

## Preface and Acknowledgments

Between 1998 and 2003 I spent nearly two years in Shanghai reading newly declassified government documents and talking to secondary school teachers about their work in the Mao era. As I pieced the data together, four facets of faculty life loomed large. First, the profession contained a large number of people whom the state regarded as politically suspect or professionally unprepared to be educators. Second, a mixture of Communist Party members, most of them lacking teaching experience, occupied school management. Third, despite being banished from management, the prerevolutionary group of school principals and administrators received the best salaries in the schools. Fourth, a culture of distrust, disdain, and discontent pervaded the faculty. Because schoolteachers transmit political beliefs, technical knowledge, and moral values, they are critical to the reproduction of any political rule. As the Chinese Communist Party was deeply engaged in turning China into a modern socialist polity, China's schoolteachers seemed like an enemy rather than ally of the state.

The unpropitious conditions in the schools stir up old and new questions about China's transition to socialism: Why did the Communist state permit underqualified and questionable people to partake in the reproduction of its rule? Why did it reward individuals whom it regarded as untrustworthy with higher salaries? How common were these practices? How did the social friction or discontent that they generated affect Communist political rule? The fact that the teachers were alienated from one another and from the state raises questions about their involvement in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, if only because research and remembrance have largely portrayed them as victims of student violence and abuse.

More broadly, my findings stimulate questions on socialism and organizations. Two issues are particularly relevant: How did Marxism-Leninism as a transformative ideology shape the development of organizations in socialist societies? How did this development in turn influence the socialist project? For decades, research has depicted Soviet-type societies in political as well as organizational terms as archetypal cases of the “hyperexpansion” of bureaucracy. Since the decline of such societies some fifteen years ago, a dominant view has emerged that their demise confirmed the vulnerability of rule by bureaucracy. These understandings of Soviet-type societies have been traced to Max Weber’s teaching that the ascent of socialism must lead to the growth of bureaucracy, an administration with the tendency to produce self-aggrandizing officeholders and to become unresponsive to public demand. Put simply, socialism apparently fostered the development of bureaucracy only to be buried by it.

There is a major problem of theoretical interpretation with these “Weberian” views on Soviet-type societies: Weber’s teaching on socialism and bureaucracy was not aimed at such societies. It was a rejoinder to the reformist programs developed in Western Europe a century ago that espoused extensive official intervention in the market. In this context, he noted that socialism would advance the development of *modern bureaucracy*, a type of work organization that had already penetrated government and big businesses. Compared with traditional bureaucratic administrations, modern bureaucracy features a single hierarchy, competent staff, impersonal norms, and other rational characteristics. Weber never considered the Bolshevik revolution, which produced the original Soviet-type society, a genuine socialist uprising. In fact, he insisted that Bolshevik ideology and modern bureaucracy are incompatible, because class struggle against the bourgeoisie would reduce the types of specialized knowledge and skill necessary for developing rational administration. But Weber did not think that Bolshevik rule would therefore lead to an upsurge of traditional forms of administration. He noted before he passed away that Bolshevism would engender a form of administration different from modern bureaucracy as well as traditional types of bureaucratic administration. Many analyses of Soviet-type societies have misappropriated Weber’s understanding of socialism and bureaucracy. Their critiques of bureaucracy in such societies resemble not his but the much less sophisticated thinking proffered by Lenin, Trotsky, and later Mao.

With the benefit of hindsight, this book expands on Weber's understanding of modern bureaucracy to suggest that the historical transition to socialism, indeed, produced a distinctive type of bureaucratic administration—an institution in many ways the structural opposite of modern bureaucracy. From a Weberian perspective, the institutionalization of Marxist-Leninist systems of rule in the last century engendered remarkably similar types of bureaucratic administration, with political appointment, shortages of expertise, arbitrary discipline, and other nonrational characteristics. I call this form of administration *counter-bureaucracy* not only because it represented the antithesis of the Weberian bureaucracy, but also because its operation was counterproductive to the welfare of Soviet-type societies. Counter-bureaucratic administrations imparted none of the benefits that modern bureaucracy can offer to organizations and governments, that is, technical efficiency, staff solidarity, and legitimate domination. Instead, they led to poor quality of work, social friction, and political resentment in the labor force. Their reproduction undermined the economic performance of such societies as well as the self-legitimizing capacity of the ruling regimes. It was a principal reason behind the decline of Soviet-type societies.

To put this differently, as social revolutions based on Reason, the Marxist-Leninist projects of the last century were flawed from the beginning. Influenced by Bolshevik ideology, the bearers of the revolutions, the communist parties, created an administrative quagmire to achieve their rational objectives of promoting technical progress, social equality, and human freedom. Within government and other institutions that were supposed to establish ideas, values, and practices to maintain mass support for the transition to socialism, the regimes normalized a form of administration counterproductive to work efficiency, social solidarity, and regime legitimacy. The decline of Soviet-type societies was not caused by an excess of bureaucracy, as numerous commentators have indicated. Quite the contrary: Marxist-Leninist regimes were not bureaucratic enough. They failed to develop modern bureaucracy to support their political authority, let alone help transform socialism into a widely supported social system.

In the face of theoretical and practical developments after the decline of Soviet-type societies, which has been marked by a state-and-society dash for "free" trade, "open" market, privatization, deregulation, and their supporting ideologies, this reevaluation of what have been called "actually existing socialisms" is especially necessary. The demise of

such societies—no doubt a cause for celebration—is dubious proof that the state's involvement in the economy must be kept to a minimum, or that capitalism is the only alternative for building a viable modern political economy. Despite the staggering resources Marxist-Leninist regimes expended on strengthening the state's role in society, they institutionalized not modern bureaucratic but counter-bureaucratic administrations that militated against the provision of public goods and the building of political consent. Actually existing socialisms were their own enemies. Their demise, which has reinforced capitalist exploitation globally, is not a moral, much less an analytical, reason for accepting that we have reached "the end of history."

In this book, I present an original case study of Shanghai secondary schools as workplaces during the Mao era (1949–76). The difference between how these schools were run by the local government and what Weber indicated to be *modus operandi* of modern bureaucracy is unmistakable. But my goal is not to merely illustrate the divergence. After all, Weber left no doubt that the rational bureaucracy he described is a theoretical construct. My argument is that the schools epitomized counter-bureaucracy, a particular form of administration specific to Marxist-Leninist systems of rule. To highlight the ubiquity, nuances, and consequences of counter-bureaucracy in Soviet-type societies, I have included in this book comparative data on workplace organization within Chinese officialdom and Soviet industry.

There are reasons for such research boundaries with regard to China and the Soviet Union besides the obvious ones of personal interest and practicality. First, China had an impoverished and mainly agrarian economy like other countries taken over by Marxist-Leninist regimes in the last century. Following the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Chinese Communist leadership aggressively pursued industrialization and ideological change, building and reorganizing governments, universities, newspapers, and so on. The Chinese experience thus serves as an excellent starting point for studying the development of bureaucratic administration within Marxist-Leninist systems of rule.

Second, the organization of the workplace is Weber's focus when he delineated the features of modern bureaucracy. The reconstruction of secondary schools as workplaces is central to any socialist project, because the faculty and staff occupy a critical position in the transmission of the knowledge and values needed to produce and reproduce

socialism as a legitimate social system. Studying the organization of these schools should thus allow us to explore the composition and consequences of the everyday bureaucratic administration developed in socialist China.

Third, why Shanghai? Before the 1949 Communist revolution, Shanghai was China's preeminent urban center. It sheltered large numbers of capitalist establishments such as trading firms, factories, and banks, many of which had overseas sponsorship or influence. The city had a vibrant consumer culture that included a large market for illicit pleasures. It was a political base for the ruling Nationalist Party and housed governing bodies set up by foreign nationals. When the Chinese Communist Party remade Shanghai, it confronted politically and socially complicated situations that influenced the tactics of workplace reorganization it would deploy elsewhere.

Fourth, the discussion of Chinese officialdom and Soviet industry is intended to strengthen my contention that counter-bureaucracy was endemic in Soviet-type societies. It is well known that Marxist-Leninist regimes strengthened the role of the state and disproportionately invested in industry. By the late 1950s, serious ideological differences appeared between China and the Soviet Union. From the Chinese leaders' perspective, there was "continuous revolution" in their country and "revisionism" in the Soviet Union. Identifying the reproduction of counter-bureaucracy in the two privileged institutions of Chinese officialdom and Soviet industry before *as well as* after the two countries departed ideologically should lend support to my argument.

The empirical materials presented in the following chapters are drawn from four different sources: official documents of the Shanghai municipal government; firsthand interviews with former schoolteachers in Shanghai; Chinese-language scholarship, recollections of events, and newspapers; and English-language research and writing on China and the Soviet Union. The first two sources are particularly noteworthy. They provide the materials for my case study of Shanghai secondary schools.

In recent years, the Shanghai municipal government has been very receptive to overseas researchers using its official archives. I have therefore been able to visit the Shanghai Municipal Archives and read large volumes of heretofore inaccessible government documents that include laws and official regulations, state plans and instructions, and reports on people, compensation, political campaigns, and other issues related

to the workplace. Written by party and state officials, the documents reflect the government's points of view. Their style, language, and level of detail are not always consistent. After all, they were compiled by a government whose leaders had not expected to take power as early as they did and whose ideology remained in flux afterward. Unlike official newspapers or materials for public consumption, however, these internal documents frequently contain in-depth and critical analyses of state policies, work establishments, and individual performance. Products of a state apparatus obsessed with surveillance, they contain a richness of data that cannot be found elsewhere. For my research, I studied selected documents of the Shanghai Education Bureau from the early 1950s to late 1960s. To understand general policy issues and workplace conditions, I also consulted documents of various Shanghai party and state agencies.

Besides archival research, I conducted over two hundred hours of interviews with sixty-two retired or retiring teachers in Shanghai about their work and lives before and after the 1949 revolution. I met the interviewees through formal introduction by academic institutions or snowball sampling. These interviewees joined the teaching profession at different times in different circumstances. They are almost equally divided between men and women. There were former school principals, school party secretaries, heads of instruction, and rank-and-file instructors. About one-third of them had been Communist Party members at some point during the period researched or throughout the entire period. The topics of discussion included their social backgrounds, occupational histories, political affiliations, and faculty experiences. Although these people worked in the same profession or even the same school or same kind of positions, they had different experiences that official documents captured in a broad sense but often not as detailed, effective, or poignant as their personal voices. Their unofficial perspectives not only provided further evidence on the counter-bureaucratic constitution of the campuses, but also helped me interrogate and corroborate apparent factual statements on official documents.

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