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# Bureaucrats and Revolutionary State-Building in Ireland and Russia. Was Weber Right?

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You can't expect the government to stop functioning just because the country doesn't exist!

Sir Humphrey Appleby.

## Introduction

A state has no existence apart from the people who work for it. The success of a revolutionary government, accordingly, depends not only on party militants and a victorious army, but on the thousands of rank-and-file full-time technical and administrative clerks without whom services would not function.

Writing between 1913 and 1919, Weber observed that, even in the case of revolution or enemy occupation, bureaucrats will normally continue to work because they are concerned primarily with their jobs, salaries and pensions. An operative “disinterested ideological factor,” he added, involved the realization that officials had to continue working to provide the necessities of life for all—including themselves. Bureaucracies continue to function regardless of who rules because a rationally ordered officialdom is of vital interest to all. “Such an apparatus makes ‘revolution,’ in the sense of the forceful creation of new formations of authority, more and more impossible.... The place of ‘revolutions’ under this process is taken by *coup d’etat*....” Weber recognized that administrators had overthrown political leaders in the past, but he thought this improbable in modern societies. (Roth and Wittich, vol. 1: 224, 264–66, 988–89).

Weber thought that the Bolsheviks had established a military dictatorship in Russia in 1917 and were threatening officials with starvation to force them to work. He added that in the long-term “... the state machinery and economy cannot be run in this way....” (Eldridge, 1971: 216).

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These observations seem to contradict his hypothesis, as they imply resistance by bureaucrats. But as Weber died in 1920 he never reconsidered his argument in light of later developments in general and Russian events in particular. And he did not discuss events in Ireland. Historians who later studied bureaucrats during Ireland's and Russia's revolutions did not reflect on the relationship between their behaviour and Weber's hypothesis; similarly no students of public administration, politics or social theory have used Russia or Ireland as a case study to test Weber's thesis.

However, Weber's hypothesis regarding bureaucrats' readiness to serve whoever holds power has been tested in the case of revolutionary France. There, by the year 1793, pre-1789 personnel averaged half of the staff in the Ministry of Finance and approximately 25 per cent of all government administrators. Seventy-five per cent of all officials were hired between 1789 and 1793, but this was not the result of mass firings or resignations of old officials. In the Ministry of War, for instance, 60 per cent of the pre-1789 personnel had left service because of retirement or death by 1793, 20% served through the revolution, while another 20 per cent were re-hired soon after dismissal. Those purged or dropped as a result of staff cuts after 1795 were not the pre-revolutionary cohort, but primarily new people hired during the preceding three years (Church, 1980: 82, 103). Despite revolutionary leaders' fears and mistrust, old-regime officials continued to work for the new regime and remained indifferent to politics, thus supporting the claim that bureaucrats are unmoved by political ideas.

Weber's hypothesis has yet to be tested against all the cases of revolutionary state building in the twentieth century, and one of the sample groups in such an investigation should include the new European governments formed between 1905 and 1919. As a contribution towards this kind of broader examination, this paper reviews state building in nationalist Ireland and Bolshevik Russia to determine whether the behaviour of old-regime administrators in those countries proves or disproves Weber's hypothesis. These two countries were chosen as case studies because historians have already studied their bureaucracies and administrations in detail between the years 1917 and 1921 and have published their findings in readily available archival-based monographs. The sections on Ireland will focus on the southern provinces that became the Irish Republic. The sections on Russia will mention Ukraine and secular educated Jews, but will focus on Russians and the 24 provinces of central Russia.

### **The Bolsheviks' Coup and the Bureaucrats' Strike**

Like most French Jacobins in 1791, most Bolsheviks in 1917 imagined that their new social order would be decentralized and run by amateur administrators elected from among the working population. Yet Lenin knew, as did the few pragmatic Jacobins, that he had to keep professional

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**Abstract.** Weber argued that bureaucrats serve whoever holds power even in the case of revolution or enemy occupation because they are more concerned with their jobs, salaries and pensions than with political ideas. His hypothesis has yet to be satisfactorily tested, however, and any such project would have to include all states that emerged from revolutions. As a contribution towards such an examination this paper reviews state building in nationalist Ireland and Bolshevik Russia to determine whether the behaviour of old-regime administrators in those countries proves or disproves Weber's claim.

**Résumé.** Weber avançait que les bureaucrates servent quiconque est au pouvoir, même en cas de révolution ou d'occupation ennemie, parce qu'ils se soucient davantage de leurs emplois, de leurs salaires et de leurs pensions que d'idées politiques. Son hypothèse n'a cependant jamais été testée de manière satisfaisante et tout projet de ce genre devrait nécessairement inclure tous les États qui sont issus de révolutions. En guise de contribution à un tel examen, cet article examine la création de l'État dans l'Irlande nationaliste et la Russie bolchévique pour déterminer si le comportement des fonctionnaires de l'ancien régime de ces pays confirme ou réfute l'allégation de Weber.

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administrators at their desks. He never lost his gut hatred for former bureaucrats nor his conviction that force was necessary to transform what he thought was an inveterately hostile group into what Bukharin termed "plain social workers." But, despite remarks to the contrary in his *The State and Revolution*, Lenin realized that administrators were necessary and acknowledged that administration required training (Lenin, 1941–51: vol. 26: 89; vol. 27: 186–87, 191, 235–36; 1931: vol. 11: 392–91).

World War I had forced all governments to increase the size and reach of their administrations. Even so, three weeks before taking power, in *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power*, Lenin explicitly stated that he would make the government bureaucracy as big and all encompassing as possible "... with ten if not twenty million people." One reason for this envisaged expansion was his belief that socialism needed a huge "state apparatus." More significantly, he also realized that it was easier to control people by making them government employees dependent on wages and rations, than by threatening them with laws and execution: "The guillotine *only* terrorized, only broke *active* resistance. *For us, this is not enough* [sic]." People compelled to work for the state by the grain monopoly, food rationing and labour conscription would be people the state could easily control. This is what Lenin understood by the slogan "He who does not work, neither shall he eat" (Lenin: 1941–51: vol. 26: 80–84, 89).

By 1917 the middle level of what had been the tsarist state administration had been socially transformed by an influx of professionals and technicians produced by the industrialization of the 1890s. These were personnel from the lower-middle strata of the *zemstva* (rural councils), co-ops and the Peasant Union. On the lowest levels of the governmental hierarchy an influx of former shop assistants, clerks, factory officials, co-op activists and technicians formed an additional new cadre of administrators (Orlovsky, 1989). As in the rest of Europe, the war in Russia

had also led to an influx of women into jobs from which they had been excluded before 1914. In June 1917 the Provisional Government opened all government jobs to women but in practice it was reluctant to hire them for any but the lowest positions. Initially organized into dozens of separate unions according to function and status, by the autumn of 1917 activists had managed to assemble all of them under a single umbrella organization “The Union of Government Administrator’s Unions” (*Soiuz soiuzov sluzhashchikh gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdenii*) with its own paper (*Tribuna gosudarstvennykh sluzhashchikh*). In March 1917 the new Provisional Government dismissed provincial governors, vice-governors and police-chiefs and a number of senior officials resigned after the abdication of the tsar. Otherwise, the vast majority of tsarist bureaucrats (*sluzhashchie*) remained at their desks (Arkhip, 1921–37: I: 28; IV: 67).

As soon as they took power Bolshevik commissars in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) went to ministries and, following Lenin’s “draft rules for office employees,” threatened staff with imprisonment and confiscation of their private property if they did not work for the new leaders. (Lenin, 1962: vol. 35: 42). Bureaucrats still considered themselves employees of the Provisional Government, however. Some continued working as if nothing had happened, while others began organizing work stoppages, as they had during the 1905 Revolution, in an attempt to bring down the new regime. As more bureaucrats decided to join the stoppages, middle ministry officials supported by the Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, and Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) coordinated this spontaneous opposition into a strike affecting all services except electricity, water, finances, and those directly related to the war-effort. At least 44,000 officials, including clerks in private companies, took part (Golub, 1987: 450). Office shut-downs went as far as removing pens from desks. According to one strike organizer, the Bolsheviks feared the united power of the “official intelligentsia” as the sole and most dangerous force organized against them (Kostorovetz, 1923: 301–07). But the strike failed to attract the support of all administrators and of all their associated unions. The telegraph, post and rail workers negotiated separately with the Bolsheviks, and pro-Bolshevik junior clerks and caretakers usually came work. As observers of administrative practice for years they were familiar enough with procedure to take over the basic tasks of administration alongside literate Bolshevik party members conscripted for the purpose. The pro-Bolshevik Union of Clerks Couriers and Guards, meanwhile, organized an anti-strike initiative. The Bolsheviks won over private sector administrator unions with promises that all administrators would be represented on Workers Councils (Aronson, 1966: 212–15, 221–26; Buldakov, 1981: 174, 258–61; Fraiman, 1969: 103–13; Iroshnikov, 1967: 157–211; Mints, 1973: vol. 3: 762–92; Pipes, 1999: 526–29; Rigby, 1979: 40–52). Young women also provided an important source of clerks for the Bolsheviks,

who, unlike their predecessors, were willing to hire females en masse. “Soviet ladies” [*sovetskie baryshni*] as they were called, were barely literate and not particularly enthusiastic about their jobs. “Yet, in essence, the entire system of soviet bureaucratism is built on these ladies: without them it is impossible either to write a document, send it, issue an order or take-out the garbage.” (Arkhip, 1921–1937: vol. 2: 102).

Three days into the strike Lenin called on “the population” to take over government. When argument failed to turn the strikers, the Bolsheviks began using force and cajolery. Between November 12 and December 12 all ministries formally informed their employees via posters and notices in the newspaper *Izvestiia* that they would be fired without pay or benefits if they did not come to work or refused to obey the new government. Commissars accompanied by armed detachments began systematically going from office to office threatening recalcitrant officials with arrest or dismissal without pension and immediate conscription into the army unless they swore loyalty. On November 29 the Bolsheviks arrested the leaders of the Kadet party and the central strike committee. On December 7 they required all officials to register with the government and carry their ID papers with them at all times—thus making bureaucrats the first group of people under Soviet rule placed under permanent surveillance (Lenin, 1962: vol. 35: 374–75). By December 24, when the Bolsheviks in effect declared City *Dumas* (councils) and *Zemstva* (rural councils) illegal, their countermeasures seemed to be neutralizing the strike as they had managed to keep central government offices open. After shifting the capital from Petrograd to Moscow, moderate leaders, in the face of protests from radical party-members, decided it was best to retain all personnel until such time as they found reason to dismiss them. They sought out and tried to amicably convince as many non-Bolsheviks as possible that they could work for the new regime without fear.

Leaders declared the strike over on January 12, 1918. This came six days after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (January 6) which had prompted former senior and middle-level ministerial officials to conclude that the strike no longer had any legal rationale. In March 1918, after the Germans failed to take Petrograd, the last stoppages in the capital had ceased.

Most of what is known about the bureaucrats’ resistance to the Bolshevik takeover relates to Petrograd. Outside the capital private and government administrators also either refused to recognize local Bolsheviks in towns where they took power before January 1918 or, went on strike against them, but historians have not yet systematically studied all these incidents. What is known suggests that resistance was sporadic. In an unpublished dissertation Valery Kanishchev suggests that strikes were rare in central Russia. They were limited to five provincial capitals, were short

in duration, and apparently were undertaken without contact with leaders in Petrograd. When threatened with force, as a rule, the striking officials submitted or resigned. There was passive resistance on the job, however (Kanishchev, 1996, 1998). A special section of the Interior Ministry dispatched “instructors” throughout the country during 1918 and by July they had brought all local offices and officials in Bolshevik territory under nominal central control. By the autumn of that year former administrators had either reconciled themselves with their new master, fled, or been fired (Mints, 1973: vol. 3: 771, 778).<sup>1</sup> In December 1917 in the district capital of Bezhetsk, Tver Province, for instance, officials initially refused to recognize the Bolsheviks. Within a week they had agreed to work on condition that the Bolsheviks not interfere in administrative affairs. Had the Bolsheviks refused, the officials were prepared to strike but only if they were guaranteed three months’ pay. This situation of “dual power” continued until January 31, 1918 when the town council, with only half its members present, voted to legally recognize the Bolsheviks. At that point the same officials all kept doing their old jobs—though not without a great deal of insults and abuse from their new rulers during their first days at work (Senin, 1996).

In the summer of 1918 the Bolshevik Party represented one of 39 political organizations that were claiming territorial administrative authority within what had been the the tsarist empire. The Bolshevik government had overlapping jurisdictions. It was overstaffed in cities, understaffed in villages, corrupt, and frequently inept. In counties and villages in particular, ignorance, confusion, favouritism, arbitrariness and outright terror was rife. The intensity of the people’s hate of rank-and-file soviet administrators was matched by the hate expressed by rank-and-file Bolsheviks for former tsarist officials—whom they referred to as “working cattle necessary for the dirty work.” The CHEKA (secret police) on the one hand issued special decrees forbidding the arbitrary dismissal of former tsarist officials from soviet agencies and, on the other hand, sometimes executed entire local executive committees (*ispolkoms*) for malfeasance (Bakhturina and Kozhevnikova, 1998: 51–52; Brovkin, 1994: 134–42; Gimpelson, 1998: 185–86; Maslov, 1922: 85–92, 112–16; Smirnova, 2000: 115–16). The Bolsheviks could fill offices with thousands of people but they could not yet control them. Organizational roles were poorly defined and much administration was done via the personal networks and contacts that local party members built around themselves during the war and revolution, and which controlled access to and distribution of jobs, services, and rewards into the 1920s. Whether or not these local “horizontally” party-affiliated individuals would obey their nominal bureaucratic superiors was by no means certain. Much depended on whether the local party potentate, thanks to a patron’s support in Moscow, was also in charge of a local branch of a central agency or ministry.

Despite these difficulties, there were two reasons Bolshevik power nevertheless managed to function through its first crucial years without a strong well-defined vertical system of administration. The first reason was the desire of the local party members to win central approval and rewards, and the second reason was the central leaders' strategy of creating middle-level regional bureaus and then appointing local leaders to them. Thus, one boss and his network would displace or absorb another, and that network would then provide the social/friendship structure around which political administration was built (Easter, 2000: 33–34, 75–76, 83–85, 90, 95).

Against this background the Bolsheviks, like the Jacobins before them, got their administrative system to do three things vital to their survival. By the end of 1919 it was able to organize the production and delivery of munitions to the four million strong Red Army, run verification committees that made sure conscripts got to the Red Army, and, redistribute money and property confiscated from deserters' families to most, if not all, families of serving soldiers—a policy that won grudging local support from those with serving family members and stemmed the massive desertions that had weakened the Red Army since it was first organized (Sanborn, 1998: 150–58, 339–40). Particularly important in winning support was a fairly efficient and more or less just distribution of pensions and rations for Red Army widows (Arkhipov, 1923: vol. 12: 106).

### **To Work or Not to Work?**

Secret police reports, diaries, and autobiographies provide insight into why old-regime administrators did or did not work for the new regime. According to one account, some tsarist administrators continued to work at their desks under the Bolsheviks due simply to their psychological need to work and they were the most dedicated and efficient Soviet bureaucrats. Another ex-tsarist official explained that intellectuals and socialists had a duty to work with the Bolsheviks, regardless of how undesirable they were, to save the revolution from the “wretchedness that engulfed it.” Some non-Bolsheviks who had decided to work for the new government publically declared in February 1918 that they did so in the name of Russian national interests. Another former official, who had emigrated, noted that some decided to work with the hope of undermining the new regime because they knew it would be easy to change policies during implementation. Once in office, however, he lamented, that most of the workers ultimately chose to pursue their careers rather than take risks. The continuing terror, the uniting of the Ministry of Interior with the Secret Police—which placed both under the control of the Secret Police

Chief Felix Dzerzhinsky when he became Commissar of the Interior at the end of march 1919—and a gnawing realization that the Bolsheviks would remain in power, all led the last die-hards to accept that covert individual sabotage of government policy was futile. Those who had rationalized their service with the intention of neutralizing bolshevism now became its servants. Those who had joined to only to survive followed their conscience when doing their duties. They either did nothing or worked to rule—implementing decisions they thought objectionable as humanely as possible (Arkhip, 1921 vol. 3: 147; vol. 6: 306–09, 316, 328–30; Hardeman, 1994: 5; Smirnova, 2000: 118–20).

A crucial factor that should not be overlooked when judging the strike is remuneration. As payday in the empire was the 20th, the Provisional Government managed to give clerks their month's wages, plus a two month advance, just before the Bolshevik's coup—although it is not clear if this pay was distributed throughout the empire or only in the capital. Within the month, nonetheless, strike organizers made it clear to the underground Provisional Government that they could remain on strike only if they were paid. The Bolsheviks, for their part, used troops and sympathetic junior staff to take money from the state bank on November 17 to pay those who worked for them. Faced with the threat of a general strike on December 14, the Bolsheviks seized all the banks in Petrograd that morning and that evening declared them nationalized. As of then only those who worked for the new government would get paid. Seeing their offices filling-up with new workers—the State Bank had hired 500 in one month—and faced with the prospect of penury and starvation, as Lenin had foreseen, striking administrators had strong material reasons to make their peace with the new rulers that January (Fleer, 1924: 202–03, 208; Gindin, 1960). *Izvestiia* (December 28) mocked the bureaucrats noting that they remained on strike only for as long they were paid and warned that those who pretended to work in Bolshevik offices only to get paid, would be arrested for fraud. The paper added that unlike the “bourgeoisie”, who demanded wages if they were to support capitalism, “the proletariat” was not averse to suffering shortages and hunger in the name of socialism.

By December in Petrograd the simple prospect of a job was attracting the desperate—those too weak or old for the army, former providers of services to the wealthy, and literate but destitute professionals—into the quickly expanding commissariats. The same penury that drove most of the capital's literate population into the Bolshevik government had similar results in the provinces where a standard scenario usually repeated itself. Once the Bolsheviks established their authority they shut-down private stores and enterprises in towns thus eliminating not only private-sector employers but also the legal supply of affordable goods. In Bezhet, for example, after a year of Bolshevik rule, the state stores were empty

while even cabbage, groats, peas and soap had disappeared from the local open-market—where prices had increased anywhere from three-fold for meat to a hundred-fold for tobacco (Senin, 1996: no. 3: 38, no. 5: 25). In such conditions, the literate but manually-unskilled who had not fled had few alternatives. Those who chose not to sit in a government office could survive for a time by trading and selling for as long as a free market existed and they had something to trade or sell, or, until one of the decrees stipulating arrest for all members of “Manufacturing-Trading Cooperatives”—which the Bolsheviks allowed to function temporarily—targeted their specific group (Arkhir, 1923: vol. 9: 199–220). Working illegally in the black market was another option. Or, by writing “I recognize Soviet power” on an application form, a person got an income and rations, kept their place of residence and was exempted from conscription, labour duties and requisitions (Lopukhin, 1986: 14, 61–62; Miakotin, 1925: 205, 210). Those on the lower end of the bureaucratic hierarchy, it should be noted, were not particularly well-off despite being employed. At the end of 1919, when potatoes in Moscow markets cost 45 rubles a pound and meat sold for 800 rubles per pound, their monthly 1500–2000 ruble wage was not enough to live on. It sufficed for three or four days, complained an anonymous petitioner to Lenin, and: “... for the remaining 27 days must the administrator sit and think about what’s going on in Rus?” (Livshin, 1998: 147–48).

During the first eight months of Bolshevik rule there were no special rations for administrators. They got the same coupons and wages as everyone else. A “class ration” system introduced in July 1918 formally discriminated against bureaucrats as non-manual workers and placed them in the low third category. By 1919, through bribery, connections, cajolery and arguing, department and/or ministerial heads could successfully obtain first-category rations for their underlings. A new “armoured ration” system introduced in November of that year placed some officials into the first category, which was expanded through 1920 to include almost all ministerial employees. But since delivery to workplaces was irregular, and department heads often distributed what arrived first to their friends and cronies, all except for party members on the highest rung of the 27-tier ranking system had to resort to speculation and bribery to survive. When they could, lower-level administrators would sell some of their rations on the market at high prices—which of course did nothing to ingratiate them to a hostile populace who considered them privileged, corrupt and incompetent (Arkhir, 1921: vol. 2: 102–03; Borisenko, 1985: 130; Borrero, 2003: 123–37).

Some bureaucrats fled Bolshevik Russia to join the White movement which declared itself formally established in January 1918—after the strike had ended. Overall, however, the White option was unattractive. White leaders created six administrative units in what had been

southern Russia, and these existed until February 1920. Borders fluctuated according to the fortunes of war but three of these were in territory claimed by Ukraine (New Russia, Kherson and Kharkiv provinces). Unlike the Bolsheviks, the Whites not only failed to attract many former tsarist officials but they were unsuccessful in hiring new employees ones as well. First, they welcomed only those who were officials before the Bolsheviks took power and even from among this contingent they did not accept anyone who had, for whatever reason, worked for the Reds. Such individuals were either arrested or executed. Second, even rank and file administrators who had not worked for the Bolsheviks preferred not to work as White officials because their wages in White territories were even more infrequent and lower, relative to prices and inflation, than that of officials in Bolshevik Russia.<sup>2</sup> Third, not only did the Whites not hire secular Jews, women, or non-government clerks, but they formally forbade members of political parties from working as government officials. In practice, leaders ignored this stipulation in regards to the small Monarchist and Kadet parties but they did apply it to the big Socialist Revolutionary and Menshevik parties. As a result, they excluded hundreds if not thousands of anti-Bolshevik Zemstva, co-op, and private company officials from their bureaucracy because almost all such individuals belonged to one of these two parties. (Butakov, 2000: 137–40; Smirnova and Medvedev, 2002: 102–78).

The Bolsheviks destroyed the independent administrators' trade unions in 1919 and, by the end of that year, were able to amalgamate their former members into the All Russian Union of Officials created from the aforementioned Union of Couriers Clerks and Guards. In September 1919 the Bolsheviks began registering ex-former middle-level and higher state officials into the group labelled "former people"—those considered anti-Bolshevik because of their pre-1917 wealth and status and thus kept under special surveillance.

In Bolshevik territories by the end of 1920 almost 38 per cent of the regime's approximately 500 000 central and local government employees were women (Trudy, 1922: no 2: 294, 301, 304; no. 3: 206).<sup>3</sup> Appointed full-time clerical personnel who were initially found within the administrative sections (*otdel upravleniie*) of Revolutionary Committees (*revkoms*), were later relocated into Soviet executive committee departments and sections (*ispolkoms*). In theory, executive committees were freely elected by soviets. In practice, where ever they could, the local commissars told the local soviets who to elect. Thereafter, executive committees reappointed themselves every three months (their formal length of tenure). As of 1920 *ispolkoms*, consisting of between three to 15 sections or departments depending on the size of the locality, averaged two to three members in villages, three to five at the county level, 12 at the district level, and 25 at the provincial level (Brovkin, 1994: 134–42; Gimpelson,

1998: 127, 132, 134–35, 142). Eighty per cent of department heads at the provincial and district levels were Bolshevik party members. Approximately 85 per cent of all local party members worked in *ispolkoms*. Ex-clerks who had worked in tsarist private and social organizations averaged 25% of *ispolkom* personnel at the provincial and district level and of these, perhaps 10 per cent were former government administrators (Vladimirskii, 1920: vol 1: 14; vol. 2: 49, 58).<sup>4</sup> Old-regime employees likely made up the majority of the departmental salaried staffs, which had almost no party members.

### **Secular Jews and Government Jobs**

Alongside women, pre-war junior clerks, doormen and janitors, secular Jews were crucial to the existence and functioning of the early Bolshevik administration. Indeed, without women and secular Jews willing to work for them the bureaucrats' strike might probably have toppled the Bolsheviks. Until 1915 the government had confined Jews to the Ukrainian, Polish, Belorussian and Baltic provinces. Though quotas (*evreiskii komplekt*), formally restricted them from entering school at the secondary and higher level, in practice the number of Jews actually enrolled was higher than the permitted quota and proportionally, of all the empire's nationalities, the Jews had the greatest number of literate and educated. Excluded from government jobs secular educated Jews were also excluded from the Bar after 1889, except by special decision of the minister of Justice, and, after 1912, from becoming apprentice lawyers. Thousands of Jewish graduates, consequently, either worked as clerks or notaries in private Jewish companies, or as non-licensed legal practitioners (*podpolnaia advokatura*) where they could become familiar with basic office and legal procedure (Nathans, 2002: 110, 272–74, 314–15). In 1915, concessions and war-time deportations, increased the number of Jews east of the front by at least 500,000. That year the government also allowed approximately 150,000 Jews to settle in central Russia alongside the Jewish craftsmen, wealthy merchants and academics who had been there since the 1860s. The government subsequently raised Jewish entry quotas for state schools—thus ensuring a substantial number of Jewish graduates would be looking for work during the first years of Bolshevik power (Altschuler, 1972–74: 12–14; Halevy, 1976). In March 1917 the Provisional Government repealed all anti-Jewish legislation and Jews became prime candidates for government jobs. Very few seem to have been hired, however.

Against this background, Lenin in 1919, like Maxim Gorky, identified literate secular Jews as the group that had played the decisive role in keeping his administration functioning. They “sabotaged the saboteurs

[striking bureaucrats]" he said. In the words of Simon Dimanshtain, to whom he confided: "Lenin ... stressed that we could take-over the government apparatus ... only thanks to this reserve of literate and more or less sober and competent new functionaries" (Lenin, 1924: 17–18). What happened in Petrograd, and probably in other cities with a sizable Jewish minority on the days following the Bolshevik seizure of power, was that just as, or even before the new rulers began advertising for administrators, hundreds of Jews began lining-up in front of Soviet and government offices hoping for jobs. In the October 27<sup>th</sup> edition of their newspaper the anti-Bolshevik Zionists expressed their disgust at the behaviour of their co-nationals whom they described as "racing" for places in the queues (Gitelman, 1972: 115–16).

Lenin did not specify if he had a particular city or region in mind, when he made the above comments concerning Jews, but presumably he was referring to the capital, western Russian towns with their recently arrived Jews, and to Ukraine's towns—the three areas where the majority of the empire's Jews lived before 1915. I know of no research on the role of secular Jews in the Bolshevik bureaucracy in Russian towns outside of Petrograd. In Kharkiv, for example, where the Bolsheviks established the capital of Soviet Ukraine after seizing power there on December 12, 1917, available figures suggest that 39 per cent of the Ministry of Labour in their first government were Ukrainians, who occupied only the lower positions. Twenty-one per cent were Russians and 34 per cent Jews. The number of Ukrainians slowly decreased as those who had decided to work subsequently withdrew because the Bolsheviks refused to use Ukrainian as the language of administration in Soviet Ukraine. (Andrusyshyn, 1995: 98). A second influx of secular Jews into the Soviet Ukrainian administration occurred after pogroms broke-out in those parts of the country that were claimed by the rival Ukrainian Directory government headed by Simon Petliura. The main sponsor of this influx was the Bund. Initially supporting the Directory alongside the left-Zionists, in March 1919 the Bund changed sides, recognized Soviet rule, and convinced the Bolsheviks that they would not be able to man their administration unless they accepted "experienced" Jewish workers into the bureaucracy en masse (Rafes, 1920: 164). Soviet figures suggest that by June 1922, of 486, 000 Soviet Ukrainian government employees, Ukrainians represented 30 percent of the total, with Russians and others (including Jews) 30% each (Babii, 1961: 101).

Some secular Jews, radicalized by their prewar marginalization and persecution, joined the Bolsheviks out of belief in their cause. Others worked for the Bolsheviks simply to survive. Ukrainian Zionists, meanwhile, were as appalled by the phenomenon of Jews in Bolshevik offices as were their Russian counterparts. They observed that, in particular, the unprincipled materialism of Jews who took jobs only to survive lent

invaluable support to the anti-Bolshevik cause because they turned previously indifferent gentiles into anti-Semites. These “helpless half-educated elements” were, in their struggle for survival, prepared to support anyone in “power who would feed them and not beat them” (Goldelman, 1921: 16, 33). In Uman, where Jews constituted almost half the population even before the war, a Jewish eyewitness reported that, “a decided majority of the commissariats and other high offices was occupied by Jews. The Jewish element in considerable proportions was installed in all possible institutions and offices [during the first Bolshevik occupation] ... the preponderance of Jews struck one forcibly.” This not only shocked the peasant who, before the war, had never seen a Jew in a position of authority and had traded with the fathers of the new commissars, but also confirmed the popular Ukrainian belief that communism was a “Jewish plot” and thus provoked pogroms (Heifetz, 1921: 297, 312, 314, 316). In a report from 1919, the Jewish Section of the Bolshevik party observed that only when they faced forced collectivization and requisitions did the peasants become anti-Jewish, stop following Jewish-Bolshevik leaders, and begin associating Jews with communism (Lenin, 1924: 59).

A Jewish doctor from Talne, near Uman, who headed the town’s Jewish Committee in 1919 provides invaluable insight into and an analysis of secular Jews in local Bolshevik administration. He writes that Ukrainian’s hatred of such people, who brought many of the Jewish ghetto’s bad traits into soviet offices, was unbounded. People accustomed to regarding Jews as pariahs, were shocked to find them at all levels of the soviet administration, including its hated secret police and food supply organs. Jewish youth who fled from villages to towns during the war and revolution occupied these official positions. By 1919 they were even more destitute than they had been before 1914, when unemployment had been disproportionately high among them. With few jobs in the local economy a Soviet office job represented their only means of survival. The doctor explained that local educated Ukrainians who were anti-Bolshevik avoided Soviet institutions, while others had no need of state employment because they already worked in non-government institutions (Bilinkis, 1998: 235–38).

Vulgar, uneducated, without vision, dazed and embittered by their suffering in the pogroms they experienced in defenseless tiny provincial towns and villages, when in front of their own eyes their family and kin died horrible deaths, their homes were destroyed, and their accumulated wealth stolen; they [young provincial Jews] entered soviet service as morally crippled individuals intent on eating their fill and rewarding themselves for their losses, [B]ut they brought with them an understandable feeling of hate and a burning desire for revenge as well as envy of coreligionists who had not suffered yet. And if the in the army, thanks to Trotsky’s energy, and vicious punishments for pillage and rape,

it was possible to establish order and discipline, in the civilian administration, that had grown colossally ..., no punishments, even shootings, could end the predation, bribery, and favouritism... .

Lots of idle Jewish youth constantly hovered around the RevKom [offices] ... drank free tea, flirted with the female clerks, [and that's why] the RevKom appeared like a Jewish institution. Even in the month before the [anti-Bolshevik] revolt when Christian commissars replaced the Jewish ones, these layabouts still hung out at the Revkom.

When Russian and Ukrainian Bolsheviks agreed on the jurisdictional autonomy of the Ukrainian SSR in November 1919, the Central Committee decision behind this compromise specifically directed all ministries to discreetly lessen the number of secular Jews they employed. Bolsheviks feared that the huge number of newly hired Jews manning their offices would compromise their regime. "Take Jews [added in marginal comments was the phrase:] (to be properly referred to as: the Jewish petty bourgeoisie) and urban dwellers in Ukraine firmly in hand," It continued, "transfer them to the front and don't allow them into the organs of power—except in tiny percentages in exceptional circumstances and under strict class control" (Iurchuk, 1976: 70–71). This stipulation was substantially revised in the "Resolution on Soviet Power in Ukraine" that the Eighth Party Congress confirmed ten days later. This published document did not mention Jews at all, and instead of referring to an almost total exclusion of "urban dwellers" from the bureaucracy, only stipulates conditions intended to prevent them from "flooding" soviet institutions. (Amiantov, 1999: 397; Vosmaia, 1961: 189). Thus, faced with an anti-Jewish backlash, Bolshevik leaders had instructed local activists to limit the recruitment of Jewish officials; probably acting on secret directives based on the November 1919 decision but excluded from the later "Resolution on Soviet Power in Ukraine." As of 1920, accordingly, the Bolsheviks allotted the majority of places in the new Executive Committees to Ukrainian peasants and gave a much smaller number of Jews than was the case earlier responsible positions (Hiefertz, 1921: 404). Whether similar restrictions were enacted in Russia is unknown.

### **Radical Nationalists in Ireland**

In the spring of 1916 in Dublin Republicans who attempted to take power by force and declare independence enjoyed little popular support and were defeated. However, the British prime minister's prompt meeting with the captured ringleaders after the fighting, followed by his speech promising immediate Home Rule (autonomy), swung Irish Catholics behind the Republican cause. Seven days of fighting, it transpired, had achieved what

decades of talking had failed to produce. The Republican's newly acquired Irish Catholic support was much reinforced by the threat of conscription, which resulted in a landslide victory for their Sinn Fein party in the 1918 parliamentary elections. Representatives, meeting in Dublin rather than taking their seats in London, created an Irish Parliament and declared independence in January 1919. Perhaps because so many Irish nationalists were bureaucrats themselves, they were aware of the importance of administration and administrators. (Garvin, 1988: 104–05). One of them, Arthur Griffith, had actually prepared a detailed organizational blueprint for independence in his book *The Resurrection of Hungary. A Parallel for Ireland* (1904). This bestseller argued that instead of working to send elected representatives to the central authority in London, Irish patriots should direct their energies toward creating a parallel civil authority in Ireland. Appropriately, Ireland's new leaders appointed Griffith to create their new bureaucracy.

After winning local elections in April 1919 the Republican government controlled almost all local councils and in September 1920 these councils formally broke their ties with London. Preoccupied with the Paris peace talks and nationalist dissatisfaction in India and Egypt, British leaders initially ignored the Irish, thinking the Republican government would collapse of its own incompetence. London finally did declare the Republic illegal in September 1919 and imposed martial law. But Prime Minister Lloyd George refused to permit the introduction of a system of identification cards and passports, which meant that the Irish could come and go as they wished. Nationalist government couriers and leaders thus rode their bicycles around Dublin and went about their business in broad daylight. Republicans intimidated loyalist administrative personnel, but made it known that they assassinated only political personnel. Their primary target was the 9000 strong Royal Irish Constabulary—which until 1920 was composed entirely of Irishmen. In the countryside there were instances of landlords forced to sell land and the IRA arresting local radical labourers. Overall, however, peasants were passive more as a result of the pre-war land reform and the workings of the new government's scrupulously fair Land Commission than because of a recently acquired sense of nationality. Not faced with radical rural upheaval, Republican leaders could direct their cadres and attention to fighting the British and running a parallel administrative bureaucracy which, by and large, the population accepted (Fitzpatrick, 1987; Jeffery, 1994; McBride, 1991: 21–22, 190, 262, 276, 287, 302–09; McColgen, 1983: 70). According to one story, two prisoners held in custody by Republican police on a remote island refused to be rescued by British police on the grounds that they were not prisoners of Great Britain but the Irish Republic (Macardle, 1965: 349–50).

### **Catholic Irish and Government Jobs**

Catholics could work for the British government from 1829 onwards but only after 1870 were they allowed to enter the domestic civil service. This reform did not please those who imagined that there were more officials than citizens in Ireland at the turn of the century. They bemoaned the proliferation of people who saw the secure small salary of the minor official as life's best prize.

Some day a man ... will point out that the rigorous exclusion from official appointments is the best thing that could possibly happen to any section of the community. Those who have no hope, absolutely no hope at all, ... of getting official positions will be obliged to turn to and work at something useful... Having secured wealth and developed character, they will rule the rest of the country and reduce the official class to ... their proper position, making them hewers of wood and drawers of water.

While recognizing the importance of administration, the author noted that men with timid office souls did not make nations great. "The more general the desire for office becomes, the smaller is the chance of national glory" (Birmingham, 1913: 25, 27). Nationalists, on the one hand, hoped that educated Irish Catholics would "swamp" local British-Protestant dominated offices, and were quick to condemn perceived discrimination in employment. On the other hand, they thought the British educational system contributed to Irish backwardness because it was geared to producing clerks rather than technicians, and they were uneasy about the increasing numbers of educated Catholics entering the professions, including the civil service. They were simultaneously uneasy about the consequences of social mobility and deplored how the drive for "respectability" led Catholics towards English culture, norms and aspirations, and away from Irish nationalism. Respectability, as one put it, was "the root of all evil" because it was a desire that discouraged pride in Ireland (Paseta, 1999: 94–97, 119–34). Nonetheless, a well developed primary educational system and net of non-governmental nationalist organizations did produce educated Irish able to sit for government exams by the end of the century, while a Land Reform Bill passed in 1903 ensured that nationally conscious Irish peasants would be socially conservative. By 1914 almost 75 percent of the peasants owned their own land and Irish Catholics comprised 60 per cent of the island's nearly 27 000 government employees (of which 20, 000 were postal workers).

At the turn of the century nationalists claimed that loyal socially-mobile Catholics could not have both English accents and Irish autonomy (Home Rule) and were becoming "West Britons." Nonetheless, after 1880 Irish bureaucrats, like the educated in general, had reason to believe that Union with Britain and their work as administrators benefitted their

country. Because the government in London thought that Irish nationalism could be neutralized by wide-ranging reforms, the decades before the war saw important and generally beneficial measures enacted in Ireland relating to local government, land reform, education, health and welfare. Certainly there were grounds for that generation of educated Irish to be dissatisfied with their lot. In a society where the state was the biggest employer perceived discrimination and blocked mobility at work at the beginning of the century among junior government employees could reinforce existing nationalist convictions, or even incline the uncommitted to reject the empire loyalism of their fathers for modern Irish nationalism (Hutchinson, 1987: 262–79). Irish society was not divided between those who did and those who did not consider themselves Irish, however. Some nationalist Irish may have disliked “West Britons” who, despite their frustrations, remained apart from the small radical Republican separatist minority. Nonetheless, the committed of that temperament ultimately did not side with London, but with the moderate anti-republican nationalist majority who sought autonomy legally and peacefully.

### **To Work or Not to Work?**

Former Republican party leaders who became senior government officials scrupulously kept party positions and activities apart from their government functions and did not transfer party members en masse from Sinn Fein into civil administration. By 1920 they were running clandestine central ministries with 2,000 part-time and 300 paid full-time staff, parallel to the established educational, taxation, and postal systems, which Republican leaders decided to leave alone. The National Land Bank, land tribunals, courts and a bank, provided a core of alternative services to the population through to 1922, but employed too few people to be as effective as some later claimed (Hopkinson, 2002: 43–45; Laffan, 1999: 305–08, 320, 321; Mitchell, 1993). Like the peasants, the educated Irish in 1919–21 supported the state-building efforts of what three years earlier had been a despised fringe group more because of the threat of conscription than a sense of national loyalty. Nor were the majority of people prepared to break the law. It was important for Republicans, therefore, to impress all concerned that their rule would not result in violence or anarchy and could provide services with due regard to property. However, by 1920 this attempt to use effective administration to win support from a populace that, like most people everywhere, preferred “beating the system” to plotting rebellion, however, was collapsing. Historians now tell us that most of the middle and lower-level staff in British offices appear to have sympathized with the Republic but they remained at their desks and did not begin working for the new government just because it was

Irish. Few officials openly declared themselves or worked for the Republic before the legal transfer of power and by withholding their services they seriously weakened the attempt at independence. Between 1916 and 1921 no more than 400 administrators were discharged for disloyalty, while no more than 900 (three percent of the prewar total) decided to actually work for the new government before London recognized it (McBride, 1921: 218, 262, 275). How many simply did little or “worked to rule,” as opposed to actively passing on information to Republicans is unknown. By hedging their bets Irish Catholic bureaucrats apparently helped bring the official-legal administration ground to a halt. But they also helped bring the Republic’s unofficial administration to the verge of collapse by late 1920.

Although hardliners in London pursued a policy of repression, moderates had assigned top bureaucrats sympathetic with moderate Irish nationalism to Dublin to begin preparing the transfer of functions even before The Government of Ireland Act (1920), which provided for the legal transfer of the British administration to the Republican government, was passed. In addition, although the terms of the Irish Free State Act were rejected by some Republicans, they were arguably crucial in keeping bureaucrats at their desks after 1921. This document did not declare Ireland a Crown Colony, nor did it recognize the Irish Republic as an independent government born of nationalist revolution. What it did was categorize the Republican government as a temporary executive committee with de facto administrative functions for one year. Ireland got autonomy within the empire, in other words. Though galling to the Republicans, this terminology gave their government a legitimacy in the eyes of bureaucrats. In turn, the new leaders, able to rely on their bureaucrats, did not have to turn Ireland into a military dictatorship to stay in power (McColgan, 1983: 32, 100, 132–36). The new national state did not hire women as administrators. Women were an insignificant minority within the bureaucracy before and after 1922.<sup>5</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The behaviour of Irish bureaucrats between 1916 and 1922 confirms Weber’s hypothesis. One year after London recognized Ireland as a “Free State” within the empire, some 20,000 government employees who had worked for the British before and during the war began working for the Irish Republic. Less than 1000 of them, the “sticky old Irish officials with cold feet ... but jealous of their colleagues and care for their salaries,” retired or resigned (Mitchell, 1993, 203). The Irish case also tells us that during times of crisis nationally conscious persons will not necessarily support radical political nationalists simply by virtue of their shared nationality.

Almost all tsarist bureaucrats also remained at their desks after the tsar abdicated in March 1917. Bureaucrats' behaviour in Bolshevik Russia, however, neither entirely proves nor disproves Weber's hypothesis. On the one hand, contrary to his argument, after the coup old-regime bureaucrats in Petrograd did strike—even if only for as long as the Provisional Government could pay them. Furthermore, Bolshevik leaders, unlike their republican and monarchist predecessors, were willing to hire en masse from groups officially marginalized before the revolution; secular Jews, literate women and radical peasants. This was a factor Weber did not consider in his reflections. Radical peasants, it should be added, were either lower-level *zemstvo* personnel or returned veterans. With high expectations and able to do administrative tasks, peasant veterans in particular joined local Bolshevik organizations and then took over office jobs (Figes, 1989: 237–39). “Throughout the peasant world Communist regimes have been built on the fact that it is the ambition of every literate peasant son to become a clerk.” (Figes, 1996: 690). If the Bolsheviks had not been willing to hire the previously excluded, or if individuals from previously excluded groups had refused to occupy empty desks in Soviet offices, the old-regime bureaucrats' strike just might have unseated the Bolsheviks—in which case Russian events would have conclusively disproved Weber.

On the other hand, outside the Russian capital bureaucrats' opposition was apparently rare, uncoordinated and weak. Most went to work for the new Bolshevik government as Weber predicted they would. In August 1918 a survey of 25 per cent of the almost 25,000 central ministry functionaries in Bolshevik territory indicated that, except for the Foreign and Secret Police ministries and the highest positions, at least one third of all central government personnel, as many as 90 per cent of rail and finance ministry staff, and 55 per cent of higher officials in central ministries had worked under the tsar and/or Provisional Government. By social status over 50 per cent of these were bureaucrats. Fifty-nine per cent of central ministry personnel in Moscow were former tsarist officials. The survey included no question on gender (Iroshnikov, 1974: 341–435). Two thousand surviving questionnaires from Moscow and Petrograd reveal that as many as 90 per cent of former tsarist officials living there in 1919 who were forty years of age or older, were working in Soviet ministries (Smirnova, 2000: 113). As of 1926 at least 10 per cent of all central ministries staff were Jews (Halevy, 1976: 57).

## Notes

- 1 The Petrograd Duma was the first one to be dissolved by the Bolsheviks (November 16 [December 29]) and apparently only five per cent of its administrative staff was still working there by July 1918.

- 2 While prices rose thirty times during 1919 in White territories wages increased no more than five times; from roughly 300 rubles at the beginning of the year, to 1200–1500 by the end of the year.
- 3 Figures are incomplete and include rail, post, and telegraph personnel as well as 20 830 doctors, artists and teachers. In addition there was at least one million office staff in state-owned enterprises.
- 4 Twenty-eight per cent identified their pre 1917 profession as “*sluzhashchie*” (bureaucrat/administrator) but in 1919–1920 figures this term referred only to clerks in private and social organizations. The category of “state employees” identified in 1921, might also refer only to position at the time and not social status.
- 5 Correspondence with Mary E. Daly, University College Dublin, September 2002.

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