of other political and cultural goals. Obviously, high correlation indexes are obtained. Thus technobureaucratic theses gain the prerogatives of scientific propositions. By these statistical methods, technobureaucrats try to establish cause and effect relationships. Science and ideology merge.

Economic growth thus becomes the preeminent political goal to be attained. Growth means modernization, industrialization, rationalization. Growth is the increase in efficiency and productivity.

On the other hand, efficiency would, according to this ideology, be the distinctive characteristic of technical experts. We have already seen that technical experts are the professionals who act according to criteria of efficiency. It is the efficiency of their action as specialists or managers which legitimate their position as technical experts. Technical experts and development thus join forces through efficiency. The technical expert becomes the principle agent of development, the only element in a society capable of planning and executing this development efficiently, not only at the level of the state but also at the level of the large private bureaucratic organizations. Thus technobureaucratic ideology gains perfect internal logic and becomes a powerful instrument for the seizing of power by the technobureaucracy.

5. Other Values and Characteristics

Aside from efficiency and economic development, which constitute the heart of technobureaucratic ideology, there are other important elements to consider.

In the first place, technobureaucratic ideology emphasizes change. The pace of technical progress made it revolutionary. It provokes profound changes in the economy and society. Change is welcomed by the technobureaucratic ideology, as it increases efficiency, and necessarily implies the introduction of new techniques.

On the other hand, technobureaucratic ideology is conservative. It deals with a new type of conservatism, a reformist conservatism. It is not an immobilist conservatism. Technobureaucrats only permit one kind of revolution: technological revolution. They may take power by a political revolution or a coup d'état. But once in power, they are not prepared to carry out an economic and social revolution. They prefer to make reforms. It is true that in the communist countries, economic and social revolutions have been profound. But we have noted that the communist revolutions were not at first technobureaucratic revolutions. The true technobureaucrats prefer not to revolutionize the social and economic structures of a country where they have taken or are taking over power. Revolution signifies disorder, insecurity and consequently, inefficiency. For this reason it is preferable to be moderately conservatives. If the structure was capitalist, it will continue to be capitalist; the same if it was supposed to be socialist. It makes no difference to the technobureaucrats. They are sure that, through their reforms and the adoption of technical criteria for planning and management, both systems will, in the long term, proceed in the same direction. And both can be efficient.

Technobureaucratic ideology also emphasizes security. This value is given particular importance by the military technobureaucrats whose very *raison d'être* is security. The military officers is a security professional and subordinates everything else to this objective. But security is not essential to military technobureaucrats alone. Political technobureaucrats also value it. Security is a pre-condition for the efficiency of the system. Without order, without security, there is no rational government; it is impossible to attain efficiency. Beyond this, an emphasis on security is a way to guarantee the autocratic power of the technobureaucrats, and to justify setting up an entire security system within a country which then covertly or openly observes and controls the activities of the society as a whole.

In other words, security becomes a political objective of prime importance, opening the way for another basic characteristic of technobureaucratic ideology. It is also eminently authoritarian. We have already seen that technobureaucratism does not mix well with democracy. It is, by definition, a species of oligarchy. Thus it is natural that its world view is authoritarian. It begins with the principle that the legitimation of political power is in technical knowledge, in competence. The democratic system does not always guarantee power to those who are most technically competent. In addition, technobureaucrats were formed within a bureaucratic organization which is rigidly hierarchical, where authority always comes from the top down. To reverse the process, as democracy tries to do, appears to irrational them.

Freedom, for the technobureaucrat, is often synonymous of lack of discipline. Freedom is a luxury which can constantly be postponed in the name of efficiency and security. It is a far-off objective which can only be reached once economic development and social order have been attained. Mihajlo Mihajlov observes accordingly:

"If the goal is technical-scientific progress and freedom constitutes only a mere instrument, then it is not too difficult to imagine the convergence of the two social systems (capitalist and socialist) into a mixed society like the one described by Orwell in 1984 and by Huxley in Brave New World" (1971).

Another characteristic which forms part of the foundation of technobureaucratic ideology is the belief that all problems are technical problems and can be technically solved. This belief is based on the typically technobureaucratic world view which presupposes an inherent internal logic that exists in things and situations in an essentially harmonious world. For the technobureaucrats, the world is a system or complex of systems in which each element has its place, its role. The technical experts' role is to understand these system - natural systems like the human organism, mechanical systems, like a machine, or social systems like a family or corporation. They understand their interdependencies and make them function smoothly and efficiently. Conflicts, contradictions or disorder are mere technical defects of the system, malfunctions which can be technically solved. In the words of Henri Lefebvre:

"Within this vast ideology, it is presupposed that societies and the groups which make them up, are like living being and "beings" in general have necessity of an internal principle which maintains their existence. This principle of cohesion and consistency, whether it is a latent or emerging structure, is the only thing of importance. Destructuralization? It is the threat, the evil side to be quickly done away with, it is the evil itself" (1967: 62).

We see the influences of Parson's functionalist sociology and Levi Strauss' structuralist anthropology as well as the whole of neoclassic economic theory in this world view. It is characterized by a conservative, mechanical view which has its origins in Newton's mechanics. The intrinsic harmony of the planetary system is transposed to all other systems, particularly social systems. However, harmony is not innate to these systems. It depends on men and women capable of making the system run correctly. It depends on the social engineers of the modern world, or in a word, on technobureaucrats.

Henri Lefebvre called this world view "new elitism" to emphasize its resistance to change and its conservatism (1967: 53-67). In reality, technobureaucratic ideology is not immobilist because it values the technical and social change which originates from it. However, it is a system which does not take history or its contradictions into account. In these terms, it is an

ideology which repudiates dialectics and a historical view of social progress. This ideology,

"... does away with history, declaring that it has neither orientation, nor sense and then demonstrating that sense is reached by the rule of rational technology" (Lefebvre, 1967: 64).

Finally, because of its vulgar materialism and its omnipotence (expressed in the affirmation that all problems are technical ones which therefore have technical solutions), technobureaucratic ideology values consumption. Efficiency and economic development are its two basic objectives. It alienates the population through mass consumption. It is a system of privilege and therefore needs a good argument to justify its domination. Consumerism, the valuing of personal consumption, as well as the furnishing of the economic means to realize this consumption, are essential elements of its system of legitimation.

Modern industrial society is a society of mass consumption. It produces in mass; thus it should consume in mass: the third car, several TV sets, more and more sophisticated electronic appliances, another telephone, more and more clothes, leisure equipment. Happiness lies in consuming. The measure of one's personal realization is in his/her consumptive capacity. Everything will be solved as more goods are produced and more goods are consumed. Consumption can be postponed, as the statist countries have been able to do for some time, but it is eventually necessary. Reducing all human aspirations to consumption makes it easier to apply the basic postulate of technobureaucratic ideology: all problems are technical and can be technically solved.

In summary, technobureaucratic ideology values technical expertise itself and its technical experts, efficiency, economic development and the resultant mass consumption. Technobureaucratic ideology place its belief in planning and rational management. More than anything else, it is the fruit of utilitarian economic rationalism. It values security, order and authority which are essential to efficiency. On the other hand, it devalues liberty, social justice, beauty, or when it does value them, makes them a consequence of or subordinate to efficiency. Freedom and social justice are considered to be dangerous and can continually be sacrificed in the name of security and efficiency.