**Pluralism Revisited**

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The struggle of individuals and groups to gain autonomy in relation to the control of others is, like the efforts to acquire control over others, a fundamental tendency of political life. Struggles for autonomy result from conflicts and cleavages; when these struggles are successful, as they often are, they result in turn in tendencies toward pluralism. Because conflicts and cleavages are ubiquitous, so too are tendencies toward pluralism.

By suppressing autonomy and preventing the public manifestation of conflicts and cleavages, a hegemonic regime can prevent the development of a pluralistic social and political order. Whenever the barriers to organized oppositions are lowered, however, the thrust toward autonomy and pluralism becomes evident in political and social life. In polyarchies, where by definition these barriers are lowest, comparatively speaking, subsystem autonomy and organizational pluralism are always marked features of the social and political order. However, even if a considerable degree of pluralism is a necessary condition, an essential characteristic, and a consequence of a democratic regime, pluralism also creates problems for which no altogether satisfactory solution seems yet to have been found.

You will have noticed that I have already used the word ''pluralism'' several times, and in several senses. ''Pluralism'' is often used simply as a synonym for ''diversity.'' Thus ''cultural pluralism'' seems to mean essentially the same thing as ''cultural'' or ''social diversity,'' except that ''pluralism'' may be intended to carry a more favorable, ''diversity'' a more neutral, connotation. I see no profit in this usage, and prefer to use the term ''diversity'' instead.

I want to use the term here in two different but related ways. First, by ''conflictive pluralism'' I intend to refer to the number and pattern of relatively

enduring cleavages that must be taken into account in order to characterize conflicts among a given collection of persons. I wish to distinguish conflictive pluralism from strict bipolarity which, I shall argue, is a comparatively rare cleavage pattern, if we consider any number of public, political conflicts within the various countries of the world, or at any rate among those where the barriers to the public expression of conflict are relatively low. Second, by "organizational pluralism" I intend to refer to the number and autonomy of organizations that must be taken into account in order to characterize conflicts among a given collection of persons. Organizational pluralism is greater, other things being equal, the greater the number of organizations and the greater their autonomy. Systems that permit a significant measure of autonomy to important units or subsystems are, in fact, frequently called pluralistic, or at least pluralistic in that respect. Thus contemporary Yugoslav writers sometimes describe their system of decentralized socialism as pluralistic, in contrast to strictly hegemonic rule with a command economy, as in the Soviet Union, or Yugoslavia itself before 1951. In Italy, and until the military coup also in Chile, Communist party leaders spoke of their commitment to pluralism in order to signify their intention of maintaining a regime that would permit opposition parties. Thus, the term is no longer limited to Western bourgeois thought, nor is it necessarily an epithet among Marxists or other socialists.

I will now very briefly, and necessarily therefore somewhat superficially, examine the causes of organizational pluralism, some of the problems or pathologies it gives rise to, and some of the remedies that are often proposed. Although I can hardly do more than hint at the main lines of the argument, my considerations will lead me to the conclusion that none of the commonly proposed solutions would accomplish much. What is more, with some the remedy seems to me rather worse than the disease.

## Causes of Organizational Pluralism

The extent of organizational pluralism within a political system, and more concretely within a country, is mainly to be explained, I think, by: (1) the amount of latent conflictive pluralism; (2) the nature of the socioeconomic order; (3) the nature of the political regime; (4) the concrete structure of the political institutions. These four factors are not wholly independent of one another; their relationships are complex and by no means well understood.

**Conflictive pluralism** As Joseph LaPalombara's recent analysis of the evidence indicates, and as others have also found,[1] in most countries there exist a number of different lines of cleavage, and the intersection of these cleavage lines has produced a pattern of conflictive pluralism, not bipolarity. Bipolarity along a cleavage line formed by social class tends to exist only in highly homogeneous countries like New Zealand or Finland where other differences,

as of language, religion, race, or ethnic group, are not sufficiently salient to disturb the effects of differences in social class. Ironically for orthodox class theory, however, it is precisely because of their high homogeneity that such countries manage to deal rather easily with conflicts arising from class cleavages. In these countries the pattern that tends to emerge, then, is not extreme polarization accompanied by acute antagonisms but rather a moderate bipolarity within a rather consensual political environment.

It is possible to interpret cleavages other than those formed by social class as crumbling obstacles to class consciousness, left behind by the slow recession of traditional society and early capitalism, destined nevertheless to rapid erosion by the push of new economic relationships. Historically, however, this interpretation has led to a persistent underestimation of the continuing strength of identifications formed by subcultures centered around religion, region, ethnic group, race, and language, and failure to foresee the emergence of new identifications centered around a variety of economic differences that do not fall nicely along a single prominent cleavage line but rather generate several or many cleavages, as among skilled and unskilled workers, organized and unorganized, blue collar and white collar, service workers, professionals, executives, and so on. Finally, in reducing ideology to an epiphenomenon of class (a position, it should be added, that many neo-Marxists have long since abandoned), orthodox class interpretations have tended vastly to underestimate the extent to which ideological diversity among elites leads to fragmentation rather than solidarity. Nowhere is this last tendency more visible, incidentally, than among the intellectual partisans of the working classes.

To account satisfactorily for the powerful thrust toward conflictive pluralism exhibited in practically all countries in the present world, and certainly in countries in the later sequences of economic change, would call for a deeper and more extensive explanation than the account I have given here. It would start, I think, with the conjecture that concrete human experiences provide a narrow base for creating strong identifications and attachments that extend much outside the small, specific, and idiosyncratic cluster of human beings with whom each of us is most intimately associated during the important occasions of our lives.

Whatever the explanation may be, the important point is not that ''class'' is unimportant but rather that, however it may be measured, in practically all countries where oppositions are relatively free to organize and express themselves, ''class'' in its various manifestations is only an element, albeit nearly always a significant one, in a fragmented pattern of cleavages and conflicts that is persistently pluralistic and not bipolar, much less consensual.

So far I have emphasized the prevalence of conflictive pluralism. But it would be wrong to suppose that the amount of latent conflict available for expression when the barriers to oppositions are lowered is approximately the same in every country. What is known from studies of particular countries and

from such cross-national data as now exist strongly supports the hypothesis that there exist significant variations in the amount of conflictive pluralism among countries with similar regimes, particularly among polyarchies, and within the same country over long periods.

**The socioeconomic order** It is reasonable to ask whether a high degree of organizational pluralism is, at least in modern times, so exclusively a product of capitalism that it would necessarily disappear in an economic order that both in theory and practice took for granted the fact that giant firms are necessarily both public enterprises and political systems. In particular, would a high degree of organizational pluralism necessarily vanish in an order where the principal means of production were socially rather than privately owned—in, then, what would ordinarily be called a socialist economic order?

Although such a view is widely held, it seems to me unambiguously false, and rests upon a theoretical confusion that makes ownership equivalent to control. Advocates of capitalism, like their socialist critics, have often assumed that private ownership is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for control of the enterprise by the owners; conversely, ownership by the government of the state is thought to be both a necessary and a sufficient condition for control by the government of the state. If an enterprise is privately owned, it is assumed, then of course the owners make the key decisions, either directly or through managers who are no more than agents. If enterprises are owned by society, the government, the people, or the workers, then it must follow that the decisions of enterprises will be made by society, the government, the people, the workers.

This is an egregious error, simple-minded in its concepts and tragic in its consequences. For experience in this century has conclusively demonstrated that ownership is definitely not a sufficient condition for control. One cannot even be certain that a particular form of control requires a particular form of ownership. Publicly or socially owned enterprises range all the way from highly hierarchical systems of managerial dominance, where even trade unions are of negligible importance—as in the Soviet Union—to the system of self-management or workers' control practiced in Yugoslavia.

If we accept the axiom that in general a specific form of ownership is not a sufficient condition for a specific control relationship (and may not be a necessary condition), then the question of control is theoretically prior to the question of ownership. (Unfortunately, this has rarely been appreciated in controversies over capitalism vs. socialism.) Seen in this perspective, what capitalism did in theory, and in substantial measure in practice, was to inaugurate a system of decentralized control over economic organizations that were to a relatively high degree autonomous vis-à-vis the central government and one another. If socialism by definition entails social ownership of economic enterprises, and unless by definition it must be centralized, then a socialist economy

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can be highly decentralized and therefore pluralistic. A socialist government might well elect to grant extensive autonomy to enterprises in order to permit internal controls far more democratic than have ever existed either under capitalism or in centralized socialist systems like the U.S.S.R. Obviously no socialist government—probably no government—would eliminate all external controls, whether by markets, the government of the state, or both. A decentralized socialist order might nonetheless generate just as much organizational pluralism as exists in any nonsocialist order, and perhaps a good deal more.

Nor is organizational pluralism in a socialist order necessarily at odds with Marxism. On this as on so many other questions the corpus of Marx's work is, taken as a whole, ambiguous. For half a century, Marxists who looked to the Soviet Union as the very embodiment of Marxist verities assumed that a socialist order must necessarily operate as a centralized command economy. Yet there are passages in Marx that lend eloquent support to the idea that socialism would be highly decentralized.

Again, the experience of Yugoslavia after turning away from Stalinism in the 1950s lends support to a perspective on Marxism that cannot be lightly dismissed as simply heretical or cryptocapitalist apologetics. Unless one is prepared to argue that by definition the Yugoslav economy is capitalist (or anyway nonsocialist) and that by definition Yugoslav Marxists are not real Marxists, one is compelled to conclude that Marxism as interpreted by some Marxists is compatible with a high degree of organizational pluralism, and socialism with a comparatively high degree of organizational autonomy.

To understand the really crucial alternatives, for both the political and the economic order, one must focus on control, not ownership. In sorting out economic alternatives, the key question is not whether an order is socialist or nonsocialist (though that may be an important secondary question) but how much autonomy is permitted to economic enterprises and the nature of internal and external controls. A nonsocialist, privately-owned economy can be dominated by a hegemonic political order that closely regulates the activities of economic enterprises, as in Nazi Germany during war time. Conversely the experience of Yugoslavia, even if it is unique up to now, demonstrates that a socialist economic order can be highly decentralized and organizationally pluralistic.

A shift from capitalism to socialism, then, need not necessarily reduce the amount of organizational pluralism in a country. It is altogether possible that in some countries (the United States might be one) where important decisions are strongly influenced by giant corporations hierarchically dominated by their managers, the inauguration of a decentralized socialist economy—in which, for example, the decisions of an economic enterprise were made according to the principles of full procedural democracy, where all persons employed by the firm (and only those) enjoyed rights of citizenship in the government of the

firm—would result in an increase, not a decrease, in the number and autonomy of economic organizations.

To sum up:

> The amount of organizational pluralism in a country does not depend on whether the economic order is capitalist, in the sense that the enterprises are privately rather than publicly or socially owned. It does depend on the extent to which decisions are decentralized, that is, on the amount of autonomy permitted to enterprises. And the amount of autonomy permitted to enterprises appears to be theoretically independent of forms of ownership, hence of capitalism and socialism as such. A capitalist order may be, but need not be, highly decentralized. A socialist order may be, but need not be, highly centralized.

**Regime** Suppose there were a country with a remarkable degree of diversity among its people on a very considerable number of characteristics: language, religion, ideology, region, ethnic group, national identification, race, etc. To prevent the manifestation of these cleavages in political life would doubtless require a regime in which a small set of unified rulers is in a position to mobilize an overwhelming preponderance of political resources for their own use and for the maintenance of a severely hierarchical bureaucracy, and to deny to everyone else practically all access to political resources. Given a highly hegemonic regime of this kind, no public conflict would appear and the underlying predisposition toward conflictive pluralism would remain unmanifest.

Suppose now that the barriers to oppositions were gradually reduced. It would be reasonable to expect that as the barriers went down, relatively autonomous organizations would spring up, and that some of these organizations would seek to advance the claims of the hitherto politically latent groups and subcultures. Up to some point, the more the barriers to organization and participation were reduced, the greater would be the proliferation of relatively autonomous organization. In time, no doubt, a limit would be reached and more stable patterns would emerge.

Fortunately, historical experience provides us with a nice laboratory for exploring these conjectures. For the fact is that something very much like this did occur in Italy, Austria, Germany, and Japan after the displacement of hegemonic regimes in those countries as World War II came to a close. De-Stalinization in Yugoslavia after 1950 also led to a great multiplicity of interest groups. To take another example, a rich organizational life began to proliferate in Czechoslovakia during the famous Prague Spring of 1968. Finally, Portugal offers a current, if still unfinished, experiment. And the reverse development often occurs when leaders establish hegemonic control over the government, destroy all autonomous organizations, prevent the manifestation

of public conflict, and build a hierarchical structure of order and cohesion over the remains of the silenced opposition.

It is important to keep in mind that whether the movement is toward organizational pluralism or away from it, the process need not come to rest either in a highly hegemonic regime at the one extreme or in a comparatively open polyarchy at the other. It may simply stop somewhere along the way. Consequently a regime may be rather "pluralistic" without being highly "democratic." Not only do polyarchies vary in the amount of conflictive and organizational pluralism they exhibit but, as Juan Linz has shown, so do hegemonies.[2]

Yet it would be an egregious mistake to suppose that the extent of organizational pluralism has nothing to do with the nature of the regime. As our illustrations are intended to show, in the same country in a period of time too short for significant changes to occur in the latent pattern of social cleavages, changes in regime have resulted in enormous changes in the amount of manifest organizational pluralism. Indeed, one of the most striking differences among regimes in the modern world is to be found precisely in the extent to which those who oppose the conduct of the government of the state are permitted to organize, express themselves, and participate in political life. Let me continue to use the term "polyarchy" to refer to a regime in which the right to participate is broadly extended and the institutional guarantees to oppositions are, by historical standards, comparatively strong and the barriers to oppositions comparatively low. Let me continue to use the term "hegemonic" for regimes where the institutional guarantees are weak or absent and the barriers to oppositions high.[3]

The proposition I now wish to advance is that:

> Organizational pluralism is ordinarily a concomitant, both as cause and effect, of the liberalization and democratization of hegemonic regimes.

In particular, the comparatively high level of institutional guarantees combined with the broad inclusiveness that (by definition) together characterize polyarchy are inevitably associated with extensive organizational pluralism. The guarantees of the right to form and join organizations, freedom of expression, the right to vote, the right of political leaders to compete publicly for support, particularly in elections; the existence of alternative sources of information—all these are important conditions for the growth of organizations, particularly political organizations, for they both heighten the incentives for forming political organizations and reduce the costs of doing so. Hence:

> Given essentially the same latent pattern of cleavages in a country, if its regime is polyarchal it will exhibit more conflictive and organizational pluralism than if it is hegemonic.

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**Concrete political institutions**  Although the concrete political institutions of a country are of course partly determined by the nature of the regime and the extent of conflictive pluralism, they can also make an independent contribution to the number and autonomy of organizations in a country. These consequences are perhaps most visible in polyarchies, among which there are marked variations in political institutions. Three kinds of variations seem to be particularly significant for their effects on organizational pluralism. First, multiparty systems of course increase the number, if not the autonomy, of political parties. Second, in some polyarchies, such as Switzerland and the United States, constitutional norms and political practices provide for an extensive partitioning of governmental authority by means of both federalism and separation of powers; the result is to increase the number and autonomy of governmental and other political organizations. In other polyarchies, such as New Zealand and Britain, there is much less constitutional partitioning; a unitary rather than a federal system, combined with parliamentary government rather than a strict separation of powers between executive and legislative, make for considerably greater concentration of governmental authority and correspondingly less organizational pluralism among governmental and other political organizations.

Finally, the number or the relative autonomy of organizations is also increased by the institutions and practices of "consociational democracy," as practiced in the Netherlands (even if the degree of conflictive pluralism that originally stimulated the growth of these institutions has waned), and by systems of "corporate pluralism" or "democratic corporatism" that have developed, and may be increasing in strength, in Norway, Sweden, and elsewhere.

Because each of these three sources of variation in concrete political institutions seems to be capable of varying independently of the others over a wide range, and because the concrete institutions of a particular country also change from time to time, even among countries with essentially similar regimes, such as polyarchies, differences in concrete political institutions help to create a staggering variety in the specific patterns of organizational pluralism existing in different countries.

### Problems

Any specific constellation of organizational pluralism is, then, a highly complex phenomenon. The particular constellations vary in important ways from one country to another. A good deal of evidence appears to support the hypothesis that:

> In different countries, the constellation of organizational pluralism varies in amount, in inclusiveness, and in the pattern of cleavages and conflicts in which organizations participate. Countries with similar regimes, e.g., polyarchies or hegemonies, may have significantly different constellations of organizational

pluralism. Moreover, although some degree of organizational pluralism is a necessary condition for polyarchy and a fairly high degree of organizational pluralism appears to be a consequence of the institutional guarantees and exclusiveness of polyarchy, the particular constellation of organizational pluralism present in a given country with a polyarchal regime is not necessarily essential to maintain polyarchy, and may be undesirable on other grounds.

**Inequality** In particular, it is pretty widely held that in its effects on decision-making institutions, organizational pluralism in polyarchies often fails to meet reasonable criteria for equality and, partly but not wholly as a result, for a broader "public" or general interest. It is hardly open to doubt that organizational pluralism and the institutional guarantees of polyarchy are not sufficient conditions for a high degree of equality in the distribution of control over the government of the state or other organizations, or the distribution of political resources, or, more broadly, status, income, wealth, and other key values.

**Stasis** This conclusion would be less consequential, no doubt, if it could be shown that organizational pluralism is a dynamic force with a more or less steady thrust toward the reduction of inequalities. I am not aware of any theoretical reasoning that has been advanced on behalf of the existence of such a dynamic force. Over against this possibility, there are grounds for thinking that despite marked inequalities in control over the government of the state in a polyarchy, organizational pluralism may sometimes develop a self-sustaining pattern over fairly lengthy periods. A stable system can develop in which the most disadvantaged are unorganized or poorly organized and therefore comparatively powerless to remedy their condition; in which, more broadly, a stable pattern of inequality in the distribution of major values is preserved, at least in part, by the results of organizational pluralism; in which major public problems go unsolved because every solution that does not have substantial agreement among all the organized forces is, in effect, vetoed; in which public policies in every sector are pretty clearly not determined by consideration of what might serve the best interests of the greater number but result instead from the play of organized groups, each concerned exclusively with its own interests; in which, finally, some such perception as this of the way the system operates becomes widely diffused and leads to disillusion and discontent not merely with the particular system of organized pluralism that creates stasis and its consequences but with the constitutional structure of the polyarchy, and more, to polyarchy in general or even to the desirability and feasibility of democracy itself. So:

> A particular constellation of organizational pluralism can produce a stable system in which mutual vetoes prevent the reduction of inequalities and, more generally, structural changes in the status quo.

For most polyarchies, no doubt, my portrait is overdrawn. But there is enough resemblance to conditions in many, including my own, to cause one to wonder how a stable equilibrium of inequalities might be overcome.

## Solutions and Their Difficulties

Quite possibly there is no general solution. That is, desirable solutions may be specific to a particular situation or country. However, some of the most commonly offered solutions run into serious difficulties of their own.

**Substance: Common interests versus particular interests** One common genre of solutions looks to the discovery of a broad, overarching public, national, collective or general interest (or good) that, if it were properly understood, would clearly specify the proper decision to be made in cases of conflicting and particularistic claims. The proper decision might specify which claim is to be given priority, or an outcome transcending all the particular claims. If everyone were to know the general good, and give priority to it, then presumably the autonomous organizations would no longer oppose changes aimed at the common good. Inequalities that remained would be the result less of the relative strengths of the various organizations involved in a conflict than of some broader principle of justice or general good deliberately adopted by all the members of the polity, and concurred on by the various organized forces.

In this view, a great deal of conflict comes about because of disagreements that are, at base, irrational. These conflicts arise because the social consciousness of some or all of the political actors is, so to speak, deformed. Irrationalities occur because some people simply misunderstand the nature, causes, and consequences of matters in dispute; or they neglect their long run interests in favor of their immediate interests; or they unwittingly sacrifice the interests of their broader, more social selves to the claims of a narrower self identified with the primary individual ego, or the family, the kin group, or some other narrow social fragment.

If all the parties to a conflict always understood their true or real interests, it is argued, many conflicts would vanish. At the very least, better understanding would facilitate a search for and the discovery of mutually beneficial solutions to conflicts. From this perspective, then, properly conducted inquiry will lead to better knowledge of the true nature of self and society, and this knowledge will in turn help to foster harmony rather than conflict.

Unhappily, this proposal is less a solution than it is a prescription to search for a solution. All assertions as to the specific nature of a general, collective, public, or national interest are, unless they are merely vacuous, themselves likely to become matters of public controversy. I don't mean to say that the idea of the general good is meaningless but only that it inherently involves debatable philosophical assumptions, together with judgments of fact and value that will

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ordinarily transform into a controversial political question any claim publicly advanced on behalf of a specific policy said to be in the public interest or for the general good. I have yet to run across a proposition about the general good that is concrete enough to specify outcomes and not highly controversial.

More specifically, arguments attempting to demonstrate to members of an advantaged majority that their best interests require them to make sacrifices in favor of a relatively disadvantaged minority, convincing as they seem to their advocates, are not necessarily convincing to the majority. Nor do advocates fare better who seek to demonstrate that a relatively privileged minority ought in its own interests to yield some of its benefits in favor of a relatively disadvantaged group, whether another minority or a majority. Anyone who puts forth arguments of this kind is either ignored or soon embroiled in political controversy. What seem to be crystalline, self-evident truths to advocates are falsehoods to their opponents. In a concrete sense, then, advocates and opponents of particular changes are partisans. If they organize to further their respective demands, they simply foster organizational pluralism.

Thus what sets out to be a way of ending conflicts among organized groups may only deepen an existing cleavage or create a new one. In the absence of general agreement on the substantive content of a transcendent public good, each group strives to impose its policies on the rest.

This is why I stated earlier that solutions of the kind I have been considering seem reducible merely to recommendations that in all cases of conflict a search ought to be made for mutually beneficial and mutually acceptable outcomes. These proposals don't and evidently can't guarantee that mutually beneficial and acceptable outcomes will actually be discovered. To search for such outcomes seems to me desirable, but unless we are told what political processes and structures will increase the likelihood of discovering and bringing about such outcomes, if and when they exist, an exhortation to search for the common good does not take one very far.

**Structures: Centralization versus decentralization** Another kind of solution fills the void of the first by specifying changes in political structures that, it is thought, would lead to the reduction of inequalities. Typically, structural solutions require either greater centralization and hierarchic controls over subsystems or greater decentralization and democratization of subsystems.

Let me briefly clarify what I mean by centralization and decentralization. If organizations are subsystems in some larger system of controls, then that more inclusive system is decentralized to the extent that its subsystems are autonomous. By definition, $A$ is autonomous in relation to $B$, with respect to some set of actions $x$, to the extent that $B$ does not control $A$ with respect to $x$. (To simplify, I am going to omit the phrase "with respect to $x$." However, reference to a scope, $x$, is always implied.) Also by definition, if $A$'s autonomy increases in relation to $B$, then $B$'s control over $A$ decreases.

Sometimes one subsystem controls all the rest, but not necessarily com-

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pletely. Let me call a special subsystem of this kind the "Center." Then starting from any given situation, to decentralize means to increase the autonomy of other subsystems in relation to the Center. By definition, decentralization also means a decrease in the Center's control of the subsystems. To centralize means exactly the reverse.

Now it is sometimes argued that because organizational pluralism leads to unacceptable inequalities and prevents the adoption of policies designed to reduce inequalities, the solution is to reduce the autonomy of organizations and to increase the control of a Center. In relation to private organizations the Center is ordinarily the government of the state. In relation to governmental organizations, the Center is usually the leadership of the governmental bureaucratic hierarchies. Advocates of this solution typically propose greater centralization of control in the government and a corresponding reduction in the autonomy of business firms and certain other organizations. Within the government, they advocate greater centralization of control in the chief executive and a corresponding reduction in the autonomy of government bureaucracies. Some advocates of the centralizing strategy recommend the abandonment of polyarchy itself, arguing that polyarchy is inherently too pluralistic; they recommend the adoption instead of a highly centralized hegemonic regime and a command economy. Only so, they argue, is it possible to reduce unacceptable inequalities in both the opportunities and rewards that are generated by any modern industrial or "post industrial" society.

Whether the solution of centralization is intended to preserve and even strengthen polyarchy, or to transform polyarchy into a hegemonic regime, it faces one grave difficulty. As we have seen, centralization means that the autonomy of certain subsystems is reduced and the control of the Center is increased. To increase the control of the Center requires that the political resources of the Center be increased relative to the resources of the subsystems. If the Center is the central leadership in the government of the state, as this solution usually prescribes, these political resources will ordinarily include an increase in the access to the means of coercion available to the central leaders. The more the subsystems must be deprived of their autonomy in order to bring about the reallocations necessary if greater equality is to be achieved, the greater must be the resources of control, including coercion, available to the leaders at the Center. At the limit, subsystems will have no autonomy and no resources for resisting the control of the central leaders. _

To say that other subsystems have little autonomy and little control over the Center is to say that the political system is based on a high degree of political inequality. Since reciprocal controls by others are weak or absent, the incentives of the central leaders to reduce inequalities are generated only by their own consciences and ideology. Historically, over the long run these have been weak, particularly as new generations of leaders succeed to top positions in a centralized system. The leaders at the Center are free to redirect privileges

toward themselves, or more generally to their own political stratum, ruling class, or elite group. Given the weakening claims of conscience and ideology, they generally do. They may further intensify the system of privilege by recruiting their successors mainly from their own stratum, including, of course, their own children.

Thus a strategy of centralization that is initially justified as a way of reducing inequalities runs a serious risk of establishing a system that not only is based on a high degree of political inequality but in due time facilitates the development of socially and economically privileged ruling elite as well.

Faced by this prospect, or perhaps even the reality, one may recommend an alternative strategy of decentralization, together with the democratization of relatively autonomous subsystems, whether governmental, partisan-political, economic, or other. Much as I prefer this approach to the other, I am compelled to confess that it also has difficulties. Except under highly unusual circumstances, the resources of the various subsystems are likely to vary. Differences in resources arise from variations in skills, energies, cultural qualities, previous accumulations and investments, scarcities, markets, readily available natural resources, and many other factors. Thus each subsystem might be internally democratic, and the principles of distribution and allocation within each subsystem might be accepted as perfectly just by all the members of each organization, yet if there were no central controls over distributions and allocations, social and economic inequalities would surely arise among the members of different organizations.

To reduce inequalities even among highly democratic subsystems and therefore among the members of different subsystems requires centralized controls over allocations, limits of some sort on organizational autonomy. How much and what kinds? Are there trade-offs among different forms of inequality—political, economic, social, and other? If so, what principles of distributive justice should guide decisions and what do these principles require? In short, which trade-offs are acceptable, which unacceptable?

I doubt whether answers can be found that are appropriate for many different situations and many different countries. Wherever people are free to raise questions such as these, the answers are likely to become, implicitly at least, the subject of political controversy.

## NOTES

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