

- 95 *ibid.*
 96 GPS, p 448.
 97 GPS, pp 441, 471.
 98 GPS, pp 539ff; GM, pp 491-2; MSS, p 16.
 99 GPS, p 540.
 100 *ibid.*
 101 Weber's lecture 'Politics as a Vocation' is often discussed as if it had no context. Yet it was given in the winter of 1918-19 in the middle of the revolutionary events. Weber was apparently only persuaded by the student association to give the address at all because of the threat that they would invite Kurt Eisner, the Bavarian revolutionary, instead. (H H Bruun, *op cit*, p 271.)
 102 GPS, pp 141-2.
 103 Letter to R Michels, 9.2.08, quoted in W J Mommsen, *op cit*, p 122.
 104 *ibid.*
 105 GPS, pp 540-1.
 106 e.g. his letter to Dr Neurath, GPS, 1st edn, p 488: 'I consider all proposals for a planned economy to be a totally irresponsible and dilettantist frivolity, of a kind which can discredit socialism for a century.'
 107 GPS, p 541.
 108 *Archiv*, 23B, p 166.
 109 Lenin, *Selected Works* (3 vols, Moscow, 1960), vol 1, p 840.
 110 *Verhandlungen des 5. Evangelisch-sozialen Kongresses* (1894), p 82.
 111 GPS, p 442.
 112 *ibid.*
 113 See Chapter 8.
 114 GM, p 384.
 115 *Verhandlungen des 8. Evangelisch-sozialen Kongresses* (1897), p 109.
 116 L M Lachmann, *The Legacy of Max Weber* (London, 1970), p 124.
 117 *ibid.*, pp 125-6.
 118 WG, pp 562-3; ES, p 975.

Chapter 7

Society, Class and State:
Russia

Weber's articles on the Russian revolution of 1905-6 form the most substantial of his political writings, at least in extent. The material for them was drawn entirely from Russian sources, though he admitted that they were written too close to the event to count as history.¹ They were no mere chronicle, however, but an attempt to grasp what was 'essential and characteristic'² about Russian developments, a portrayal of the 'general social and political situation'³ in which the events of the revolutionary period took place. It is this attempt to distil the essential interrelationship of society and government that gives the articles their value as examples of political analysis.

Like Weber's writings on Germany, indeed more explicitly so, his Russian articles were concerned with the question of how a movement for Parliamentary government was possible within an authoritarian state, and what social forces were capable of sustaining it. At the same time Weber recognised obvious differences between the political structure of Russia and that of Germany. Russia lacked the basic civil freedoms which were taken for granted in Western Europe. Richard Pipes is wrong when he says that Weber was looking to Russia for entirely new possibilities of freedom which existed nowhere else.⁴ On the contrary Weber was explicit that the demands of the Russian liberals 'for us in the West have long since lost the charm of novelty'.⁵ What was new was the problem of establishing these freedoms for the first time under the conditions of advanced capitalism and a modern bureaucracy. Besides the absence of basic freedoms, Russia was also distinguished by a sharp divorce between society and state. The absolute power of the Tsar, as Weber described it, 'after the breakdown of the organic structures which gave Russia of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries its character, now hangs in the air in a completely "unhistorical" freedom'.⁶ Although

Weber's own account showed this 'suspension' to be by no means total—the system of Tsarist autocracy enjoyed a measure of support from the Church and sections of the landowning aristocracy, as well as from emerging capitalism—yet its degree of alienation from society was remarkable and could only be a source of political weakness. This fragility of the system was further emphasised by the conflicts within society itself. If a feature of German development was the tension between the rural aristocracy of the east and the urban society of the west, Russia was distinguished by an even more violent contrast: the 'importation of great capitalist powers in their most modern form on to a basis of archaic peasant communism'.⁷

For all these differences, however, Weber raised a similar question in his Russian studies to the one that concerned him in relation to Germany: what social forces were there capable of generating and sustaining Parliamentary government? This was the explicit theme of his first article, entitled 'The Situation of Bourgeois Democracy in Russia'.⁸ The first part of the present chapter will follow the account given in this article, of the main forces at work in Russian society, albeit in a more systematic manner, and omitting some of its detailed discussions of the various liberal programmes. Weber's second article was devoted to a political analysis of the Tsarist system, and contains an account of a more dynamic kind of the way it responded to the various revolutionary crises. This will form the subject of the second part of the chapter. The third section will consider the article Weber wrote on the April revolution of 1917 and his subsequent reactions to Bolshevism. The chapter will conclude by drawing out some of the theoretical implications common to his writings on Germany and Russia together, among others his theory of the historical conditions for liberal democracy.

THE OUTLOOK FOR BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY

The immediate subject of Weber's first article, written at the end of 1905, was the reform proposals published by the Constitutional Democrats under Peter Struve earlier in the year.⁹ Part of the article was taken up with a discussion of this document and a comparison of its proposals with those of other groups. Weber's analysis, however, went deeper, to involve a consideration of the political forces which generated these proposals, and the question of whether there existed a sufficient social basis in Russia to support a liberal democratic regime.

His starting point was an analysis of the liberal movement itself. Though supported mainly by the urban intelligentsia and the liberal landowners it was not tied to any particular economic class, but was largely an idealist movement. From an economic point of view, Weber noted, its supporters were 'Nicht-Interessenten', bearers of a political and social idealism of a kind that was impossible to organise into an effective political force in Germany.¹⁰ In the years preceding the revolution, this movement had found its focus in the 'Zemstvos', the organs of local government, which Weber described as the 'most lively institutions of Russian public life'.¹¹ The Zemstvos offered a basis for the liberal movement in a number of ways. They provided a sphere for the exercise of self-government, which, in the range of tasks they performed, gave the lie to the belief that the Russians were 'unready for a free administration'.¹² At the same time the national Zemstvo congress provided a forum in which the liberal landowners and the intelligentsia could organise legally for constitutional reform.

However, Weber questioned the real strength of this Zemstvo movement. The Zemstvos themselves were being increasingly undermined by the central bureaucracy, which sought to restrict their activities and take over their functions. They were increasingly restricted to the role of a 'passive organisation for raising taxes decreed and spent by the state'.¹³ In the light of this trend Weber expressed his amazement that the various liberal reform programmes contained so little mention of the autonomy of local government, which was one of the central constitutional questions of the time.¹⁴ Another weakness of the liberal movement was that it was so largely a movement of the intelligentsia. These were 'bourgeois' in terms of their life-style and education but not strictly in terms of economic class.¹⁵ Although Weber was ready to acknowledge the strength of this tradition in Russian life, he clearly saw it as having only a limited political effectiveness, apart from the support of major classes or institutions of society.¹⁶ The rest of this section will consider Weber's assessment of the main forces of Russian society, from the standpoint of their possible support for the liberal movement, beginning with the Church.

In Weber's view the character of a society's religion and religious institutions was historically one of the most important factors in determining its political outlook, in particular whether it developed a liberal tradition or not. Those forms of Protestantism which rejected all worldly powers as usurpations of divine authority had a special influence on the development of political individualism.¹⁷ The historical character of Russian orthodoxy, in

contrast, was authoritarian. 'The history and form of organisation of the orthodox Church,' Weber wrote, 'makes it quite improbable that, however transformed, it could ever set itself up as a representative of civil liberties against the power of the police state.'¹⁸ This was not only a question of its own authoritarian internal structure, but also of its historical implication in the state. The doctrine of the Church provided Tsarism with a powerful ideological justification, and its priests acted as instruments of police rule in rural areas. The orthodox Church was the 'religious foundation of absolutism'.¹⁹

Weber recognised the existence of a radical movement among the clergy, reflecting the wider movement in society. Basing itself on a theology which emphasised the this-worldly element in the Christian message and the desire to realise God's kingdom here and now, it demanded the end of absolutism and a programme of social reform.²⁰ This was linked with the demand for various internal reforms within the Church, such as increasing the importance of the laity and subjecting the episcopacy to election from below. The movement was only of limited consequence, however. It was essentially urban-based, and made little impact on the countryside.²¹ Further, as Weber pointed out in his second article, these attacks from below on the authority of the episcopacy, only served to strengthen the alliance of the hierarchy with the state administration.²² An episcopacy whose internal authority was threatened, far from joining in the challenge to the power of the state, would have every incentive to make common cause with it, in order to win external support against its own rebels. In this respect, Weber argued, Russian Orthodoxy was in a crucially different position from Roman Catholicism:

The Church has no Archimedean point outside the sphere of the state, in the form of a pope, and will never get one. Given the choice between dependence on those under them through election, and dependence on those above, the hierarchy will have no doubt which is preferable for its own interests; indeed, the choice has already been made.²³

If it was in vain to expect support for the liberal movement from the chief historical institution of Russian society, what of its social classes?

Of all the classes in Russian society, Weber regarded the peasants as most crucial to its future political development. The decisive question, he wrote, for the success of the movement for constitutional democracy and for the chances of a liberal develop-

ment of the Western European kind 'is and must remain the position of the peasants'.²⁴ The space he devoted to the agrarian situation in his articles reflected not only his long-standing interest in the economics and sociology of agriculture, but also the centrality of the issue in Russian society at the time. Proposals for agrarian reform held a central place in all the liberal programmes.²⁵ The need to satisfy the demand of the peasantry for more land was generally accepted, and the failure of the Tsarist regime to tackle the issue contributed to its weakness. The important question to Weber, however, was how far the peasants could be won for a liberal *political* programme, and whether their economic demands could be satisfied in a way which would strengthen the cause of bourgeois democracy. The liberals in general assumed that agrarian reform and political reform were two sides of the same coin, and that they would reinforce each other.²⁶ Weber questioned this assumption on the basis of his analysis of the economic demands the peasants were making.

The demand for more land, Weber argued, by and large did not take an individualistic form, but was shaped by the traditional communist ideals of the Russian 'Mir'.²⁷ In opposition to the capitalist principle of the 'selection of the fittest' on the basis of private ownership and technological development, the peasant movement demanded the principle of the equal right of all to a livelihood from the land, on the basis of traditional methods of agriculture.²⁸ Paradoxically, this principle was itself only strengthened by the development of industrial capitalism in the urban centres; it was the 'reflex image' of capitalism.²⁹ The peculiarity of the Russian situation, Weber argued, was that 'an increase in capitalist development . . . can also bring with it an increase of archaic agrarian communism'.³⁰ The broad mass of the peasantry were not to be won for an individualist agrarian programme in the Western European sense.

If the peasant movement were successful in its demands, Weber believed, it would set Russia's economic development back a generation.³¹ But it was the political consequences that concerned him more. The result of satisfying the peasants' demands could only be to strengthen the anti-individualist forces in Russian society and make the cause of liberal democracy more difficult. The liberal reformers were thus caught in a dilemma.³² They accepted the need for agrarian reform and made it the centrepiece of their social and economic proposals. But its achievement could only weaken the chances for success of a genuinely liberal political programme:

They have no choice but to support an agrarian reform, which, in all probability, will not strengthen the cause of an economically and technically 'progressive' socialism of a voluntary kind, but will rather confirm an essentially archaic peasant communism . . . as the main feature in the economic practice and outlook of the masses, and thus postpone the development of a Western European individualist culture that most of them consider inevitable.³³

A further feature of the peasants' demands, which made their support for liberal democracy questionable, was that they were almost exclusively economic. In so far as they had any political aims, these were entirely negative ones: the abolition of bureaucratic supervision at the local level, and the election of representatives to negotiate directly with the Tsar—a conception which, as Weber pointed out, had absolutely nothing in common with modern Parliamentary government.³⁴ The main emphasis of their demands, though, was economic, and Weber could only express a general scepticism about where 'the masses would find the impulse from to participate in a movement which went beyond purely material demands'.³⁵ While this also applied to the urban masses, it was particularly true of the peasantry, who possessed no consistent political character of their own. Foreign observers, Weber noted, tended to regard the Russian peasants as extreme reactionaries, whereas the Russians themselves considered their temper to be that of extreme revolutionaries.³⁶ Both could be equally true. The historical experience of modern European revolutions was for the peasants to switch 'from the most thoroughgoing radicalism to a state of apathy or political reaction, once their immediate economic demands had been satisfied'.³⁷ The basic assumption of the liberals was that it was impossible for these demands to be satisfied under Tsarism, since it would involve the dispossession of the landed aristocracy, and that therefore the peasants must be the allies of Parliamentary reform. But Weber himself would not rule out the possibility that by some act of force the autocracy might 'stop up their mouths with land'. If this happened, or if the peasants simply seized the land for themselves in an outburst of anarchy, 'any further interest on their part in constitutional reform would evaporate'.³⁸

To regard the peasants as committed supporters of liberal democracy was thus a mistake in Weber's view. While they might join in a coalition of forces for the overthrow of Tsarism, they could not offer any long-term basis of support for Parliamentary

institutions. But nor could the more 'modern' social classes, the urban proletariat or the bourgeoisie, either. The non-liberal character of the former was reinforced by Social Democracy. The latter were able to attain their ends by interest-group pressure on the administration.

Weber's account of Russian Social Democracy is characteristically hostile, though the article contains an acute analysis of the divisions between Lenin and Plekhanov.³⁹ The reasons for the split, he observed, were not so much a matter of principle, as of a personal and tactical nature. It also had its origin in the ambiguities of Marxism—as demonstrated by Marx himself in his attitude to the Paris Commune and similar events—as well as in the particular character of the Russian tradition of socialism. The emphasis on revolutionary uprising and the opposition to fixed laws of social development lay 'deep in the blood' of Russian socialism, as the consequence of specifically Hegelian ideas. What Weber called the 'pragmatic rationalism' of this tradition—its emphasis on the creative character of human thought—was never completely submerged under the 'naturalistic rationalism' of a theory of inevitable social development.⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, though, Weber could find nothing in either faction which bore any relation to liberalism. Both declared it the party's duty to support the liberal movement against Tsarism, but at the same time did their best to discredit all the liberal groups in the eyes of the workers. What particularly destroyed the hope of any unity in the opposition to Tsarism was the dogmatic and sect-like character of Social Democracy. The chief aim of the rival groups was to maintain the purity of their doctrines, to win a few extra souls for their sect, to secure the exposure of the 'enemies of the people' in the neighbouring factions rather than to work for any long-term political success. 'Any agreement among the oppositional elements is thereby made impossible,' Weber concluded.⁴¹

As in his writings on Germany, Weber was also concerned at the educational effect of Social Democracy on the character of the working class, and its inculcation of attitudes far removed from the spirit necessary to the operation of free institutions. Although a year or two later he was favourably to compare the Russians' 'Catalan energy of faith' with the qualities shown by the German party,⁴² here he criticised them for the same ineffectual posturing which was his standard reaction to revolutionaries. Nothing that he wrote elsewhere was quite as scathing as this:

'Correct' Social Democracy drills the masses into a spiritual

parade march, and dismisses them, not to an other-worldly paradise (which, in Puritanism, at least had respectable achievements in the service of this-worldly freedom to its credit), but to a this-worldly one, and makes from it a kind of vaccination for all those with an interest in the existing order. Social Democracy accustoms its pupils to submissiveness in the face of dogmas and party authorities, to the futile spectacle of mass strikes and the passive enjoyment of the spine-chilling ragings of their press hacks, considered as ridiculous as they are harmless by their opponents—accustoms them, in other words, to a hysterical excess of emotion, which acts as a substitute for economic and political thought and action, and renders it quite impossible. On this sterile soil, when the 'eschatological' epoch of the movement is past, and generation upon generation has clenched its fists and gnashed its teeth in vain, can only spiritual dullness grow.⁴³

Whatever the adequacy of Weber's assessment of the revolutionary potential of Russian Social Democracy—and he was not alone in underestimating it—he was at least correct in his judgement that it did not have much in common with liberalism, and that whatever alliance it might make with bourgeois democracy would be a matter of temporary convenience only.⁴⁴ Under its tutelage, the working class was unlikely to provide reliable support for the liberal movement.

The last of the social classes to be considered in Weber's account—the petty-bourgeoisie merited only a few lines in its capacity as Jew haters and police agents⁴⁵—was the 'thin stratum' of the bourgeoisie itself. In effect, Weber's conclusion was the same as Lenin's, that this was a bourgeois revolution without the bourgeoisie.⁴⁶ The liberal intelligentsia were 'bourgeois' in life-style and outlook alone,⁴⁷ whereas the bourgeoisie proper, the capitalist entrepreneurs, kept aloof both from the party of Constitutional Democracy and from the Zemstvo movement.⁴⁸ None of its leading figures were to be found within the ranks of liberal reform. A few industrialists might support a progressive social policy and resent their exclusion from formal political power, and the class as a whole could not be assumed without further question to be on the side of Tsarism. But they were not decisively in favour of the liberal movement either.⁴⁹

This assessment was emphasised by the events Weber analysed in his second article. Even though the industrialists were largely unrepresented in the Duma elected in the spring of 1906, they

were perfectly happy with the system of 'token constitutionalism',⁴ because they could get the economic changes they wanted by means of direct pressure on the bureaucracy.⁵⁰ They had been interested in political reform only so as to secure social order and a relief from revolutionary turmoil, but they had no desire to turn the token constitutionalism into an effective Parliamentary system. 'The class of the large capitalist entrepreneurs and the bankers,' Weber wrote, 'is the only stratum apart from officialdom itself, that would pronounce itself in complete agreement with the rule of the bureaucracy in token constitutional form, always under the assumption that a free hand were given to profit...'⁵¹

Weber recognised at work in Russia the same feature of modern large-scale capitalism that he had found in Germany: that its material demands could be met without a system of effective Parliamentary government, provided it was able to maintain its influence with the bureaucracy. Under modern circumstances economic liberalism, in the sense of 'a free hand for profit', was perfectly compatible with a political system which embodied a widespread denial of civil liberties and constitutional rights. Indeed the Russian civil service, on Weber's analysis, itself demonstrated this combination; economically liberal in outlook, it administered a repressive police state.⁵² There thus existed no 'inner affinity' at all between modern high capitalism and liberal democracy.⁵³ This made the outlook for bourgeois democracy particularly bleak, when the bourgeoisie themselves were no longer necessarily in favour of 'bourgeois' political reforms. The Russian dilemma, as Weber concluded at the end of his second article, was that capitalism was being imported into the country in its most advanced form.⁵⁴ Thus 'all the forms of development are excluded which in the West put the strong *economic* interests of the possessing classes in the service of the movement for bourgeois liberty.'⁵⁵

There is much more in Weber's first article than can be included in this brief summary, in particular an exhaustive account of the programmes of the various political parties and groups, but what has been mentioned here constitutes the essence of his social analysis. The problem for bourgeois democracy, according to this, was that, whatever the extent of opposition to the Tsar, there was no major social interest decisively behind a specifically liberal programme. The latter was a movement of ideas only, and such a movement, without the support of significant material interests, could only have a limited political effect. Although the elections to the Duma were to bring a temporary triumph for

THE PATHOLOGY OF ABSOLUTISM

Where in his first article Weber was more concerned with the social forces at work in Russian society, his second article, entitled 'Russia's Transition to Token Constitutionalism',⁵⁶ was devoted to a political analysis of Tsarism itself, and its response to the revolution. It was written in August 1906, after the election and subsequent dissolution of the Duma, at a point when it was possible to attempt some overall assessment of the events of the previous year. In his first article Weber had described the Tsarist system as 'suspended above society' like the monarchy of Dionysius.⁵⁷ The gulf between society and government was a recurrent theme of his second article, a gulf which he largely explained in terms of the 'vanity' and 'prestige interests' of the Tsar and the bureaucracy, and the steadfast refusal of the regime to share any of its power, even with those social groups which were otherwise its natural supporters. In the absence of this support it was forced to rely on the police and the army, and to have recourse to 'the typical instrument of the Roman emperors in their period of decline: massive donations to the troops'.⁵⁸ As a result, its success in stemming the tide of revolution could only be temporary, Weber believed, especially as in the process it had been compelled to make concessions to the liberal position—theoretical if not practical—which could only further undermine its rule.⁵⁹

For the time being, however, Tsarism had survived, and Weber sought to show how it had done so. Its response to revolution had been to offer a façade of token constitutionalism, which created the illusion of reform without surrendering any essential powers, and provided a breathing space to regroup the forces of reaction.⁶⁰ The success of this strategy was already evident in the Moscow strike in December 1905, which achieved nothing in comparison with the October ones, because it no longer enjoyed the support of the bourgeoisie.⁶¹ Its failure marked the beginning of reaction. Weber did not, however, assign all the credit for this strategy to the regime itself; it was largely forced upon it by the insistence of foreign banks. The actions of the government were only intelligible, he argued, when one grasped its essential dependence on external creditors.⁶² These demanded 'order'. The Manifesto of October 1905 was an attempt to secure order, but it failed. The

bankers thereupon insisted that the proposals for a constitution should actually be put into effect. The Tsar was forced to bow to the necessity of empty coffers and 'show the requisite obedience towards the impersonal but all the more implacable power of the exchange market'.⁶³ In the light of its financial position, the regime was compelled to operate a kind of 'double account':

On the one side it is obvious that the Tsar himself never seriously believed in the transition of Russia to a constitutional state, with 'effective' guarantees of individual rights, as they were naïvely termed in the October Manifesto, and this was made evident on every occasion that offered itself. The interests of the police were all he thought of. This fitted in very nicely with the power interests of the old type of police bureaucracy, and at the same time a policy of ruthless oppression could certainly impress the foreign exchanges with the appearance of 'strong' government. On the other side, however, the repeatedly fruitless missions abroad of finance officials showed that, in spite of all, the bankers believed they must insist upon the Duma's actually being summoned before any substantial loan could be entertained. So the promises of 17 October had formally to be observed, and the 'constitution' put into effect at least far enough to show the public abroad, on whose good impression the bankers were calculating, the outward semblance of constitutional guarantees.⁶⁴

The task, then, assigned to the ministry under Count Vitte, was the establishment of token institutions which would give the appearance of carrying out the October Manifesto and create the necessary confidence abroad, without in fact yielding any of the arbitrary power enjoyed by Tsar and bureaucracy.⁶⁵ Weber proceeded to examine at some length the various freedoms which had been proclaimed, and showed each in turn to be a sham.⁶⁶ Thus freedom of expression had been declared in principle; in practice oppositional newspapers were harassed at will by local officials. All that was meant by freedom of conscience was that certain sects were tolerated; unbelief itself was not admitted. Freedom of association was never effective, least of all at the work place. The declaration of the freedom of the person was accompanied, from the beginning of 1906 onwards, by the extension of martial law and emergency jurisdiction, till the prisons were insufficient to cope with the numbers. In general the government 'by means of every judicial manipulation subordinated the new freedoms to

administrative arbitrariness. . . . The machinery grinds on, as if nothing had ever happened.⁶⁷

However, as Weber was quick to point out, this kind of double game, of formally conceding rights on the one hand, while taking them away with the other, was more dangerous than naked repression, and only increased resentment.⁶⁸ In practice the only effective reform dating from October was an administrative one, which eroded liberties still further.⁶⁹ The traditional method of government was by means of autonomous departments, each answerable to the Tsar, without any co-ordinating first minister. These separate 'satrapies' were usually in a state of war with one another or, at best, enjoyed a relationship of uneasy peace. On the outbreak of 'war' they would bombard each other with massive papers of state, running into hundreds of pages and full of learned erudition. It was only this obstructionism that made life at all tolerable for the subjects of autocracy.⁷⁰ From the standpoint of individual freedom, Weber remarked, 'every obstruction which the "system" of absolutism set in its own way . . . provided a protection for the human dignity of its subjects'.⁷¹ The reform of October put an end to this chaos, and created a modern centralised bureaucracy under a single ministerial council. Such a 'rationalisation of autocracy' strengthened the position of the bureaucracy at the expense of the Tsar himself, who now received all questions pre-digested from the council. At the same time it made the position worse for the subjects. The whole of Russian society, Weber wrote, apart from the industrialists and the bankers, opposed this development of ancient absolutism into a modern rational bureaucracy. With it, the war of society against the bureaucracy became chronic.⁷²

The centrepiece of token constitutionalism was the Duma, which itself reflected the absence of effective rights in society and the opposition between the society and its government.⁷³ Its constitutional position was very weak and restricted, in terms both of its powers to propose change in the laws and to supervise the administration. It was denied the usual rights associated with a Parliament, such as the right of petition and the right to approve the budget; the latter it had in token form only, since in the absence of its approval, the previous year's budget was automatically renewed. The only right it possessed was to veto legislation, which epitomised the whole relationship between Russian society and government in its assumption that 'the representative assembly is the natural enemy of the government . . . and the government the natural enemy of "the people"'.⁷⁴

While the earlier parts of Weber's article were concerned to examine the framework of token constitutionalism and the emptiness of the rights it embodied, the later parts were devoted to an account of the circumstances leading up to the election of the Duma, its summoning and subsequent dissolution. Despite the universal hostility of society towards the government, Weber remarked, everything in the early months of 1906 seemed to conspire to make the circumstances unfavourable for a liberal democratic outcome to the elections. The electoral system was carefully rigged by the regime to exclude whole groups of the population and diminish the voting strength of others.⁷⁵ The campaign in the countryside was hampered by continuous police harassment.⁷⁶ The most radical leaders were in jail. In addition, the parties themselves were in some disarray. The decision of the Social Democrats to boycott the Duma proved a considerable obstacle to the cause of democracy throughout the elections. It was no thanks to them that the elections did not produce a reactionary outcome: 'they had done all they could to play into the hands of the government'.⁷⁷

Worst of all, in Weber's view, was the situation in the party of Constitutional Democracy itself, the Kadets.⁷⁸ They were increasingly divided over the question of land reform. Not only was there a chaos of conflicting interest among the peasants themselves, which it would require a government of dictatorial stamp to resolve,⁷⁹ but a crucial change could be observed in the attitude of the large landowners, who were the class most favoured by the electoral system. Under the pressure of continual peasant agitation and the threat to their land, they were becoming increasingly reactionary.⁸⁰ They had provided the spearhead of Zemstvo liberalism, but now that their material interests were threatened they could afford to entertain liberal ideas no longer:

After the suppression of the Moscow uprising and under the pressure of peasant unrest, the reaction began to infiltrate from the sphere of the bureaucracy into 'society', that is, in the first instance into the Zemstvos. In this respect it was the severe threat of peasant unrest to the economic basis of the private landowners, whose representatives formed the best minds of the liberal Zemstvo movement, that played the decisive role. The course events took is a good example of the conditions for ideological activity on the part of a propertied class, and of the limited effect of humanitarian ideals in the face of economic interests. So long as the economic basis of the landowners, who

were dominant in the Zemstvos, remained undisturbed, they assumed the leadership of the numerous political and social ideologues who stemmed from their midst. But once the threat of immediate physical and economic ruin appeared, they were assailed by the force of conflicting interests which had remained latent before, and it was inevitable that, shaken out of their everyday existence and forcefully reminded of the material basis of their own position, their attitudes should undergo a marked transformation.⁸¹

In view of all these handicaps to the cause of democracy, and in particular of the increasing class conflict within the Zemstvos,⁸² it required some special explanation why the elections turned out favourably for the Kadets. One point Weber had made earlier was that, once the fetters of absolutism were loosened, however momentarily, it unleashed such a flood of political activity as simply could not be controlled by the government.⁸³ But the main reason, he argued, was the government's own obstinacy. One would have thought that it would have been only too ready to make use of the class interests of the propertied strata, always prompt enough in the support of state order, and would have sought to forge an alliance with the moderate elements in the Zemstvo movement, which were increasingly fearful of revolution. Instead the bureaucracy steadfastly refused to make any sacrifice of its arbitrary powers, and went out of its way to affront the self-respect of the Zemstvos. No compromise of its supreme power was to be entertained.⁸⁴

Even so, the results of the elections were quite unexpected.⁸⁵ The government was confronted with an almost totally hostile Duma, composed mainly of Constitutional Democrats. Their victory, though, needed careful interpretation, Weber argued. It was the product of an alliance between the urban voters, the peasants and some landowners, united in their opposition to administrative arbitrariness, but not necessarily in support of a full liberal programme. The success of the Kadets depended upon Social Democrat voters, who in the absence of their own candidates voted for the next best thing; in the few instances where Social Democrats put up at the last minute, they easily beat their Kadet opponents. The democratic victory thus rested on an uncertain foundation. Once the extreme left took part in elections, it would give the Kadets such a trouncing in the large cities that the balance would lie entirely between the socialist and the bourgeois class parties, and ideological democracy would be,

eliminated'.⁸⁶ The vote had been primarily a negative vote, in which everyone who had an ounce of conviction 'joined under the flag of democracy to protest'.

The party of trade and industry, in contrast, proved completely ineffective in the elections. Its response was to dissolve itself into a powerful economic interest group, and concentrate on exerting influence on the government direct. In this it proved more successful.⁸⁷ The 'general agreement between the government and the industrialists' was shown when, immediately after the elections, they were invited to discuss a social programme of a far-reaching kind. They were offered all they wanted in the way of freedom from administration control and supervision, in return for some minimal recognition of workers' rights. From the point of view of the bureaucracy, Weber wrote, this was tactically just right: the Russian bourgeoisie, freed from state control in the pursuit of its economic interests, would become 'an even more reliable supporter of "strong government", though certainly not *inside* Parliament'.⁸⁸

Apart from the bourgeoisie, the regime found itself faced with the united opposition of society in the Duma.⁸⁹ But it was the foreign banks which now 'had the game in their hand'.⁹⁰ It was they who had insisted upon the calling of the Duma in the first place; it now became a matter of urgency for them that the government loan should be effected before the Duma actually met, since they realised that it would never accept the terms they knew they could exact from the government. The government was in a hopeless financial position. It had the choice of submitting either to the Duma or to the banks. It preferred the latter, under almost any conditions, and they were the severest that any great power had ever had to agree to. At all events, the loan was brought safe into harbour before the Duma met. Count Vitte's ministry was now dispensable, its main purpose having been achieved, and it was promptly replaced by an assortment of correct thinking conservative officials, who were less 'compromised with society'.⁹¹

Under these circumstances of confrontation, Weber found it hardly surprising that the activities of the Duma should prove ineffectual.⁹² All its proposals were simply ignored by the government. And at the first opportunity the Tsar dissolved it. Thus the opposition between society and government remained total; the 'two Russias' stood over against each other without any meeting point.⁹³ The immediate reason for this, as Weber had insisted, was a political one: the obstinacy of Tsarism. Its concern with its own prestige, with saving its face, always led it to make the necessary

concessions too late, and then, 'as one concession after the next was forced from it, it sought to retrieve its lost "prestige" through the relentless use of arbitrary police powers'.⁹⁴ It was impossible for such a regime to bring any lasting peace to the country; the tireless energy of Russian radicalism would bring about the economic ruin of the country first.⁹⁵

However—and here Weber returned to the theme of his first article—it was unlikely that a liberal government could survive for long under Russian circumstances. Underneath the political conflict lay a social crisis: the tension between peasant and landowner, the tension created by the superimposition of advanced capitalism on an archaic social structure, and the radical socialism this generated. Tsarism sought to keep these tensions in check. But 'the easing of the great pressure of police arbitrariness under a liberal ministry would have brought about a powerful increase, not only in aimless outbreaks by the radicals, but also in the intensity of class and national conflicts'.⁹⁶ The course of the revolution itself had also pushed the supporters of liberalism among the landowners to the right. Any government based upon property would therefore, in Weber's view, be reactionary rather than liberal.⁹⁷ The prospects for the liberal movement thus looked bleak. This had nothing to do with the Russian people's 'immaturity for constitutional government', as German readers might like to believe; it was the product of the circumstances themselves.⁹⁸ 'Never,' he concluded, 'when all is said and done, has a struggle for freedom been carried out under such difficult conditions as the Russian.'⁹⁹

REVOLUTION AND BOLSHEVISM

Weber did not return to the study of Russian affairs till 1917. The article he wrote soon after the February revolution¹⁰⁰ largely confirmed the analysis of his earlier studies, particularly the impossibility of bourgeois liberalism under Russian conditions, and will be summarised here mainly as a postscript to the previous analysis. Weber admitted that he had thought the prospect of a revolution during the war unlikely.¹⁰¹ The land reforms of Stolypin had divided the peasantry, one of 'the chief fighting forces of the regime', and created a new body of property owners allied with the regime.¹⁰² Although the industrial proletariat had increased dramatically in numbers, it still remained comparatively small, and, as the previous revolution had indicated, could only bring Tsarism down by means of an improbable alliance with the

bourgeoisie.¹⁰³ The large industrialists remained as reactionary as ever. As for the bourgeois intelligentsia, they had seen their self-respect broken by the failure of 1905–6, and sought compensation in external adventures:

There appeared to be no doubt about the attitude of the majority of the Zemstvo circles and of the bourgeois intelligentsia, previously the main supporters of reform. Their self-respect, which had been broken by the disappointment of their internal power hopes, now transferred itself all the more fervently to the romanticism of external power. It is perfectly understandable: the members of the higher Russian civil service as of the officer corps are mainly recruited, as they are everywhere else, from these propertied strata. Constantinople and the so-called 'liberation' of the Slavs—which meant in effect their domination by the national great Russian bureaucracy—now replaced the earlier enthusiasm for 'human rights' and 'constituent assemblies'.¹⁰⁴

A revolution had thus appeared improbable. The reason why it in fact occurred, however, was a familiar one: the persistent vanity of the Tsar, especially after Russia's defeats in war, and his determination to rule alone without sharing power, even with the socially conservative forces of bourgeois property.¹⁰⁵ Given Russia's situation after three years of war, it was no longer possible to rule the country by means of the police alone.

The revolution that in fact occurred, however, was not a real revolution, according to Weber. All that had happened, he wrote, was 'merely the removal of an incompetent monarch, not a "revolution"'.¹⁰⁶ The Kerensky regime was a transitional one, and the question was, which way it would go. The owners of property, who determined its character, would much have preferred a bourgeois constitutional monarchy or military dictatorship, but had had to make common cause with the proletariat in order to get rid of the Tsar.¹⁰⁷ This was a temporary alliance only. The Social Democrats and Social Revolutionaries in the government fulfilled the role of 'taggers-on', useful to the bourgeoisie 'because they created the illusion among the masses that the regime was really revolutionary'.¹⁰⁸ As soon as order was established, and an opportunity presented itself, the army would be used to remove them.¹⁰⁹

The essential character of the Kerensky regime, as the title of Weber's article indicated, was that of 'token democracy'. Its bourgeois members could not allow real democracy, since this

would mean a majority for a peasant movement committed to the expropriation of land and the renunciation of state debts. The constituent assembly had therefore to be delayed.¹¹⁰ Above all, the peasantry had to be kept at the front so that there was no chance of their participating in any election. This was the crux of the situation, as Weber saw it. Continuation of the war was necessary for internal reasons, however hopeless its outlook:

They [the propertied classes] are unconditionally for the continuation of the war for its own sake, however hopeless the prospect, in order to keep the peasants away from home. Only through continuation of the war can, first, the peasant masses be kept under the control of the generals far away in the trenches; secondly, the new-found power of the propertied classes be consolidated before the conclusion of peace; thirdly, the financial support of the banks at home and abroad be secured, in order to organise the new regime and suppress the peasant movement.¹¹¹

Once more the banks and financiers played a central role. The regime needed credit for the purpose of war and internal suppression, and this reinforced the token character of its democracy.¹¹² As under Tsarism, democratic-sounding promises had to be made, but no genuine democracy could be allowed. Professions of peace were given, but peace had to be denied in practice.

The fate of social revolution, on the other side, was also intimately linked with the question of war and peace. So long as the war continued, the peasants would remain at the front, the power of finance would be supreme, and the 'revolutionaries' would be limited to the role of 'taggers-on'.¹¹³ Weber confessed that he did not see the task of the revolutionary movement to be an easy one, such were the conflicts among the peasants, between those who owned land privately and those who did not. But he was clear about the necessary conditions for its success:

These difficulties could only be overcome in the course of a social-revolutionary dictatorship lasting for years. . . . Whether the personalities for this are available, I cannot say. But they could only achieve lasting power if peace were concluded immediately. Only then would the peasants be available at home to support them.¹¹⁴

The possibility Weber was considering here was a peasant-based revolution, and its possible relationship to the urban proletariat was unclear. As he argued, there might be a degree of subjective

solidarity between the proletariat and peasantry, for instance, on the issue of peace, but their interests were largely opposed.¹¹⁵ Any settlement of the peasant demands would set back Russia's capitalist industrial development for years. Whatever the future prospects here, however, Weber was clear that the Kerensky government was a transitional one only, and could only develop in one of two directions, reactionary or revolutionary. In either case, the possibility of a liberal development was ruled out.

While subsequent events proved the correctness of Weber's analysis of the Provisional Government,¹¹⁶ the Bolshevik uprising itself did not conform to the social revolution he had expected. 'It is a pure military dictatorship,' he wrote in February 1918, 'only one of corporals rather than generals.'¹¹⁷ The longest he expected it to last was a few months. Too much stress should perhaps not be placed on instant analyses made in a rapidly changing situation, and Weber wrote no systematic account of Bolshevism as he had of the previous revolutions. Two points, however, are worth noting about the various brief references he made to Bolshevism, since they form characteristic assumptions of Weber's political writing.

The first of these was that the character of Bolshevism was determined, not by its ideas, but by the material interests of its followers. Whatever goals the Petersburg intellectuals might pursue, Weber wrote in February 1918, the instrument of Bolshevik power, the soldiers, demanded above all pay and booty.¹¹⁸ The Red Guards could therefore have no real interest in peace, since it would leave them without any source of income. The fate of the Kerensky regime had been similarly decided by the instrument of power on which it relied, foreign finance. In order to get the necessary credit to establish its authority, it had been forced to deny its idealism, and sacrifice its citizens in a war for the interests of foreign bourgeois powers.¹¹⁹ The Bolsheviks might aim for peace in their turn, but their military following would prevent it. This had been Weber's initial analysis, and though the situation changed, he believed that it would be the material interests of the Bolshevik following that would determine everything. Thus he spoke of the influence of those who lived 'not for but off the revolution', the parasites who made a living out of revolutionary activity as such, and were more interested in its perpetuation than in the achievement of ideological goals. This was the 'essence of Bolshevism'.¹²⁰ In his address on 'Politics as a Vocation' Weber used this as an example of the general problem confronting any crusader who sought to achieve this-worldly transformation:

He who wants to establish absolute justice on earth by force requires a following, a human 'machine'. He must hold out the necessary internal and external premiums—heavenly or worldly reward—to this 'machine' or else the machine will not function. Under the conditions of the modern class struggle, the internal premiums consist of the satisfying of hatred and the craving for revenge. . . . The external rewards are adventure, victory, booty, power and spoils. The leader and his success are completely dependent upon the functioning of his machine and hence not on his own motives. Therefore he also depends upon whether or not the premiums can be *permanently* granted to the following, that is, to the Red Guards, the informers, the agitators, whom he needs. What he actually attains under the conditions of his work is therefore not in his hands, but is prescribed to him by the motives of his following, which if viewed ethically, are predominantly base.¹²¹

In the case of Bolshevism, Weber argued, the need to satisfy the material interests of its proletarian supporters struck at the root of its socialist ideals, since it was forced to introduce practices into industrial life which denied all its principles:

. . . The Soviets have preserved, or rather re-introduced, the highly paid entrepreneur, piece-work, the Taylor System, military and industrial discipline, and have instituted a search for foreign capital. Hence, in a word, they have had to take on again absolutely all the things they had fought as bourgeois class institutions, in order to keep the state and the economy going at all.¹²²

This passage illustrates a second assumption of Weber's, familiar from the previous chapter, that industrial development could only take place under capitalism, through the 'economically revolutionary' class of the bourgeoisie, and that any attempt to introduce socialist experiments prematurely was bound to fail.¹²³ In this respect, if not in accepting the values or desirability of socialism, Weber stood near the position of the 'evolutionary socialist' Mensheviks, who argued that 'this Bolshevik experiment, of superimposing a socialist order from above on the present state of bourgeois society, is not only a nonsense, but an outrage against Marxist dogma.'¹²⁴ This was the position of all 'scientifically trained' socialists, according to Weber.¹²⁵ If he did not agree with them on the advantages a socialist future would bring, he at least could agree that capitalism must come first. Thus in his

analysis of Bolshevism we find Weber, in effect, appealing to orthodox Marxism against what he had called the 'Hegelian' tradition of Russian Social Democracy, with its emphasis on the 'creative character of human thought'.¹²⁶ The material interests of the proletariat, and their demand for jobs, would, he believed, make a capitalist organisation of industry in Russia a necessity.

THE CONDITIONS FOR LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

The account of Weber's writings on Russia given in this chapter may appear to have been unduly drawn out, but it is difficult to compress further without losing altogether the sense of his argument. Along with his writings on Germany, the aim has been to convey some idea of how Weber analysed the politics of a particular society in his own time, and what he conceived the most significant features in such an analysis to be. We are interested in these writings not merely as descriptive accounts, but also for the theoretical assumptions they contain. These assumptions can be treated at a number of different levels. At the most general level is a theory of the relationship between society and government. At this level, it should be clear that Weber's accounts of Germany and Russia differ in a number of respects from what is frequently regarded as the typically Weberian approach to political analysis, and that such supposedly Weberian emphases as the independence of the 'political' from the 'economic' (in particular from economic class), the importance of ideas, the role of legitimacy in explaining political stability and change, etc., are largely absent from these accounts and even at points explicitly denied. Thus class and class conflict are seen to be central features in explaining the exercise of power and the phenomenon of political change. If Tsarism managed to achieve a certain independence from society by reliance on the police and bureaucracy, this was only at the expense of internal instability and submission to the demands of foreign finance. So too Weber explicitly denies the power of ideological factors in the face of material interests. In Russia the liberal movement failed once the material position of the intelligentsia was threatened, and socialist ideals gave way before the need to satisfy the material demands of the proletariat.

These and other aspects of Weber's account will be discussed in a more systematic manner in the final chapter, when a comparison will be made between the standpoints of his political and sociological writings. For the moment, however, a different level of theory will be examined, concerning the historical conditions for

liberal democracy. Weber found in Germany and Russia a common inability to develop a liberal constitutional state, or 'bourgeois democracy' as he called it. This was partly the result of conditions which were unique to each country. At the same time there were factors common to both his accounts, which together provide the basis for a theory of liberal democracy.¹²⁷ The most significant features of this can be summarised briefly.

First was the character of industrial development in the two countries, and the difference between mature and early capitalism. Political freedom, Weber argued, had grown historically out of the practice and idea of individualism, which was rooted in the economic and social structure of the early capitalist epoch.¹²⁸ The age of this individualism was now past. The development of capitalism itself had destroyed for ever 'the optimistic belief in the natural harmony of interests of free individuals'.¹²⁹ The impact of technology had created a uniformity in the external conditions of life through the standardisation of production. The organisation of industry required the aggregation of large numbers of men into hierarchical structures, while their welfare needs were met in ways directly opposed to individualistic self-help: 'American "benevolent feudalism", Germany's so-called "welfare organisations", Russian factory administration—everywhere the cage of a new bondage is ready'.¹³⁰ Nothing in all this development had anything to do with the individualism characteristic of the earlier epoch. Thus countries, of which Russia was the extreme example, which began their industrialisation late, with capitalism in its mature form, missed out that epoch of social and economic development which had provided the basis for free political institutions and a strong liberal tradition. If it depended only on material conditions, Weber wrote, and the constellation of interests created by them, one would have to conclude that 'all the *economic* weather signs point in the direction of increasing "unfreedom"'.¹³¹

A second reason Weber gave was also linked to the development of capitalism, but was of a more political kind, and concerned the political character of the bourgeoisie. In Germany and Russia the bourgeoisie was never given a chance to share in political power before the appearance of the proletariat and the development of modern class conflict.¹³² Their fear of working-class power pushed them into an alliance with the existing authorities, and the interests of property became directed in support of a traditional system rather than against it.¹³³ This was exacerbated by the fact that the suffrage was extended to the working class, or parts of it, before the establishment of Parliamentary government,

and made the bourgeoisie afraid of a Parliamentary system.¹³⁴ As Weber argued in his writings on both countries, the nature of modern capitalism made any sort of electoral system short of universal suffrage in the long run untenable. The continually changing character of industry made it impossible to limit the suffrage on the basis of economic or social function,¹³⁵ and the representation of one class by another could no longer be justified once their interests were in conflict.¹³⁶ It was therefore no longer possible to give the bourgeoisie a chance to find its feet politically by means of a suffrage weighted in its favour. As he said of Russia, 'the opposition of economic interests and the class character of the proletariat strikes all specifically bourgeois reforms in the back: this is its fateful work here as elsewhere'.¹³⁷ Germany provided the clearest example of this 'fateful work'. Although working-class representation in the Reichstag could not hinder the economic progress of capitalism, Weber wrote, yet 'it weakens the political power of the bourgeoisie and strengthens the power of the bourgeoisie's aristocratic adversaries. The downfall of German bourgeois liberalism is based upon the joint effectiveness of these factors'.¹³⁸

Both the factors mentioned above were the product of a late development of industrial capitalism. A further factor—and according to the typically Weberian account it was related to the others—was the historical character of religion in both countries.¹³⁹ In each case this worked in support of the traditional state, rather than against it, and reinforced attitudes in the individual of submission to authority rather than of personal independence. This was true to an extreme degree of Russian orthodoxy; itself authoritarian in structure, it was bound intimately to the state, providing 'the religious foundation of absolutism'.¹⁴⁰ Although Germany, in contrast, had experienced the Protestant revolution, it had taken a form in Lutheranism which legitimated the authoritarian state, and established itself as a 'church' rather than a 'sect'. In his article on 'Church and sect in North America',¹⁴¹ Weber ascribed important features of American liberal democracy, in particular its strong tradition of individualism and of voluntary associations, to the influence of the Puritan sects. Two passages from this article are worth quoting. The first emphasises that Weber's account of liberal democracy involved a conception of society and not merely political institutions:

Whoever understands by 'democracy' . . . a human mass pulverised into atoms, is fundamentally mistaken, at least so far as

American democracy is concerned. It is not democracy, but bureaucratic rationalism that tends to have this consequence of 'atomization', a consequence which is not avoided by its preference for imposing compulsory structures from above. Genuine American society... was never a sandheap of this kind, nor yet a building where anyone without distinction could just walk in. It was and is permeated with 'exclusiveness' of every kind. The individual never finds sure ground under his feet, either at university or in business, until he has succeeded in being voted into an association of some kind—in the past invariably Christian, now secular as well—and has asserted himself within it. The inner character of these associations is governed by the ancient 'sect spirit' with far-reaching consequences.¹⁴²

The religious development in Germany had taken a very different form, with markedly different consequences for its political life, as Weber explained in a further passage:

It is even now still our fate, that, for numerous historical reasons, the religious revolution of that time meant for us Germans a development which did not promote the power of the individual, but rather the importance of officialdom. And so, because the religious community after the revolution as before took the form only of a 'church', a compulsory association, there arose that situation in which every struggle for the emancipation of the individual from 'authority', every manifestation of 'liberalism' in the widest sense, was compelled to set itself in opposition to the religious communities. At the same time we were denied the development of that tradition of voluntary associations which the 'sectarian life' had helped to encourage in the Anglo-Saxon world, so different in all these respects.¹⁴³

It is of some interest that Weber should criticise the 'sects' of Russian Social Democracy for fostering precisely the opposite traits—subservience to dogmas and party authorities. This apparent inconsistency would seem to justify the doubts of those who confess to see no particular connection between religious sectarianism and political liberty. In Weber's view, however, it was a question of the interaction between a particular set of beliefs and the pressures of sect life. Not only did the sects reject all earthly authorities, but the continuous pressure they exerted on the individual to prove himself in the possession of distinctive

personal qualities, led to the 'inner isolation of the individual' and the 'maximum development of his powers towards the external world' together.¹⁴⁴ This was the result of a very different kind of discipline from that of an authoritarian church. The continuous and unobtrusive ethical discipline of the sects, Weber wrote, was 'related to the discipline of the authoritarian church as the rational training and selection of qualities is to command and punishment'.¹⁴⁵ The contrast between sect and church was thus reflected in the contrast between the 'social elasticity and individualist quality' of Anglo-Saxon democracy, and the rigid authoritarianism of social institutions in Germany.¹⁴⁶

Thus, in the course of their development, Germany and Russia had missed out on the particular combination of factors which defined the epoch of individualism. These were now unrepeatably. The particular quality of religious sect life could not be recovered, even if one wanted to. The bureaucratisation of industrial concerns was far advanced. The arrival of the working class on the heels of the bourgeoisie was irreversible. As was pointed out in Chapter 2, however, Weber did not regard individualism and political freedom as necessarily identical; it was possible for the latter to survive without the former. But the end of the age of individualism made it infinitely more difficult to *establish* civil liberties and Parliamentary institutions for the first time. This was the dilemma for bourgeois political development in both Russia and Germany.

The character of Weber's argument was largely a historical one. It concerned the particular societies of Russia and Germany, and the historical conditions for liberalism in the West. At the same time his accounts contain material of a wider significance, which raises questions about the concept of 'bourgeois liberalism' as such, irrespective of the particular circumstances of the two countries mentioned. Weber's critique of socialism, discussed in Chapter 3, was based upon an argument of a general kind—that some special connection existed between the bourgeoisie and political freedom, which would be denied under a socialist order. Capitalism provided a necessary tension between the bureaucracies of industry and the state: the bourgeoisie as a class provided the necessary social support for free Parliamentary institutions. The accounts given show that in practice Weber had reservations on both aspects of the argument.

First, Weber recognised that an increasingly common feature of large-scale capitalism was its forging of close links with the state. This was not only because of the needs of capitalism to secure a

political climate favourable to its interests, but also for the state in the pursuit of its own ends. The result, however, of such links was not so much the state direction of industry as capitalist direction of the state, because of its superior knowledge in the field of business. Weber repeated this theme in a number of contexts. In a Verein debate in 1905 on the relations between cartels and the state, Weber opposed Schmoller's suggestion that there should be state-appointed directors in the major cartels.¹⁴⁷ Among other objections to this kind of liaison, he argued that, far from it producing a greater influence for state policy in their operations, it would only give *them* greater influence with the state;¹⁴⁸ in the act of embrace, the cartels would play the role of Brunnhilde, and the state would suffer the fate of King Gunther.¹⁴⁹ The reason for this, as he pointed out in *Economy and Society*, was that the expertise of businessmen in their own sphere was far superior to that of the state bureaucracy, and that as a consequence the measures taken by the state to influence economic life under capitalism were frequently 'made illusory by the superior knowledge of interest groups'.¹⁵⁰ It was not simply the question of who would influence whom, however, that concerned Weber, but the possible threat to freedom posed by the increasing tendency of large-scale capitalism to involve the state in its activities. The following passage from Weber's memorandum on social policy raises very explicitly the question of whether capitalism was necessarily preferable to socialism in this respect:

The trends towards state ownership, municipalisation, syndicalisation, advance irresistibly together. Increasingly, administrative positions in the syndicates are adjusted to the career opportunities of state officials, and influential state positions to those of industrialists. For these and other reasons, it will in future be all the same from the standpoint of social policy, whether it is state ownership or state 'controlled' syndicalisation that takes place, or whatever else the formal relationship is between the state and municipal apparatus on the one side and that of the large syndicates on the other. In the face of these overpowering corporations the traditional trade union policy breaks down, as does that of all social structures which can be considered as agencies of a decisively liberal social policy.¹⁵¹

It needs to be remembered here that Weber's view was coloured by the experience of an authoritarian state, and that Prussian conditions were no more satisfactory a guide to the future of capitalism than of socialism. Indeed Weber's commitment to

capitalism as a system presupposed that a more liberal social policy was possible within it than existed in his own society, and that the formally free association of economic interests on the part of both capital and labour, which he saw as a distinctive feature of capitalism, could be structured so as to achieve a more even balance of power between the two sides of industry. In fact, it was in this context that he produced his only really democratic argument for the extension of the suffrage, when he wrote that, without it, the bankers and large capitalists would become 'the uncontrolled masters of the state'.¹⁵² Possession of the vote by the working class would counteract some of the worst features of 'power exercised in the interests of profit'.¹⁵³ Against the reality of capitalism in his own society he thus set a counter-image of capitalism as it might be, which provided the basis for his critique both of German capitalism and of the socialist alternative in his speeches to the Verein für Sozialpolitik. Nevertheless, if Weber gave characteristic expression to the theory that a tension between the bureaucracies of industry and state was a necessary condition for social and political freedom in modern society, his writing also provided evidence that, unless there were strong counteracting factors, the interests of business would come to dominate the state, and that there was nothing in the nature of modern large-scale capitalism as such that was necessarily conducive to political liberty.

The same could equally be said of the bourgeoisie themselves, that there was nothing in their social or economic conditions of life, nothing in the ownership of property itself, to make them the natural supporters of free Parliamentary institutions. What was 'bourgeois' about the Russian liberal movement, on Weber's analysis, was the character of its ideas, not the social composition of its supporters; the capitalists were noticeably absent from its ranks. There was no particular connection between the freedom to make profit and political liberty. The desire of the Russian propertied strata for order was stronger than their zeal for constitutional rights,¹⁵⁴ and they were prepared to put up with a widespread denial of civil liberties provided a free hand was given to profit.¹⁵⁵ Equally, Weber wrote of the German bourgeoisie that, as a result of material prosperity and an efficient administration, it had found itself perfectly at home in the 'cage' of the authoritarian state.¹⁵⁶

Taking Weber's account as a whole, therefore, it is clear that in practice he regarded the concept of 'bourgeois liberalism' as a historical rather than a living concept, as a set of ideas rather than

a living relationship between a particular economic way of life and corresponding political institutions. The only ultimate guarantee of political freedom thus lay in the liveliness of a country's *political* tradition and in its determination to be free:

Democracy and freedom are only possible where there exists a settled and determined *will* on the part of a nation, not to be ruled like a herd of sheep. It is 'against the stream' of material interests that we are 'individualists' and advocates of 'democratic' institutions.¹⁵⁷

How it was possible to attain such a will when it did not already exist, to this Weber had no clear answer. But at least he recognized that it had nothing to do with modern capitalism as such, nor with the economic circumstances of the bourgeois class.

This discussion brings us to a final substantive issue to be considered in Weber's political theory. Weber's account of the dilemma of bourgeois liberalism exemplifies a more general problem which he discerned in the character of bourgeois society, arising from the phenomenon of class and class conflict. If the nature of class action was to pursue material interests to the exclusion of other considerations, and to see politics largely as an instrument of this, how was it possible for wider political goals of any kind to be achieved? When Weber wrote of the Russian masses that he doubted where they could find 'the impulse to participate in a movement which went beyond purely material demands',¹⁵⁸ he could well have said the same about any of the classes that he analysed in contemporary Russia and Germany. It is in the context of this problem that the next chapter will return to a reconsideration of his conception of political leadership, and in particular of the factors which led him to abandon some of the liberal constraints on the political leader in his postwar constitutional theory. It will be argued there that this is only fully intelligible in the context of his theory of society, discussed in the preceding two chapters.

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46 What made it 'bourgeois' was the character of its demands: guaranteed freedoms for the individual, a constitutional 'Rechtsstaat', etc. *Archiv*, 22B, pp. 280-1.

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50 *Archiv*, 23B, pp. 371-3.

51 *op cit.*, pp. 231-2; GPS, p. 79. 'The large capitalists will naturally *always* take the side of the bureaucracy against the Duma. . . . ' *ibid.*

52 e.g. *Archiv*, 22B, p. 352. Their policy was 'on the one hand to encourage the

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development of capitalism, on the other to cut off every development towards bourgeois independence'. GPS, pp 64-5.

53 *Archiv*, 22B, p 347; GPS, pp 60-1.
54 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 398-9; cf p 324: 'One sees how in this respect also the country immediately jumps right into the middle of the most modern form of economic struggle, without repeating any of the intermediate stages of Western development.'

55 *ibid.*
56 'Russlands Übergang zum Scheinkonstitutionalismus', *Archiv*, 23B, pp 165-401.

57 *Archiv*, 22B, p 246; GPS, p 30.

58 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 175-6.

59 *ibid.*, pp 249-50.

60 *ibid.*, pp 171-4; GPS, pp 67-9.

61 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 167-70.

62 *ibid.*, p 170; GPS, p 66.

63 *Archiv*, 23 B, p 171; GPS, p 67.

64 *ibid.*

65 For an analysis of Vitte's position in Weber's first article, see *Archiv*, 22B, pp 337-45; GPS, pp 52-8.

66 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 181-224.

67 *ibid.*, p 224.

68 'One cannot treat a nation and its political freedoms like a "Hasch-Hasch" game with children, offering them the ball one moment, then hiding it behind one's back as soon as they make a grasp for it.' *ibid.*, pp 224-5; GPS, p 71.

69 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 226-33; GPS, pp 72-80.

70 *ibid.*

71 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 228-9; GPS, pp 74-5.

72 *Archiv*, 23B, p 232; GPS, p 79.

73 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 233-50.

74 *ibid.*, p 237.

75 A detailed account of the electoral arrangements is given, *ibid.*, pp 251-74.

76 *ibid.*, pp 275-6.

77 *ibid.*, p 284.

78 *ibid.*, pp 284ff.

79 *ibid.*, p 312; GPS, p 90.

80 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 327-8; GPS, pp 93-4.

81 *ibid.* Weber gives a similar analysis in his first article: 'It was naturally also the hope of the government, and of Vitte especially, that anarchy would produce this result, and that, in Vitte's own words, "society itself" would finally come to demand order and recognition for their watch-cry "Enrichissez-vous": And so it happened. . . . The hour of the ideological gentry was over; the power of material interests resumed once more its normal function. The consequence of this process was to rule out, on the Left, any thoughtful political idealism, and on the Right, any commitment to the extension of the old kind of Zemstvo self-government. . . . Vitte was unlikely to lose any sleep over either.' *Archiv*, 22B, p 342; GPS, p 55.

82 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 333-55.

83 *ibid.*, pp 270-2.

84 *ibid.*, pp 359-60.

85 *ibid.*, pp 360-71.

86 *ibid.*, pp 363, 371.

87 *ibid.*, pp 371-3.

88 *ibid.*

89 *ibid.*, pp 377-8.

90 *ibid.*, p 378.

91 *ibid.*, p 379.

92 *ibid.*, pp 380-90.

93 *ibid.*, p 385.

94 *ibid.*, p 394; GPS, p 103.

95 *Archiv*, 23B, p 396; GPS, p 105.

96 *Archiv*, 23B, pp 386-7.

97 *ibid.*, p 395; GPS, p 104.

98 *ibid.*

99 *Archiv*, 23B, p 398; GPS, p 107.

100 'Russlands Übergang zur Scheindemokratie,' published in April 1917 and reprinted complete in GPS, pp 192-210. Lionel Kochan calls Weber's analysis 'remarkable'. L Kochan, *Russia in Revolution* (London, 1966), p 212.

101 GPS, p 192.

102 GPS, p 193.

103 GPS, pp 193-4.

104 GPS, p 194.

105 GPS, pp 196-9.

106 GPS, p 205; cf p 200.

107 *ibid.*

108 GPS, p 205.

109 GPS, p 206.

110 GPS, p 205.

111 GPS, pp 202-3.

112 GPS, p 203.

113 GPS, p 205.

114 GPS, p 202.

115 GPS, pp 204-5.

116 Thus he wrote later in the year: 'I believe that, in this as in other predictions that I made elsewhere about the Russian situation, I was unfortunately right.' GPS, p 325, n 1.

117 GPS, p 280.

118 GPS, p 281.

119 *ibid.*; cf GPS, p 325, n 1.

120 GPS, p 440.

121 GM, p 125; GPS, p 544.

122 GM, p 100; GPS, p 517.

123 In his lecture on socialism (July 1918), having described how the Bolsheviks had compelled existing entrepreneurs, civil servants and army officers to serve their regime, Weber remarked that 'a state machine and an economy cannot be conducted for long in this manner'. GASS, p 514.

124 GASS, p 516.

125 *ibid.*

126 *Archiv*, 22B, p 283.

127 For a contemporary discussion of these issues, see Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (London, 1967), though the