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of action that cannot be carried out without resorting to organizational models, that human groups and human societies can set new objectives for themselves and thus learn by obtaining the sanction of the environment. It is only through these sanctions, i.e., in view of their successes and failures, that they can change. Changes, we are inclined to believe, appear first at the level of the praxis and second only at the level of the values. It is true that cultural and organizational systems are too stable to allow groups to learn just anything. But within the limits fixed by the conditions of equilibrium of these systems, they can and actually do learn. The sanction of the environment, furthermore, does not stop at this stage; it tends to eliminate inadequate patterns of action and, finally, feeds back on cultural traits and basic behavioral attitudes.

To discuss the margin of freedom and of innovation or, better, the possibilities of learning still offered by these complex systems, we shall employ the theory we submitted about their conditions of equilibrium. Even less than in the technical field can one discover, in this domain, a *one best way* to be accepted by everyone, and there is no point in looking for the linear growth of a unidimensional rationality. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to predict the evolution of the systems of interdependent elements of which we have tried to understand the latent functions. In this final perspective, our models will appear no longer as ends in themselves but as so many stages necessary both for understanding the general orientation of this evolution and for setting the problems in their proper context.

We shall study successively the development of bureaucratic rigidities according to the evolution of industrial society and the special place of the French model within this evolution. In conclusion, we shall examine, in the more concrete case of French public administration, how the forces of resistance and the forces of change can be roughly appraised in terms of action.

BUREAUCRATIC SYSTEMS OF ORGANIZATION AND THE EVOLUTION OF INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

Two general factors, in our opinion, influence the evolution of organizational patterns in modern society in a way Weber did not foresee. These factors, whose importance we have already stressed in our discussion of the ways in which an organization achieves conformity, are (1) the constant progress in the techniques of prediction and organization; and (2) the growing sophistication of the

individual in an increasingly complex culture. Organizational progress has made it possible to be more tolerant of the personal needs and idiosyncrasies of individual members: one can obtain the wanted results from them without having to control their behavior so narrowly as before. Cultural sophistication, on the other hand, has increased the individual's capacity for accommodation and at the same time, as a consequence, his possibilities of independence. People can now measure their contribution to the organization in a more precise way; they are no longer obliged to bargain for all or nothing. Participation is much less dangerous for them, since they have learned to be more flexible and since they can participate without committing themselves quite so much. The cost of quitting and finding a substitute participation is, in any case, both psychically and materially much less heavy than before. The more tolerant modern organizations demand much less from their members, and the latter's freedom and flexibility allow them also to demand much less in return. If pressure from both sides can diminish as both parties become less demanding, rigidity will tend generally to decrease. The number and the complexity of the rules may increase tremendously—modern organizational patterns will be more flexible, much less "bureaucratic" than before. Organizations will be content with a more temporary loyalty from their members, even at the highest echelons, and individuals will not press the organization to protect them by using the rules in the most binding way. With pressures from the top and counter-pressures from below decreasing, rigidity as described in our model will tend to diminish.<sup>2</sup>

Many authors, we are aware, have adopted a different view of modern organizations. William H. Whyte, Jr.,<sup>3</sup> who has been among the more outstanding, argues, for example, that modern organization man is above all a conformist, that the new ethic which the development of large-scale organizations is creating is an ethic of conformism, in contrast to the Protestant and capitalist ethic of individual responsibility. His arguments, however, are not very convincing even if limited to the short run. It might be true that our social system still needs more individual responsibility than the present trend allows us to manifest. But this does not mean that our society is more conformist than that of even thirty years ago. The "well-rounded" per-

<sup>2</sup> Starting from a different point of view, the British social psychologist Tom Burns has recently presented a similar argument. For him, the growing acceleration of change in modern industrial society tends to impose a type of *organismic* management against the usual *mechanistic* type. See Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker, *The Management of Innovation* (London: Pergamon Press, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956).

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sonality which Whyte so attacks is the mark of a flexible individual always ready to compromise and generally more socially-minded than his more assertive counterpart of thirty years ago. Does this mean that organizational men in general are now more conformist? Certainly not; the confusion comes from Whyte's focusing on the top, successful individual. The Protestant ethic was supportive for the successful executive who could be extremely assertive in the name of individual responsibility. But this kind of independence meant more submissiveness on the part of his subordinates and the retreatism and ritualism necessary to alleviate it. The social values of today's organization man are conducive to better possibilities of adjusting in a more independent way, if not the top, but the average, member is considered.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, the extension of those values to other domains where individual creativity is the decisive factor can become a deterrent to progress, but in the paramount domain of social action the price which had to be paid for maintaining the authoritarian hero of former times was such that the flexible, tolerant, and well-rounded conformist manager of the organization era seems, in comparison, to be a model of efficiency.

Moreover, as Dalton has shown, the complex human relations and power relations system of a modern organization imposes on its executive the need to take initiative constantly and to be creative more subtly.<sup>5</sup> Instead of assuming the full responsibility of command in a general climate of uncertainty, they must settle conflicting claims in a maze of rules, arbitrate between opposing forms of rationality, and face the difficult moral issues of the ambiguity of means and ends. They are becoming political leaders instead of risk-taking entrepreneurs.

Considering only these general tendencies, we could conclude that bureaucratic systems founded on those vicious circles of dysfunctional elements which we have analyzed are bound to become less conspicuous. Contrary to the fear of so many humanists and revolutionary prophets of doom, we can expect more promises of liberalization than threats of standardization.

Such optimism, however, must be considerably moderated, since we must also take into account the general progress of rationalization that constantly diminishes the challenge of uncertainty, thus allowing organizations to escape reality. The existence of this long-range trend toward rationalization that so impressed Weber does not mean that organizations are becoming more "bureaucratic" in our

<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding the difficult situation of several layers in the hierarchical pyramid, and especially the lower supervisors and foremen.

<sup>5</sup> Melville Dalton, *Men Who Manage* (New York: Wiley, 1959).

dysfunctional sense, but that men's activities are increasingly processed through formal organizations, i.e., that bureaucratization in the Weberian sense is truly increasing, perhaps at an accelerated rate, but without entailing the dysfunctional consequences that Weber feared and all his successor prophesied. We come then to the following paradox. That greater flexibility which makes it easier for individuals to participate in the standardized and controlled activities of large-scale organizations is responsible for the development of "bureaucratization." In other words, the elimination of the "bureaucratic systems of organization" in the dysfunctional sense is the condition for the growth of "bureaucratization" in the Weberian sense.

Finally, as is most often the case, the optimist's and the pessimist's views equally should both be dismissed. Neither the logic of standardization nor the logic of liberalization is applicable alone if one tries to envisage the total picture. Both are valid at that level. Man seems to push the logic of standardization, i.e., the goals of efficiency, as much as the successes of the logic of liberalization will permit him. New equilibria are constantly formed in place of the older ones. They give man both the advantages and the burdens of greater sophistication and more complex entanglements.

Within this very general framework, it can be shown that, at the operational level, it is only when large-scale organizations become more flexible and can eliminate some of their bureaucratic vicious circles that they can overstep significant stages of growth. Recent research in the field of large-scale organization history has made this point clear.<sup>6</sup> Decentralization now seems, to shrewd observers of the business scene, to be the necessary condition for further growth.<sup>7</sup>

This outcome, however, is not a simple linear process, and present systems of organization are still to a large extent "bureaucratic." Progress in the organizational field meets a strong passive resistance. Bureaucratic systems persist and always find new forms. This is the result of two opposite and yet convergent pressures. On the one side, each individual, each group and category within an organization, will always struggle to prevent the rationalization and maintain the unpredictability of their own task and function. Their power, the influence they can wield, depend, as we have demonstrated, on their amount of discretion, and, finally, on the uncertainty they have to face. One can thus understand that they will fight rationalization in

<sup>6</sup> See, among a number of articles published in the *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Ernest Dale, "Contribution to Administration of Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., and G. M.," I (June, 1956), 30-62.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph R. Cordiner, *New Frontiers for Professional Managers* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956).

their own field while trying to further it in other fields. On the other side, the constant progress of rationalization offers the possibility and the temptation, to those responsible for it, to push planning and standardization further than is rationally feasible.

Two kinds of privileges and vicious circles, therefore, tend to develop. The former correspond to the resistance of groups trying to preserve their positions of strength which can be weakened by technical progress, and the latter to the desire of other groups to impose a rationalization which is not yet warranted by this progress. Those two forces very often reinforce each other. A premature centralization can create the best protection for local privileges; conversely, a coalition of such privileges will eventually fight to impose a rationalization which will protect them and even enhance their status temporarily by eliminating other privileges.

The success of these two maneuvers depends on the organization's capacity to isolate itself from the rest of society. Since the persistence of bureaucratic vicious circles will entail, as a primary consequence, difficulty of contact with the environment, those activities in which it is easier to remain isolated from outside pressures are most likely to allow the development of bureaucratic systems of organization.

We should like thus to argue that the fears of technocracy expressed by so many authors are not founded on fact. When progress accelerates, the power of the expert is diminished and managerial power becomes more and more a political and judicial power rather than a technical one. Managers' success depends on their human qualities as leaders and not on their scientific know-how. As science invades the domain of the experts, those aspects of their roles which it affects decrease in importance.

We may emphasize, as a last paradox, that bureaucratic forms in the dysfunctional sense correspond to the impossibility of eliminating all elements of charismatic power from the functioning of large-scale organizations. Bureaucratic privileges and vicious circles follow from the necessity of resorting to charismatic-like power in an otherwise ever more rationalized world.

#### THE GROWING THREATS TO THE FRENCH BUREAUCRATIC PATTERNS

Let us now analyze the place and meaning of the French model in this general context. We have shown that its temporary and local dysfunctions could only reinforce its general hold. The system as a whole seems to be functional, inasmuch as it relies on a number of cultural traits and basic patterns of behavior that have been constant

throughout the modern history of French society. These traits and these behavioral patterns, however, cannot be considered as given once and for all. Whatever their stability, they have also to submit to the necessity of a minimum of equilibrium with the environment. And we now must ask ourselves whether or not, in view of the extraordinary upheaval brought about by the rise and the development of mass-consumption society, the whole complex of bureaucratic patterns, processes of change, and the basic primary traits will not finally become gravely dysfunctional and whether or not the pressure of necessity will not oblige French society to learn new patterns of behavior that will tend to influence and transform basic traits which could until now be considered immutable.

Until the present, the pressures of the outside world have led only to a reinforcement of the system. There had been constant progress in flexibility, but this was offset by a general growth of centralization and a wider diffusion of the bureaucratic patterns. French society met the challenge of the modern world by extending its own special type of organizational rationality and pushing it to the extreme. There are now signs, however, that the limit of possible developments has been reached, that the system does not have the necessary resources to solve the increasingly difficult problems which it will confront if it extends still further. We may now approach a breaking point, from which point on the basic stability of the system will be threatened.

The threat comes from two sets of convergent pressures. On the one hand, the requirements of efficiency of modern industrial society, that cannot be met as in earlier times by resorting to greater centralization, force the elimination of some of the bureaucratic rigidity. Role differentiation, the complexity of the co-operative process, and sheer organizational growth require that individuals and groups have more personal contacts, participate better in the decision-making system, and be part, finally, of more fluid equilibria of newer relationships. On the other hand, the modern mass-consumption techniques seem to present new possibilities of meeting French basic needs at lower cost and more rationally. This convergence makes it possible to meet the two basic conditions for successful change: urgent necessity and the material and moral possibility of adjusting to it.

Let us be more specific. We emphasized, in the preceding section, that the whole tendency of modern organizational development has had to be toward more flexible patterns and that decentralization at certain decisive stages has been prerequisite for further growth. This problem has been especially misunderstood in France, where modern organizational development has often been resisted under the

pretext that it is bureaucratic. To be sure, many voices have denounced, time and again, the errors and failures caused by the French patterns of organization. But most of the time this has been done in a very partial and ultimately reactionary way, since the critics have refused to understand the price which would have to be paid to eliminate the dysfunctions about which they complain so bitterly. Finally, there has been a deep consensus about the relative excellence of the French system, to which most Frenchmen, revolutionaries and conservatives, radical and moderates, alike have instinctively adhered.

They have had some justification for this opinion, since the French system has been able to claim, within the context of bourgeois and traditional Europe, all the tangible advantages that we have analyzed of stability, reliability, protection of individual independence. At the same time, it has seemed to bring, in its own way, a very sufficient measure of efficiency, while appearing, in a nation deeply influenced by the ups and downs of a turbulent history, as the best system for safeguarding the unity of purpose and the permanence of national society and insuring a quick mobilization of resources in case of war.

The consequences of the ensuing organizational lag have not been very worrying, since the lag could not be embodied in practical terms. On the contrary, most responsible Frenchmen have been very proud of the success of an organizational system that could make it possible to benefit from all the progress of modern technical civilization without having to obey the imperatives of standardization, concentration, and discipline already stifling the spirit of the other Western nations. But the lesser efficiency of French organizations can be compensated for by the gains brought by centralization, only as long as planning, prediction, and development activities remain extremely uncertain, arbitrary, and hazardous, thus making the activities of control and regulation the decisive administrative functions. Now, when a more rational view of man's influence in shaping future events can be maintained and an increasing number of organizations are becoming able to make more conscious choices, the centralized administrative state and all organizations and branches of activities influenced by bureaucratic patterns are, curiously enough, becoming more conservative than their less integrated counterparts. They may be bigger and more sophisticated, but they are paralyzed by egalitarianism, by the weight of their own impersonal rules, and, above all, they are unable to master the necessary pressure for imposing change upon resisting groups. Centralization, once a certain stage has been definitely overstepped, cannot any longer bring useful rewards. It seems even to have become self-defeating in the French

cultural context, where socialist solutions are not able to escape the dilemma of stagnation or totalitarianism.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, when there seems to be no escape within the system itself, pressures from without become increasingly stronger. The different para-bureaucratic systems disintegrate. The bourgeois entrepreneurial system is no longer able to compete with the more flexible modern managerial organizations. The educational system cannot any longer promote the highest learning and research achievement. The colonial system is unable to give way to another, better-adjusted type of political influence. Pressures to disrupt all these entrenched patterns are finally threatening the bureaucratic system of organization itself.

From another and perhaps more profound perspective, the possibility of the emergence of a new form of rationality not compatible with the bureaucratic tradition seems extremely difficult to discard in a country which has always prided itself in keeping in the vanguard of rational achievement.

French bureaucratic rationality has relied on individual effervescence and competition to produce new and more elaborate models of routine activities to be carried out on an egalitarian and impersonal basis after having overcome the resistance of groups. This has meant no competition and no co-operation at the group level; state and group quasi-monopolies have imposed the *one best way* through egalitarian pressures against individual resistance. This procedure makes planning extremely difficult, because planning ahead implies organizational experimentation, exchange of information, and statistical analysis—all contrary to the philosophy of the *one best way* and the negative practices of groups. It also requires a co-operative attitude on the part of individuals that cannot be obtained when the dominant behavior of the central and group authorities is one of control and repression.

Now, when managerial planning for growth both in private and public organizations has definitely taken precedence over state and group attempts at controlling or regularizing the blind forces of the market, when organizations come to recognize that it is better to allow a large tolerance for calculated waste and human deviances and imperfections than to sacrifice growth to thrift and the pursuit of possible overlapping, waste, and corruption, the rationale of the traditional system of organization crumbles. The French bureaucratic system of organization, as we have described and analyzed it, cannot

<sup>8</sup> The model of state socialism, once rather progressive, seems now increasingly to be associated with inefficiency, corruption, and waste (the Middle East, Latin America, Spain), unless it becomes totalitarian, while the only success of socialism in modern times has been obtained in countries with strong tendencies to self-government.

easily adjust to this new form of rationality. It is not fit for planning ahead, but for regularizing, after the fact, the results of group struggles over the proposals of individuals. Planned growth implies greater trust in human motivations, fostering initiative at all levels, more co-operation between individuals, and more competition between groups.

If everything is taken into account, it no longer seems possible to maintain the rate of development required by modern industrial society without resorting to this new strategy of action. And French society, as a matter of fact, has been moving steadily in this direction. The first sign of a significant change was the creation of the Planning Commission just after the Liberation, and the subsequent elaboration, in its midst, by younger higher civil servants and the most progressive business leaders, of first the practices, and then the philosophy, of *économie concertée*.<sup>9</sup>

*Economie concertée* has many weaknesses in practice and is only very partially fulfilling its ideals. It retains many of the anterior practices. The state still keeps some of its authoritarian and negative attitudes, and it is only by manipulating the different pressure systems that it can succeed in obliging private groups to act. Private groups, on the other hand, maintain their infantile attitude and consent to co-operate only when they feel that the state agrees to pay a heavy price for their co-operation. Yet *économie concertée* is a significant departure, since many positive results have been achieved without the traditional controls, and both the private managerial elite and the state bureaucratic elite are gradually but definitely being won over to the new kind of rationality. These groups are thus increasingly able to bargain realistically without resorting to the traditional mixture and alternation of repressive control on the one side, and secretiveness, resistance, and apathy on the other.

<sup>9</sup> This is what Henry W. Ehrmann, in an otherwise extremely perceptive article on *économie concertée*, fails to understand when reviewing the theory and practice of recent French bureaucratic intervention in the economy. He is judging according to the American standards of a trust-busting and competitive philosophy. For him, therefore, *économie concertée* has much in common with the Vichy attempts at corporatism and traditional European protective tendencies. This is quite true but represents only a part of the picture. That picture may be good, but the comparisons, we believe, are not relevant. The defects of *économie concertée* to which Ehrmann is pointing concern practices that were flourishing earlier in different forms. And what is more significant for assessing the change brought by *économie concertée* is not a comparison with American but with earlier French practices which have been hampering the growth of the nation. Measured against the latter, the new attitudes toward co-operation and planning ahead, the diffusion of the new managerial rationality, are extremely important and revolutionary factors. (See Henry W. Ehrmann, "French Bureaucracy and Organized Interests," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, V, No. 4 [March, 1961], 534-53; and Club Jean Moulin, *L'Etat et le citoyen* [Paris: Le Seuil, 1961], pp. 354-70.)

While the pressures for new organizational patterns become stronger and more difficult to resist because of the lure of progress, efficiency, and a broader kind of rationality, there are also signs that the cumulative changes brought about by the emergence in France of a mass-consumption society are beginning to offer new possibilities, outside the bureaucratic system of organization, of meeting basic individual demands. In the pre-mass-consumption era, the satisfaction of the individual needs for autonomy, individual control over the environment, equality, and freedom from direct dependence relationships required the combination of a stratified society and a centralized system of decision-making. Stratification made it possible to safeguard equality, while centralization made the consequence of stratification impersonal and allowed the individual to escape the difficulties of hierarchical relationships.<sup>10</sup> But with mass consumption, stratification becomes less rigid. More and more people can participate in ever wider cultural influences. The greater complexity of the whole culture does not seem to entail a greater degree of hierarchy but engenders, on the contrary, greater and greater specialization and the breakdown of the old hierarchical order. Impersonality, equality, and individual autonomy, therefore, become possible outside the protection of the strata, and direct interpersonal contacts become less threatening. We do not want to imply that the pressure for avoiding face-to-face relations will cease, all at once, to be an important element of French social relations, but we do believe that the emergence of mass consumption is already lessening this pressure.

French society has resisted the diffusion of the new cultural models of mass society, which for this reason have developed less quickly in France than in the neighboring countries.<sup>11</sup> But this resistance amounts only to rearguard delaying tactics.

A national, all-encompassing market is emerging in France slowly but with increasing rapidity, in the field of culture as well as in the fields of material products and services. It may even be argued that the more rational and universalistic culture of the French has fewer possibilities of resistance than more particularistic and "deferent"

<sup>10</sup> The protection brought by social stratification is still important in France. We believe one can find an indirect proof of this in the strong limitations imposed by spontaneous group references to the expectations of individuals. These limitations appear to be much greater than in America and the other Western countries closer to the model of mass society. See Stern and Keller, "Spontaneous Group References in France," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XVII (1953), 208-17.

<sup>11</sup> The temporary but important lag in the diffusion of television in France in the 1950's is a good case in point. This lag cannot be explained by economic and financial reasons, as the French standard of living in this period was high enough and still growing—it was caused by the general resistance to change generated by the French system of social relations.

cultures.<sup>12</sup> The open and egalitarian French culture has been able to maintain stratification only with the use of artificial distances.<sup>13</sup> Once such distances appear anachronistic and ludicrous, no possible basis of discrimination remains.<sup>14</sup>

The consequences of these new developments are already apparent. The basic rules of the game of French human relations have already changed greatly in many fields, as can readily be verified.

Changes in class relations are the most conspicuous. Social distance has diminished considerably. Class lines are increasingly blurred. Only the widest social distances are apparent. Centralization has both focused attention on them and helped to lend strategic importance to the opposition of groups at the end of the social spectrum. But the game is played, on both sides, with more sophistication and less passion than earlier. Employers and employees understand each other better and are becoming more tolerant. Parallel progress in the organizational field, finally, makes the complex game of polite avoidance and indirect bargaining seem hollow and useless.

Cultural differences, however, still remain as difficult a barrier to overcome as the traditional bureaucratic rationality; but they also are tending to crumble under the pressure of mass culture. A great loss of faith in the most discriminating aspects of bourgeois culture is already manifest. Even the baccalaureate, that old symbol of bourgeois status whose sacred character Goblot emphasized, is about to disappear in the relative indifference of public opinion. Correlated with this loss of faith in social discrimination, and running much deeper, is the change that is slowly gathering momentum in parent-child relationships, which will have a decisive influence upon the patterns of authority.

The impact of the mass media has already made possible the development of a youth culture outside the parental orbit, and the diminishing influence of traditional social discrimination has greatly alleviated the pressure on the younger generation. French parental

<sup>12</sup> We use the term as suggested by S. M. Lipset in his analysis of present-day British society. See Lipset, "Democracy and the Social System," in *The First New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

<sup>13</sup> Inferiors did not internalize their inferiority as in England; they were kept at a distance only by the vertical stratification of cultural patterns, the difficulty of promotion and crossing over the social barrier, and the resulting fear of face-to-face contacts and of humiliation.

<sup>14</sup> The disintegration of the traditional system of cultural stratification is quite apparent already when comparing the theater and movie public in Paris. The hierarchic differences in public, still very strong in the theater, have not persisted for the movies, in spite of the frantic efforts of the holders of high-brow culture to impose more sophisticated aesthetic standards. See Crozier, "Employés et petits fonctionnaires, note sur le loisir comme moyen de participation aux valeurs de la société bourgeoise," *Esprit*, June, 1959.

authority is still far from being permissive, but the self-perpetuating conflict over authority can be expected to lose one of its indispensable sources, the family system.<sup>15</sup>

These new social and cultural developments may account for the emergence and the significant progress of new patterns of action opposed to the bureaucratic spirit. We shall cite only two of them. First, as we have stated, a new managerial spirit is flourishing that is breaking away from the traditional bourgeois pattern and pervades the entrepreneurial system as well as the higher strata of the Civil Service. Good observers might still find many remnants of the bourgeois patterns in this new spirit. But, here again, the important thing is the departure from entrenched patterns of action and the tendency to give more importance to the values of growth, co-operation, and service to the community than to the values of stability, individual control, and class discrimination. Another new and interesting phenomenon has been the increase in autonomous co-operative group action in a number of different domains, ranging widely in the fields of economic and political action, among students, peasants, entrepreneurs, and religious milieux. Many aspects of these new group activities, it is true, also retain some of the characteristic negative features of the French tradition.<sup>16</sup> Yet we believe that there has been a significant departure from the traditional group passivity of the French bureaucratic and bourgeois system. The change that is occurring in the peasantry, especially, is an extraordinary revolution which no one would have dared to predict twenty years ago and which puts to the question many aspects of the traditional equilibrium of French bourgeois society.

All these changes and their consequences feed back vigorously on the spirit of youth and have finally brought in a new intellectual climate whose importance, although fogged by the passions and violence of the Algerian war, should not be underestimated.<sup>17</sup> A greater

<sup>15</sup> Another very important element of the French family system has changed significantly, namely, the attitude and behavior toward procreation. The change in the birth rate is not very great and may seem, at first glance, to be accounted for by too many factors to be relevant to our discussion. Yet we believe that this change is very important, because it concerns basic attitudes toward life and therefore must be associated with the general transformation of French society. The behavior of self-restraint that the French people were the first to impose on themselves in the nineteenth century was quite an unusual human achievement, and it can be considered as a milestone in human rationality typical, after all, of the bureaucratic spirit. A relaxation of this restraint is thus very significant. It corresponds in our opinion to a more trustful and future-oriented view of the human condition that is well in tune with the new forms of rationality.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., the activity of the students' union and of the farmers' associations in the years 1959-61 has often been extraordinarily irresponsible.

<sup>17</sup> The decisive breaking point seems to have been the Mendès-France experiment in 1954.

concern for empirical knowledge, a greater disregard for abstract theories, a reformist and action-oriented philosophy, have marked a student body whose enthusiasm and radiance have not been matched since the first half of the nineteenth century. The educational system has not yet changed; but the climate which is shaping the learning process of the elite of French youth<sup>18</sup> also calls for the acceleration of the disintegration of the traditional bourgeois and bureaucratic order.

THE MODEL'S POSSIBILITIES OF RESISTANCE:  
THE CASE OF FRENCH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In considering the growing threat to the French bureaucratic and para-bureaucratic patterns, we have taken into account only the changes in values and modes of action effected by the accelerating development of industrial civilization. We have thus easily concluded that these patterns are likely to recede inasmuch as their latent functions lose their importance. These conclusions may be considered as probable hypotheses for the long run, but they do not seem adequately relevant to the present and the near future. For they do not give proper importance to the possibilities of resistance to change of all-encompassing and yet self-contained and tightly controlled systems of organization. It may be argued that such systems can outlive the disappearance of their traditional latent functions. Because of their possibilities of action upon their own environment, they can reshape the latter, create a new kind of equilibrium, and develop new latent functions for maintaining the basic behavioral patterns necessary to their survival.

We shall discuss these possibilities of resistance in the most central and decisive case for France, that of public administration. The bureaucratic system of organization of French public administration is certainly one of the most entrenched of such closed systems of social action that has existed in the modern world. It contributed heavily to the shaping of its own environment in the past, and many of the patterns of action that support it at present have developed under its influence.<sup>19</sup> Our problem is to assess whether and to what extent it is still able to exert such influence in the mass-consumption era.

<sup>18</sup> This climate is all the more important, since the content of the curriculum is formalistic and uninspiring.

<sup>19</sup> De Tocqueville has argued, for example, that the lack of independent group action and the strata isolation in French communities were due to the king's municipal and fiscal policies. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'ancien régime et la Révolution*, *passim* and especially I, 115-22.

It is self-evident that most nations are now much more interdependent than they were, and that France is no longer able to pursue its own bureaucratic experiment by isolating itself from the rest of the world. Once it was possible for parallel social systems to take their own courses in a rather independent way. Today, however, there are too many organizational links and too many intellectual contacts to allow a nation to remain isolated. Only Russia and the Communist countries can preserve such isolation, but they are a world unto themselves and have to pay a heavy price for it. France, in any case, cannot conduct its bureaucratic experiment while ignoring the rest of the world. The failure of its colonial system, the end of its "civilizing mission," have taken away the last buffer against foreign contacts that it had elaborated. France has had to recognize that its organizational system is not only not universal but has proved inferior, at least in the organizational competition within the Western world.

This over-all analysis, however, is still adequate only for the long run. The relative inferiority of an organizational system does not make it impossible for this system to resist change if it is able to maintain its equilibrium or to find a new equilibrium with its environment. From this point of view, we believe that three main areas of contact are decisive for assessing the possibilities of resistance to change of the French bureaucratic system of organization: the area of policy-making (the orientation of the system); the area of personnel recruitment (the human basis of the system); and the area of the bureaucratic functions (the services given to the larger community).

The first area of contact of the bureaucracy with the outside world concerns, of course, general policy-making. We have shown how difficult this problem can be for a bureaucratic system that always tends to transfer major decisions further up. French public administration has set aside special categories of higher civil servants separately recruited and trained, relieved from the usual organizational requirements, who alone can confront these problems and thus become the system's change agents. The role of these members of the *Grands Corps* has become increasingly important as the gap between the bureaucratic system and its environment has widened, for they have become the necessary mediators between the bureaucracy and the environment, especially at times of crisis. This is why the present change of outlook of the younger generation of higher civil servants should not be neglected. They have been deeply influenced by the new intellectual climate of the student world and by the experiments in economic action made possible by the nationalization of various

enterprises and the growth of *économie concertée*.<sup>20</sup> As a consequence, they have lost most of their attachment to the bureaucratic system as an ideal of perfection.<sup>21</sup> They have become empiricists, more devoted to economic growth than to purity of style and, especially, financial purity. Their heroes are no longer the perfectionists but the doers.

This great change, however, has not as yet greatly influenced the internal functioning of the system.<sup>22</sup> At this level, the values and perspective of the new managerial leaders are not entirely decisive. According to the scheme we have proposed, the "directors" are all-powerful in maintaining the status quo and finding ways of readjusting the system to new conditions, but very weak in operating basic reforms or even changes affecting interrelationships between different groups. Yet it must be recognized that some margin of action is granted them, especially during crises and because of their strategic situation as mediators. In the short run, it is true, a higher civil servant who wants to initiate reform must resort to an authoritarian show of force that, in the end, defeats its own purpose and reinforces the whole system. In the long run, however, the diffusion of a reformist spirit among most of the higher civil servants must have decisive consequences. When the breaking point is reached, it will no longer be possible to maintain the bureaucratic faith in the middle ranks while the upper ranks disown it.<sup>23</sup> From then on, groups' resistance to reforms will be less and less easy.

The second area of contact is the domain of personnel recruitment. No organizational system can survive without achieving a proper equilibrium with the community in which it is developing and which must provide it with a reasonable flow of new members. This condition is even more restrictive for the French public service, since it relies on a tight stratification system that functions well only if there is enough pressure for entering it at the bottom.

Yet this is now one of the weak points of the French bureaucratic system. The crisis of recruitment that began after World War II has become increasingly more acute. Contrary to a very long tradition, there seems to be a decreasing interest in state employment at the

<sup>20</sup> This may be only vicarious participation. The Renault experiment is considered by many younger higher civil servants as one of the outstanding successes of their new philosophy, although almost none of them has been active in it.

<sup>21</sup> Although, in practice, fewer of the present than of the past generations of higher civil servants leave the service.

<sup>22</sup> Very curious double standards seem to have emerged. The bureaucracy is progressive when dealing with the outside world and extremely conservative in regard to its own patterns of action and internal functioning.

<sup>23</sup> The bureaucratic faith has already much declined among young middle-rank civil servants.

lower and middle ranks.<sup>24</sup> There are now fewer candidates for many competitive examinations than there are jobs offered.

This situation, which is beginning to undermine the whole system, has many causes. General factors that have devaluated the traditional advantages of the Civil Service are the universal downgrading of routine clerical occupations, the growing stability, security, and even independence guaranteed by private employment. But more specific factors may have had as much importance, especially the insistence of the French bureaucratic establishment<sup>25</sup> on maintaining and even extending its rigorous selective system, with its high and at times irrelevant standards, and the climate of cramped outlook and narrow bickering that has discredited petty civil servants in the community.

Here again, instead of the bureaucracy's influencing its own environment, as in earlier times, and slowly reshaping it in accord with its own wants and requirements, the community is beginning to put pressure upon the bureaucracy by refusing the bureaucratic patterns. This second area of contact is also an area where the bureaucracy is in an inferior position, more likely to be influenced than to influence.

The system has been able to maintain itself up to now by tapping new human resources. Lower civil servants, once predominantly male and recruited from all over France,<sup>26</sup> have become increasingly female and originate mostly from the underdeveloped Southwest. Such a new symbiosis with the community, however successful it may be in the short run, inevitably involves two risks. First, it is only temporary; the Southwest also will industrialize (it is already doing so), and there are limits to the number of women who seek employment outside the home. Second, it accentuates the inferior situation of the bureaucracy, increasingly staffed by people who are clearly ranked much lower than their counterparts in private employment.

At the same time, other pressures are exerted during the employment life of civil servants. Civil servants are no longer so isolated as they once were. They are, therefore, much less committed to the Service. The rate of departure may still be low, but there is already much more alternative employment offered, and this is causing unrest. Public service will have increasingly to compete with other possible employment in order to keep its personnel. This will become

<sup>24</sup> Because of their general social and intellectual prestige, the higher ranks still attract the best talent.

<sup>25</sup> The pressure, as we have shown, does not come from the policy-making ranks but from all the groups interested.

<sup>26</sup> There were, of course, already many important distortions of geographical distribution, but no such focusing on only one region as exists now.



extremely difficult if public service maintains the egalitarian guarantees that make it impossible to discriminate between employees.

Finally, the pressure for change we have seen developing in the higher ranks has its counterpart in the lower ranks. There, however, it is likely to be expressed through movements making rather simple claims, whose objectives are likely to be even more conservative in regard to the system. This has already been marked in the successive strikes and social movements that have plagued the Civil Service in the last fifteen years and that played their part in the troubles of the Fourth Republic.<sup>27</sup> But we are also close to a breaking point, inasmuch as the system is pushed into more and more contradictions and can no longer find its equilibrium.

The last and third area of contact of the bureaucracy with the outside world is the area of the bureaucratic functions. This is not so dynamic a domain as the first two, but it will also, in the long run, generate a pressure for change that will be difficult to resist. Change in this area comes from the universally increased importance of the role of the state and the growing demands of the community for public services. This trend is disturbing the traditional French equilibrium between the state and the citizen. The citizen, who once refused state intervention as much as he could, is now continually asking for more services. Thus servicing in the balance of activities of the bureaucracy is taking the precedence over controlling. Increasing numbers of new roles must therefore be created which do not fit into the old scheme. The system is tending to disintegrate because it has had to overextend. Specialization and differentiation, as we have seen, entail another logic of bureaucracy that can be reconciled with the logic of centralization only in the short run. In the long run, and we are already seeing many consequences of these new developments, the general equilibrium of the system is completely disturbed, and this engenders another kind of pressure for change.

In all three of these areas, the same scheme operates that we have so briefly reviewed. The pressure of the general community, which is much more open than the bureaucracy to the new patterns of action brought by mass production and the mass-consumption society, becomes the leading force, and the balance between the state and society is reversed. In the major areas of contact, the French Civil Service seems unable any longer to shape its own environment; it appears, on the other hand, to be fighting a rear-guard battle to escape the outside influences conveyed by this environment. The French bureaucratic system of organization is desperately trying to

<sup>27</sup> We are still within the vicious circle. The malaise originating in the application of the system gives rise to movements that claim, and partially succeed in imposing, an extension of this system.

cope with ever expanding responsibilities, and with new functions and a new managerial spirit not easily compatible with its principles, while the community refuses to give it proper recognition and to staff it adequately.<sup>28</sup> In so doing, without understanding it very well, French society is paving the way for a much deeper crisis, or at least for a change of a much greater magnitude, whose repercussions will bear in their turn on the French model of change and adjustment to change and on its usual patterns of action.

#### THE FRENCH BUREAUCRATIC CONTRIBUTION

No such deeply stabilized system as the French bureaucratic system of organization can disappear without shaping profoundly the patterns succeeding it. The more practical question, therefore, which should be asked is not whether or not change will come, but what is likely to remain from the traditional bureaucratic system. Or, in more elaborate terms, what new equilibrium, what new system of relationships, can be evolved in, and well adjusted to, the modern world, to preserve the advantages of the original French bureaucratic contribution.<sup>29</sup>

We have already discussed the advantages for the individual of the French bureaucratic system,<sup>30</sup> and what was at stake in the individual's attachment to it. Examining these advantages again from a general and comparative point of view, we should like to argue that the basic benefit the French bureaucratic system brought to the individual was the possibility it offered to all its members, even the most humble, of participating on a wide and egalitarian basis in a style of life that featured especially a great deal of personal independence, the possibility of detaching oneself from the pressure of circumstances, and great freedom and lucidity. These achievements should not be minimized. They may be considered as one of the best parts of the contribution of the French culture to the Western world. At different stages they have been decisive for the progress of Western civilization. They are maintained now in a very expensive

<sup>28</sup> One should also take into account that the new functions and the new opportunities offered by these changes will lure away the most brilliant of the civil servants, by weakening resistance that would otherwise be very difficult to break. It can be hypothesized, finally, that resistance will come mostly from the middle and lower middle ranks that are best identified with the system and less open to exterior influences.

<sup>29</sup> We tend to believe that older systems influence new ones by imposing on them the requirements of securing at least equivalent benefits for most people concerned. This means that one of the decisive starting points in our prospective orientation would be to ascertain what was the basic contribution of the French bureaucratic system to the general Western culture in which it has developed.

<sup>30</sup> See above, pp. 198-203.

and inefficient way, and the whole balance of French society is affected by the relative failure of these traditional patterns. At the same time, however, there are enough elements in modern mass production and mass-consumption society that can be utilized by French society to elaborate new patterns enabling it to maintain and to renew its traditional and necessary contribution.

Such a problem presents a very deep challenge to a society, but it is not insuperable. One should point out also that nowhere else has a satisfactory balance as yet been achieved between individual and organized activity. Modern organization man is groping for a new culture, open to all and thus a mass culture, yet lively and creative enough to encourage each individual to participate with the best of himself. It is not so surprising that France, whose bureaucratic and bourgeois system permitted the blossoming of one of the most elaborate individual cultures of the pre-industrial era, should remain attached to it somewhat longer than other nations. But we can hope that when change comes, as it now does, the challenge offered to French ingenuity may be met by a positive contribution to the new humanism that must develop in the context of the new organizational rationality.

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