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Bureaucracy and Corruption as Anthropological Problems: A Case Study from Romania

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Introduction

Bureaucracy and corruption are two fundamental facets of modern social life. Yet despite their nearly universal presence, it is curious that neither bureaucracy nor corruption have become valid objects of anthropological research. Anthropologists have used bureaucracy as a backdrop for more detailed analyses of informal or ritual behavior. Corruption has been reduced to the level of supporting data, or reified to the point of all-purpose explanation. Development experts who once complained of "tenacity of tradition" now cite "endemic corruption" in explaining why development plans fail or why whole countries seem to be falling apart.

The lack of anthropological theorizing on bureaucracy and corruption is all the more curious because of the apparent linkage between the two phenomena. This is illustrated by the fact that the same places which furnish accounts of brazen corruption are also known for oppressive bureaucracy and red tape. It is the purpose of this paper to elaborate the linkage between bureaucracy and corruption and to apply the analysis to the countries of "actually existing socialism" (Bahro 1978). In particular, the empirical data focus on Romania, a society which possesses the organizational forms common to Eastern Europe, but which has historical conditions, developmental goals and socio-economic problems greatly resembling those of the Third World. By analyzing the interaction between formal organization and personal relations in Romania, we can help bridge the artificial gap which separates models of bureaucratic structure from the harsh realities of corrupt

It is this artificial separation that has hindered us from explaining either bureaucracy or corruption in a satisfactory fashion. Bureaucracy has commonly been discussed in terms of highly sophisticated models and deviations from norms, while corruption has been trivialized to the level of anecdote or reified as a residual explanation when nothing else seemed to work. Entire societies were thus interpreted as either "bureaucratized" or "corrupt", as "loosely structured" (Embree 1950) or as "sloppy systems" (Rotenberg 1977).

The tendency to form such all-encompassing characterizations is especially marked in the research on Eastern Europe, where large-scale bureaucracies coexist with instances of inefficiency and corruption. Within Eastern Europe, Romania presents an example of a developing society which appears heavily bureaucratized but which is riven with anti-bureaucratic behavior (not all of which is corrupt, of course). Under this seemingly contradictory situation, Romanian society, like the rest of Eastern Europe, manages to reproduce its basic conditions of existence. In colloquial terms, it "muddles through". This paper suggests that Romania's ability to muddle through can be explained by the specifically dialectical relationship between bureaucratic organization and the reality of corruption.

Social scientists have been all too quick to equate the presence of bureaucratic *forms* with the bureaucratization of *social relations*. They have confused a model of "bureaucratized society" with the reality of a "society with a bureaucracy." By integrating formal organization and informal relations into a single analytical framework, we can reconcile the gap between the existence of bureaucratic hierarchies and the presence of corrupt activities. It is this dialectical unity of bureaucracy and corruption which helps us to explain why societies that appear to be "falling apart" somehow seem to "muddle through". The paper begins by discussing "bureaucracy" and "corruption" as anthropological concepts. This is followed by a discussion of Romanian "bureaucrats" and the way they balance their formal and informal obligations when dealing with rural localities.

Is There an Anthropology of Bureaucracy?

The anthropological study of formal organizations has tended to center on three domains: (1) studying formal organizations as quasi-tribes or quasi-communities; (2) examining the effect of colonial administration on local-level social structures; and (3) analyzing the impact of modern development schemes on local communities. The emphasis in all three domains has been on the informal social mechanisms which presumably lie just beneath the formal, institutional "shell" of an organization. Studies of Japanese banks, community mental health centers, government agencies, insurance offices or total institutions often focus on the informal social mechanisms which

integration, social solidarity and ritual symbolism to modern institutions (see, respectively, Rohlen 1974, Schwartzman *et al.* 1978 and Schwartzman 1980, Britan 1981, Serber 1981, Goffman 1961). The organizational hierarchy is described but not questioned. The organization becomes merely a forum for what are considered more profound (or at least more interesting) social processes. Bureaucracy becomes merely a context (Handelman 1976) or a fieldwork obstacle (Serber 1981).

Analysis of the impact of colonial administration has a long tradition within British social anthropology (cf. Richards 1959). Lloyd Fallers (1955, 1965) elucidated the role conflicts imposed on local chiefs, while Gluckman extended the analysis to include white district commissioners. Yet in both cases, bureaucracy is reduced to a problem of individuals in the middle, rather than a structural problem. In Indonesia, however, Geertz (1963a, 1963b) and Wertheim (1963) analyze the interaction between Dutch and local bureaucracies on the one hand, and the pressures of national and local corruption on the other. For both Geertz and Wertheim, the lack of effective bureaucratic organization enables "primordial loyalties" to surface, leading to political corruption. Wertheim provides a listing of corruption's functional and dysfunctional aspects, but he fails to analyze the way in which bureaucracy and corruption are integrated into a single social system.

Finally, several works in applied anthropology, development studies and program evaluation have provided elegant analyses of the effect of bureaucratically administered projects on local communities. Yet few of these analyses have turned upward to study the dynamics of project administration (cf. Britan and Chibnik 1980, Sampson 1982b). For most anthropologists, bureaucracy has provided an arena for research but has rarely been the focus of research.

Corruption seems to have been as taboo a subject for anthropologists as it has been for other social scientists. Corruption provides evidence of the importance of informal ties such as patronage and friendship (Galt 1974). It can be the indicator of the "sloppiness" of a social system (Rotenberg 1977), an index of culture clash between different cultural groups (Smith 1964), or proof of underbureaucratization and weakness of state penetration (Blok 1974). Corruption's relation to bureaucracy is conceived by one anthropologist as the relation between the "official system" and the "real system" (Galt 1974). Yet in no case has corruption itself been the object of anthropological theorizing.

The traditional social science division of labor can partly explain the lack of anthropological research on bureaucracy and corruption. Formal organizations (even in their most corrupt forms) have been considered the province of sociologists, political scientists and economists. Anthropologists have dealt with the *pariah* peoples, strange customs, deviant cases, and

otherwise anomalous social groups. Anthropologists themselves seem to insist on this division of labor, such that our own cultures are transformed into something exotic; hence, Weatherford's book on the U.S. Congress is entitled *Tribes on the Hill* (1981). Similarly, a programmatic statement on anthropology and formal organization (Britan and Cohen 1980) emphasizes the need to expose the informal structure of bureaucracy.

Since most social scientists are aware of informal structures. I would suggest that the anthropological contribution to the study of bureaucracy could be more valuable: namely, in showing how bureaucratic ideology and informal organization realities fit together. Anthropologists possess both the conceptual apparatus and the methodological techniques to discover why the myth of formal organization maintains such a hold on those who work within and those who study bureaucracies. The anthropological concept of holism, the emphasis on intensive and qualitative field data, and the interest in trying to demystify seemingly sacred social hierarchies can help explain how formal organizational myths can coexist with the realities of personal networks and corruption. To do this, we must make fundamental distinctions between the typical social structures studied by anthropologists and "administrative forms of social organization" (Wallace 1971).

Concepts of Bureaucracy

Bureaucracies are distinct because they link social roles, duties and obligations with an explicit organizational objective. For this reason, bureaucracies cannot be interpreted simply as quasi-tribes or quasi-communities. The objectives of any bureaucracy are codified in an organizational charter which is much more explicit than the charter of other social groups such as clans, tribes or ethnic groups. The origin myth of a clan, for example, ordinarily explains *how* that group arose. The charter of a bureaucracy explains *why*. The purposive character of bureaucracies thus gives them an eminently arbitrary character. To make this arbitrary character somehow "natural", to legitimize the bureaucratic hierarchy and purpose, requires a considerable amount of sanctification. Unlike kin or clan groups, bureaucracies cannot use biological events such as birth or death as a basis for this sanctification; unlike community groups, bureaucracies cannot link themselves to common territories. Thus, there is a need for a bureaucratic consciousness and even a mythology to legitimate the bureaucratic structure. This is especially problematic because bureaucratic tasks can usually be performed by a wide variety of social arrangements (Wallace 1971). Indeed, most bureaucracies are enormously flexible, with constant reorganizations, consolidations, expansions and contractions. It is this flexibility that makes the inculcation of a bureaucratic ideology so important. The myth of bureaucracy lies in its presumed necessity: that bureaucratic objectives can

be achieved only by the existing hierarchical organization, by the present specificity of duties, rational administration, written records and other attributes popularized by Weber's famous essay on bureaucracy (1958).

With its teleological covenant and its mythical importance, it is no accident that bureaucracy has been viewed in a variety of conceptual, theoretical and methodological perspectives. Albrow (1970:84-105) lists seven distinct concepts of bureaucracy: Weberian rational efficiency, as inefficiency and red tape, as the rule of elites, as governmental administration, as administrative science, as formal organizations in general, and as a metaphor for society. Yet these perspectives fail to make systemic linkage between the nature of bureaucratic organization and the overall functioning of social systems. Popular notions of "how the system really works", remain incomplete without a thorough understanding of how inefficiency and corruption are reproduced within bureaucratically organized systems. How does red tape coexist with formal, rational authority? Why does corruption coexist with bureaucracy? How do the "official system" and the "real system" form part of a single social whole? Can we speak of a "corrupt society" or must we talk only of "corrupt behavior within society"? Studying the specific features of bureaucracy certainly helps to elaborate bureaucratic organization, but such a strategy tells us little of how social systems actually work. For this we need a framework which can integrate bureaucracy with its corresponding "informal structure", or what Page (1946) has called "bureaucracy's other face."

Bureaucracy's Other Face

The informal organization of bureaucracy consists of those social relations not recorded in organizational codes or official blueprints. Organizational theorists such as Page and Blau (1955, 1956) have tended to define informal organization as the parallel social relations which exist solely within the bounds of the organization. Typically, such informal structures involve ties of friendship, patron-clientage, coalitions, cliques, factions, action-sets or other types of non-corporate groups (Wolf 1966, Boissevain 1968, 1973). Yet the informal organization should also be understood to include relations which members have with the world outside: via kinship, friendship, patronage, ethnicity, community affiliation, common group identity or common interest. Hence, in addition to having an official bureaucratic role, each member of an organization is also involved in both types of informal structures; that is, the parallel structures within the organization and the connecting networks outside it.

In functional terms, the informal structure of an organization provides a channel for circumventing formally prescribed rules and procedures (Page 1946:90). Yet the existence of informal structures poses two theoretical

problems. First, why is it necessary for formal rules and procedures to be circumvented in the first place? Second, why are informal structures so effective in accomplishing these tasks? The first question can be approached in terms of the properties of formal organizations. Bureaucracies tend to have long-term goals which make them inflexible for coping with certain short-term tasks. Because informal structures are ego-centered and uncodified, they constitute a flexible means of bypassing organizational bottlenecks without threatening the legitimacy of the organization itself. In Romania, for example, a collective farm organization may ask that the members' families help with the harvest; or a village mayor may ask his brother to assist him in mobilizing villagers for a voluntary work brigade. In both cases, organizational goals can be achieved by mobilizing informal or unofficial social ties.

These two examples are also applicable to answering the question of the effectiveness of informal structures. This effectiveness is based on the moral authority of kinship, friendship and community relations. It seems that such moral authority can mobilize far more resources than any administrative authority. Hence, the informal organization can lubricate the bureaucracy, helping it to achieve goals more efficiently while leaving intact the legitimacy and structure of the formal organization.

From Informal Structure to Corruption

So far I have been discussing informal structure as a benign supplement to the formal, rational organization. However, organizational goals may also be achieved by methods which are not just informal, but illegal, illegitimate or improper. For example, factory managers in the Soviet Union often resort to off-the-record pay-offs and unofficial "expediters" to secure scarce supplies (Berliner 1957, Grossman 1977). Such procedures are technically corrupt, but are overlooked as long as the factory achieves its plan, even when the managers extract a small portion of the factory's profit as personal rewards. It is the extent of these rewards that defines the borderline between benign informal organization and corruption.

Informal structure thus poses a complex problem: as a supplement to bureaucratic resources, it can help the organization to achieve its objectives. At the same time, the flexibility of informal ties may operate so as to impinge on bureaucratic roles and subvert organizational goals. From being a benign supplement, informal structure can become the core of the organization. Primary-group strategies will be pursued at the expense of organizational objectives. It is this transition – from functional supplement to central core – that denotes corruption. To illustrate with the above-cited examples: the Romanian family members who are supposed to help harvest the collective farm's crops may instead decide to *pillage* crops to feed their

own livestock. The mayor's brother, instead of helping to mobilize fellow villagers, may use his position to sell influence. And in the Soviet factory, the "family circle" of managers may decide to increase their rewards to the extent that the factory fails to achieve its plan. Corruption occurs when individuals or groups start to exploit formal organizations instead of simply working for them. Organizations are transformed from places of work to resource banks whereby individuals and informal groups pursue their own goals.

It should be emphasized that informal organization in itself is not the same as corruption. Informal structures are simply the means by which individuals and groups can pursue their own goals *alongside* those of the organization. It is only when these personal goals are pursued *at the organization's expense* that informal organization becomes corruption. The distinction between private and public goals is implicit in Nye's widely-cited definition of corruption:

"Corruption is behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains: or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. This includes such behavior as bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgement of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses)." (Nye 1967; reprinted in Heidenheimer 1970:566-67 and Scott 1972:4).

Using Nye's definition and the distinction between informal structure and corrupt behavior, we can distinguish four levels of corruption:

1. *corrupt procedures* – when informal means of social action, instead of being used alongside administrative procedures, are used instead of them. The use of such procedures may prevent organizational goals from being achieved, or cause them to be achieved in a manner which is regarded as incorrect, improper or illegal.

2. *corrupt individuals* – persons whose behavior elevates personal goals or the goals of their primary group above the goals of the organization with which they are affiliated.

3. *corrupt organizations* – formal organizations which fail to achieve their goals because of corrupt individuals and procedures. Such organizations have become resource banks for their constituent members. (Note that organizations may fail to achieve their goals because of "inefficiency", but inefficiency is not always caused by corruption).

4. *corrupt systems* – social systems whose leading formal organizations have become dominated by corrupt procedures and the goals of primary

groups; systems whose formal organizations function principally as resources for realizing personal or group strategies.

By conceiving of corruption in terms of scale, it can be seen that statements such as, "Thailand is a corrupt society" need to be made more precise. In reality, corrupt systems are extremely unstable, since they reflect an imbalance between the formal and informal structures. Instead of condemning whole societies for being corrupt, it is more productive to determine how corrupt individuals, procedures and organizations help systems to endure despite their systematic contradictions.

This strategy is especially necessary in view of prevailing explanations for corruption which tend to view it as complementary or mutually exclusive with bureaucracy, such that the absence of one implies the presence of the other. Galt's analysis of patronage in Italy speaks of "parallel systems" of formal rules and informal action. Anton Blok (1974:228) attributes mafia and corruption in Sicily to the "early phases of state formation", while Myrdal (1968:950) sees corruption in India as the consequence of a "soft state" and "low level of social discipline". These kinds of explanations rely on an "underbureaucratization thesis"; corruption fills in gaps left open by the "weakness" or "softness" of formal organization. Following this logic, stronger states and more bureaucracy would presumably eliminate corruption.

In opposition to the underbureaucratization explanation, I would suggest that it is bureaucratization which itself creates the conditions for corruption. It is only after state bureaucracy begins to dominate aspects of social life previously governed by personal or market ties that the opposition between "private-regarding" and "public-regarding" criteria can emerge. It is this opposition which forms the basis of Nye's definition of corruption. Hence, the relationship between bureaucracy and corruption is not complementary but dialectical. This dialectical relationship appears even while bureaucracy itself undergoes internal changes, the most pertinent of which is called "debureaucratization".

Bureaucratization, Debureaucratization and Corruption

Since Weber's seminal essay on bureaucracy (1958), bureaucratization has been regarded as an inevitable concomitant to modern society (cf. Eisenstadt 1965). The evidence for "the bureaucratization of the world" (Jacoby 1973) is undeniable: personal relations and free market transactions have given way to formalization, regimentation, hierarchy, task specificity, administrative procedure, rational goals, written records and the anonymity of "the case". Bureaucratic organizations have penetrated widely differing cultural settings. (Crozier [1964:227-37] provides a quasi-anthropological comparison of French, Soviet and American bureaucracies.) Bureaucra-

tization has selected for particular personality types (Merton 1940) and has influenced our cognitive processes (Berger, Berger and Kellner 1973:44-61). A superb example of the penetration of "bureaucratic consciousness" (*ibid.*:49) is the middle-class family whose members communicate to each other via handwritten messages on a family bulletin board, much like a small, multi-purpose organization.

Yet not all social change has been in the direction of bureaucratization and formalization. Nonbureaucratic manifestations arise even in the most administered societies (e.g., prisons). Official regulations, formal roles and bureaucratic hierarchies can break down due to internal contradictions, external pressures or unusual working conditions. Katz and Eisenstadt (1960) have referred to such phenomena as "debureaucratization", i.e., "the impinging of nonbureaucratic roles on the specific bureaucratic role in question" (p. 129). In their study of the Israeli welfare bureaucracy, Katz and Eisenstadt found

"officials relating to their clients personally,... not confining themselves to their officially relevant roles, ... trying to get their job done not so much by means of the power and symbols of office, but on the basis of exchange of services, persuasion or personal charisma" (1960:114).

Debureaucratization is not corruption, for it can occur at the same time as organizational goals are being achieved. However, debureaucratization may provide the social context whereby individuals rethink their obligations to the organization and whereby corrupt procedures can emerge. Corruption usually entails some form of debureaucratization, but not all debureaucratization is corruption.

Like informal relations, debureaucratization is also a two-edged sword. Insofar as it transforms anonymous bureaucratic "cases" into unique individual persons, debureaucratization could be said to "humanize" the bureaucracy. Yet it is precisely this humanizing individuality that opens the door to corrupt procedures, stimulates individual bureaucrats to rethink their allegiances to the organization, causes organizations to degenerate into resource banks, and pushes social systems toward decay. Debureaucratization is the process whereby bureaucratic relationships become personalized, but it is with personalization that the potential for corruption also emerges.

The dual character of informal relations is also seen in the literature on the causes and functions of corruption. In the introduction to his book of readings, Heidenheimer (1970:4-6) classifies definitions of corruption into three categories: (1) those emphasizing deviations from the norms of public office (Nye 1967), (2) market-centered definitions in which administrative services are transformed into "black-market bureaucracy" (Tilman 1968) and (3) definitions stressing corruption as a violation of accepted community

standards or public interest (Friedrich 1966, Rogow and Lasswell 1963:132-34). When these normative conceptions are applied to non-Western societies, they risk becoming moral condemnations (Wraith and Simkins 1963, Leys 1965). Alternatively, corruption may be seen as a social pathology, as a symptom of Third World instability and its "lack of social discipline" (Myrdal 1968:937-57), or as a cynical tactic by which undeserving regimes stay in power by manipulating a system of spoils (Waterbury 1973). Other scholars have tried to emphasize the positive functions of corruption in easing the transition to modernity: corruption presumably encourages capital formation and entrepreneurship, diminishes red tape, mitigates ethnic or class conflicts, integrates pariah groups into society, and gives more people a stake in the system (cf. Leff 1964, Bayley 1966, Van Roy 1970, Scott 1972, Schwartz 1979; for critiques of the functional approach, see Myrdal 1968:937-40 and Waturbury 1973). From this perspective, behavior which appears inefficient or corrupt (e.g. hiring kinsmen) may be both moral and effective under Third World conditions. A similar sensitivity toward social context emerges in the historical studies of corruption (Wertheim 1963, Smith 1964, Scott 1972:25-56, Schuller 1983), such that one man's corruption is another's morality. M. G. Smith's discussion of corruption in West Africa is a typical example: "What Britons saw as corrupt and Hausa as oppressive, Fulani might have regarded as both necessary and traditional" (1964:194).

The ambivalence about the causes and functions of corruption is especially visible in analyses of Eastern European states, for these societies seem to be pervaded by both oppressive bureaucracy and endemic corruption.

Bureaucracy and Corruption in Eastern Europe

Although much anthropological research has been carried out in Eastern Europe over the past 15 years (Halpern and Kideckel 1983), very few studies have dealt with the nature of socialist bureaucracy or even the impact of formal organizations on community social life (cf. Kideckel 1977, 1979, 1982; Cole 1980, 1982; Sampson 1980, 1982a). The lack of anthropological research on socialist bureaucracy means that we must rely on top-down studies by sociologists and political scientists, most of which tend to focus on formal organizations.

The social science study of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has come a long way from the "totalitarian" models of the 1950's. Convergence theory, interest groups, institutional pluralism, the increasing integration of state and society, corporatism, and bureaucratization have all been employed as explanatory frameworks in discussing the institutionalization of power in the countries of actually existing socialism (cf. Johnson 1970, Hough 1977, Tavel 1979, 1982).

In all these studies, the bureaucratization of these societies is taken at face value, as if the *presence* of large-scale Leninist organizations is proof that, socialist societies actually *function* bureaucratically. The dominance of "the bureaucracy" – or in some cases "the bureaucracies" – is a basic premise not only among mainstream Western Sovietologists (Lane 1976, Hough 1977, Rigby 1977) but also among Marxist critics of Eastern Europe, dissident East Europeans and even East European "official" Marxists (cf. Trotsky 1940, Hegedus 1970, Arato 1978, Bahro 1978, Castoriadis 1979, Konrad and Szelenyi 1979, Hirschowicz 1980, Schaff 1982). Maria Hirschowicz's remarks on "the sovereign bureaucracy" in Eastern Europe would thus be acceptable to all these research traditions:

"Work and leisure, mass media and research, accommodation and urban planning, travel abroad and week-end trips, participation in public ceremonies and educational opportunities – all these aspects of life are directed in one way or another by the state; i.e., they are controlled by officials and functionaries and are subject to plans, orders, rules and regulations. The impact of bureaucratic administration is particularly strong, of course, in the processes of work since all productive activities of the nationalized economy are integrated into the centralized system of command" (Hirschowicz 1980:134).

Yet alongside this ostensibly corporatist bureaucratic facade there exists throughout Eastern Europe unmistakable evidence of personalistic, anti-bureaucratic forms of social organization. Soviet industrial organization is characterized not so much by blind authority and iron discipline as by particularism, improvisation, semi-legal procedures and informal "family circles" of managers (Berliner 1957, Hough 1969). The daily activities of Polish and Romanian planners are similarly marked by oscillations between bureaucratic procedure and informal behavior (Hirschowicz 1980:127-170; Sampson 1980, 1982b). Writing within the totalitarian paradigm, Bauer, Inkeles and Kluckhohn (1956:82-85) emphasize the contrasts between rigidity and flexibility in Soviet Society. Merle Fainsod's extraordinary analysis of the Smolensk Party archives (1958) also shows a local bureaucracy continually plagued by extra-bureaucratic forces, corrupt party functionaries, recalcitrant peasants, crime, deviance and gross economic inefficiency. Studies of the so-called "second economy" and abundant anecdotal evidence of bureaucratic dysfunctions and corrupt networks all indicate that "getting things done" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe involves much more than the use of official, administrative channels (cf. Bauer, Inkeles and Kluckhohn 1956:74-82, Inkeles and Bauer 1959, Brokhin 1975, Smith 1976, Grossman 1977, Kenedi 1981, O'Hearn 1982, Simis 1982, Sampson 1983). The paradox of Eastern Europe is this remarkable coexistence of rigid, inflexible, hierarchical structures with flexible, personalistic social relations.

Much of this "flexibility" could fall under the rubric of "corruption". Personal linkages and informal networks are not just functioning as benign supplements to official procedures but actually helping to subvert or prevent the fulfillment of administrative objectives. Both empirical realities and ideological viewpoints have thus tended to generate quite contradictory analyses of corruption in Eastern Europe. Corruption is seen as one indicator of the system's utter decadence (Simis 1982), as a symbol of protest against the alienating bureaucracy (Schapiro 1983), as a product of bureaucratic misinformation and inefficiency (Hirschowicz 1980) and as a functional component which maintains the official system in tact (Schwartz 1979). Simis concludes his graphic account of small- and large-scale corruption in the USSR by insisting on the absolute necessity of corruption for Soviet socialism. Hence, "Soviet society will never rid itself of corruption as long as it remains Soviet. It is as simple as that" (Simis 1982:211).

It appears that the bureaucratic structures of socialist countries persist both because of and in spite of corruption. Eliminating corrupt behavior in Eastern Europe – insofar as it could be accomplished at all – would thus be both helpful and harmful to these systems. This ambivalence is especially visible in the following analysis of bureaucracy and corruption in Romania.

Bureaucracy and Corruption in Romania: the "Official" Viewpoint

Contemporary Romanian social science is replete with studies of management, organization and worker motivation, yet nowhere in this literature does one find the existence of bureaucracy within Romanian society, not among the vast economic organizations, nor among the state government, nor in the centralized Party apparatus. Romania has no bureaucracy, only "administration". There are no bureaucrats, only "leadership cadres" and "state functionaries".

In official use, "bureaucracy" (*birocratie*) is an epithet denoting the social pathology called "bureaucratism" (*birocratismul*). According to Romanian Party Secretary Nicolae Ceausescu, bureaucratism involves "nurturing a real worship for all sorts of orders, instructions and circular letters, ... neglecting on-the-spot work with the people" (1982:592). The Romanian concept of bureaucracy is much the same as the popular view of inefficiency and red tape. Bureaucracy is neither a political threat nor a social science problem but an administrative illness, in the same category as other such illness like "indiscipline", "careerism", "egotism", "formalism" and "excessive centralism". Bureaucratism can be "cured" by ideological exhortations to improve discipline, by organizational streamlining and by "improving cadre quality", i.e., replacing the timid paper-pusher with the enthusiastic party activist. Since bureaucracy is not at all problematic, Romanian social scientists and managers have no hesitation about borrowing Western

"bureaucratic theories" of management, administration and organization. These are considered techniques for improving the scientific management of Romanian socialist society.

Romania's lack of a theory of bureaucracy is replicated when dealing with the existence of corruption. Corruption falls into the same pathological syndrome as bureaucratism. The mass media readily reveal instances of bribery, nepotism, embezzlement, misuse of authority and failure by local party organs to crack down on violators of the public trust. Righteous attacks are made on corrupt individuals who put their "personal interest" ahead of the "general interest". Most of the culprits are low-level functionaries, brigade foremen, and warehousemen, with only a rare case of high level officials. As individual corruption, these are simply "abuses" or "deviations". The periodic accounts of high officials who extort payments or receive large bribes (*mita*) have never led to a discussion of organizational or system corruption in the mass media or in social science publications. The Romanian word *corrupție* is thus never employed. The "abuses" and "deviations" are "explained" by invoking aphorisms such as, "There is no forest without dead wood."

Newspaper accounts, party officials and social scientists tend to explain the presence of these "deviations" in terms of "retrograde mentalities": legacies from the Ottoman empire, the underside of a "Balkan mentality" or personal egotism. Romanians particularly emphasize the Ottoman-legacy theory as part of the popular "folklore of corruption" (Myrdal 1968:940). Indeed, Romanian words for petty bribe (*ciubuc*) and gratuity (*bacăș*) are of Turkish origin. Since corruption is considered to be an individual problem, the same methods used to combat bureaucratism can also be suitable in anti-corruption campaigns: ideological moral exhortations, more vigilance and strict punishment of offenders.

Coping with the Bureaucracy in Romania

For most Romanians, the notion of an efficient, Weberian type bureaucracy seems to be a contradiction in terms. For example, a Romanian emigree living in Zurich insisted to me that "there was no bureaucracy in Switzerland", whereas Romania was oppressively bureaucratic, which forced him to use personal relations to achieve even the most mundane tasks.

The linkage between formal and informal organization is evidenced by the well-known joke about the initials "PCR". Officially, PCR stands for *Partidul Comunist Roman*, yet folk humor renders PCR as the abbreviation for "pull, acquaintances and connections" (*pile, cunoștiințe și relații*), which are the foundations of corrupt behavior. (The word *pile* actually means "file", as in filing one's way out of jail.). Most Romanians insist that although one cannot dismiss the first PCR, it is through the second PCR that

one gets things done. Analyses of "familism" even within the hierarchical Party organization are further evidence of the role of "pull", acquaintances and connections (cf. Grossman 1977, Jowitt 1978, Chiro 1980, Simis 1982).

The importance of personal relations is linked not only with traditions of peasant life in Romania, but to the public's general lack of confidence in existing formal organizations to help them solve their personal problems. For example, most parents will try to obtain private tutors for their children because the school system is considered inadequate for preparing them for the highly competitive entrance examinations. A personal baby-sitter, either a grandmother or an old woman, is always preferred over Romanian day-care institutions, while quality medical care exists only if one has a personal doctor who can be cultivated with periodic gifts, visits and offers of godparenthood. Doctors are particularly important as brokers to other important persons and as sources of reliable information about manipulating the system.

Romanians' preference for connections, brokers and patrons does not in itself constitute corruption. It becomes corruption only when personal networks influence bureaucratic actions which would turn out otherwise. Corruption is not when the doctor puts in a good word for his god-child so that he can gain entry into an academic high school, but when the doctor intervenes successfully after the child has been denied entrance. The important point is that informal ties and corruption remain important *options* to bureaucratic procedures and in some cases are preferred options. That is, people will not turn to personal ties after they have run up against a bureaucratic wall, but will assume that personal relations are necessary in the first place.

This is indicated in numerous verbal expressions of Romanian daily life. For example, discussions over bureaucratic bottlenecks, especially outright rejections, usually include an optimistic "We shall see" (*Vedem noi*) or "We shall find a solution" (*Gasim noi o soluție*). Personal connections appear to be extremely efficient when compared to bureaucratic channels, yet considerable energy goes into locating and maintaining the wide networks of acquaintances, or towards finding the right connection (*pile*). One friend can also pass along his connection to another, i.e., to "make a connection" (*fac relații*), or tell his friend of a kinsmen or acquaintance (*cunoștiință*) at a certain bureau. Romanians tend to stratify individuals according to their abilities to "find solutions" or "get by" in the system (the verb *a descurca*). Such individuals are not only "clever" (*descept*) but are admired for their ability to maneuver through the bureaucratic maze (*descurcări*).

The individual who is *descurcări* cultivates a wide and varied network of kin, friends, acquaintances, patrons and clients. Like other Romanians, the individual who is *descurcări* has numerous social "obligations" (*obligații*)

toward kin, friends and patrons. Yet a wide network of obligations also enables the *descurcări* individual to make moral claims on others. By combining strategic gift-giving and cash payments, by cultivating patrons, collecting obligations from friends and clients, and by skillfully employing his connections, the *descurcări* individual can be enormously successful in realizing personal, financial or career ambitions.

In a society of ubiquitous shortages and interminable red tape, the *descurcări* provide evidence that everything is available, that there is always a short cut; indeed, that in Romania nothing is impossible. Numerous stories recount the "amazing feats" which can be accomplished by such clever people and their personal networks: scarce consumer goods obtained, tourist passports to the West procured, entrance into "closed" jobs, schools or towns, and bureaucratic doors miraculously opened when they appeared to be closed.

The power of these "success stories" is so strong that most Romanians will attribute the failure to obtain a given item or service not to the inefficiency or injustice of the bureaucracy but to the inadequacy of the individual. He just was not "clever" enough to "find a solution"; he did not have the right "connection"; he did not know how to give a gift or where to place his cash. The last criticism is directed particularly against rural folk, who often try to establish personal relations or give bribes to people who are without the power to expedite their requests.

Payments, gifts and the ability to influence bureaucratic procedures or obtain scarce goods involve willing parties outside the organization and willing officials within it. Romanian society is pervaded by large and complex organizational frameworks, such that even the lowliest functionaries have control over some resource or access to resources (the obvious example being the gatekeeper (*portar*) who stands at the entrance to every major factory or office). Every member of an organization stands as a client to those above him, as a patron to those below him and as a broker connecting individuals in the organizational network to those seeking the organization's resources. It is this linkage which provides the protective shield for low-level bribes or high-level graft. One may thus conceive of the Romanian bureaucracy (or bureaucracies) as overlapping structures composed of (1) hierarchical administrative offices giving differential access to resources and information; (2) vertical chains of patron-client relations which distribute access to these resources and information in a non-bureaucratic fashion (i.e., voluntarily rather than administratively); and (3) horizontal networks of connections, kin, and friends which trade services and information within and outside the organization. The cross-cutting of personal and bureaucratic relations means that the larger the bureaucracy, the more possibility exists for personal linkages to develop. These personal links can breed large-scale

corruption by subverting administrative authority.

Romania, like other socialist countries, is particularly susceptible to corruption because its public sector includes not only social services but the production and distribution of most consumer goods as well. Romania's steel factories, gasoline stations, grocery stores and auto-repair shops are owned, operated, managed and monitored by state functionaries. Most supplies and raw materials are allocated administratively from central state warehouses. Most consumer goods are in inadequate supply, causing lines and periodic shortages. Certain commodities are rationed. All these conditions not only provide breathing space for personal relations but actually nurture these relations.

The fact that socialist states like Romania have bureaucratized *material* production and distribution of consumer goods has implications for the extent of corruption. Unlike normal public services by bureaucrats, material goods can be passed on continuously and anonymously. That the public sector in Romania is so large and that it contains these anonymous material goods means that more people can partake of the personal networks necessary for corruption. There is greater likelihood that corrupt individuals and procedures will lead to corrupt organizations and system-threatening corrupt activities.

In addition to the extent of the public sector, there are other factors which make Romania especially prone to corruption. First, the citizenry (and especially the peasants) have historically viewed the state bureaucracy as either foreign or parasitic, its procedures as hopelessly complicated or capricious, and state/party functionaries as opportunists more than public servants. Second, the economy has an acute shortage of consumer goods and services while there exists a surplus of cash among the population. Third, the bureaucracy's monopoly of resources precludes alternative forms of personal aggrandizement such as entrepreneurship. Fourth, personal networks are seen as both preferable and obligatory means of obtaining scarce resources of bureaucratic services. These factors tend to make it easier to transform bureaucratically controlled resources into either black-marketable commodities or into objects of personal reciprocity.

Nevertheless, there are forces which tend to keep corruption in check, and which tend to distinguish East European corruption from the more free-wheeling corruption one finds in the Third World. Socialist bureaucracies tend to control enough resources so that they can be re-channelled into areas in which system crisis has built up. Limitations on luxury goods in Romania and on private property and spending also put real limits on the amount of wealth a corrupt official could consume or even spend. Social and spatial mobility among ordinary citizens and state functionaries tend to keep personal networks fluctuating so that they are not always that effective. Most

important is the fact that self-interested individuals will avoid preying too much on their organizations, lest they deprive themselves of necessary resources. Even though Romanian corruption may be ubiquitous, the individual corrupt acts remain on a small, human scale. As individual acts, they tend to preserve the legitimacy of the various bureaucracies so that any question as to their fundamental restructuring does not arise. It is the symbiosis between formal organization and the small-scale corruption brought about by personal relations which keeps Romania "muddling through".

The dialectical relationship between bureaucracy and corruption will now be illustrated with two brief case studies from Romania, one dealing with the planning process, the second with the activities of village elites. It will be seen that what could be interpreted as cases of societal corruption are in fact only the use of informal social ties at a much lower level. Societies like Romania can tolerate an enormous amount of such low-level corruption without breaking down. What appears to be a corrupt society should be more aptly designated a "society with corruption."

Bureaucracy and Corruption in Romania: Case Studies

1. The Planning Process

Romania's development efforts include the phasing out of hundreds of "irrational" villages and the conversion of 300 selected localities into small towns. Since most rural investment will be concentrated in these 300 communities, there arises an understandable competition among villages to be designated as "a future new town" (for more details on Romanian settlement planning see Sampson 1980, 1982a). The official criteria for selecting future towns include geographic, demographic economic and social indices which are partly quantitative and partly subjective. County planners judge whether a locality has "central" geographic placement, a "healthy" demographic profile or "significant" potential for economic development. Planners evaluate these criteria in terms of their own notions of "rational" and "irrational" settlements, but they must also act in accordance with national priorities and competing interest groups (Sampson 1982b). The complexity and vagueness of the official criteria thus make the selection of many new towns somewhat anomalous (Turnock 1982). One can hypothesize that a certain number of subjective factors and outside influence cause certain localities to be selected over others. It is a type of corruption hardly unknown in the West.

This competition for state resources was clearly present in Romania's Brasov County during the mid 1970's, where 7 new towns were to be selected from 150 villages. In one case, the selection of village "J." gave rise to informal protests and complaints from residents in the neighboring village of "M". Those in M. rightly feared they would lose certain retail and trans-

port services to J. The protests seem to have gone unheeded by county officials until the chance assignment of a new staff member in the County Planning Office. This individual happened to have been born in M., and in a few months M. replaced J. as the selected locality. In objective terms, the change was due to M.'s geographic location superceding J.'s "development potential", but the reversal of priorities was more likely caused by the fact that a county planner's personal relations and local patriotism led to a manipulation of bureaucratic procedures.

In this case, corrupt behavior occurs because "private-regarding criteria" (to use Nye's phrase) are given priority over bureaucratic criteria and public duties. Yet the corruption of bureaucratic procedures could not have occurred if the original decision to urbanize J. had not been grounded in vague bureaucratic criteria in the first place. The formal organizational structure and the subjectivity of the planners' selection criteria ("healthy", "significant", "rational", etc.) left the possibility open to exercise the option of corruption. This option was taken by concerned citizens of village M., since they feared a stagnation or decline in their living standards if they did not receive "new town" status. Villagers thus personalized the decision-making process by capitalizing on the planner's ties to his home community.

It should be clear that this kind of corruption is certainly not threatening to the planning bureaucracy. Communities like M. seek only to manipulate the planning bureaucracy because this is the only way in which they can gain access to state resources. Corruption in the selection of new towns becomes a way of influencing the allocation of these resources. By manipulating the imprecise criteria of new town selection, what appears to be "sloppy administration" or "corruption" is simply "politics".

2. Local bureaucrats in Romanian villages

Conflicts between bureaucratic duties and personal obligations are especially acute for those elites who work in Romania's rural communes (as the unit of rural administration, each commune contains from 1-5 villages with total populations of 4000-8000; local elites may live in any of the component villages). The mayors (who are also party first secretaries), vice-mayors, party secretaries, collective farm chairmen and consumers' cooperative presidents are the final links in Romania's administrative chain, but they are not faceless bureaucrats or clerks. Unlike higher level state and party functionaries, rural elites do not deal with an anonymous public but with fellow citizens with whom they live and work. Even those elites sent in from outside are soon compelled to relinquish single-stranded administrative ties for multiplex ties combining workplace, neighborhood, friendship and sometimes kinship.

The preoccupation with formal organizations at the regional and national

levels of Romanian society has led scholars to see the village as a microcosm of a highly bureaucratized society. Yet the village party organization, the people's council, the mass organizations and the economic units function differently in the rural setting. Weberian features such as rank order, task specificity, universalistic recruitment/promotion criteria, written guidelines, automatic career advancement and official secrets apply only rarely at the village level. For the local elites who head these organizations, ranks are often confused, tasks vague or overlapping, anonymous criteria can become personalistic, written guidelines useless, careers may not necessarily advance, and official secrets are difficult to maintain under the conditions of face-to-face community life. Local elites are in fact compelled to relate to their "clients" in a nonbureaucratic manner if they are to carry out their tasks. It is the intensity of these personal relations and the tendency toward debureaucratization in local political life that lay the groundwork for corruption in Romania.

To the conditions of rural social life must be added the specific party demands on local elites. Local elites are required to spread the party program, educate the population in the socialist spirit, mobilize villagers to achieve state development goals and monitor their reactions. To achieve these tasks, they are required to immerse themselves in community life. As Romanian President Ceausescu has stated, "there is no dimension of life which is not of interest to the party" (1977:518).

In executing party policy, local elites are advocates of what is called "the general interest". However, elites reside in communities where interests of a more specific character must also be met – interests of neighborhoods, kin groups, households, social classes and individuals. Achieving state goals will be impossible for the elite if he or she does not operate on personalized terms with these specific interest groups. This may require the elite to keep a distance from the bureaucratic organization of which he or she is a part. Interpreting and applying certain regulations with a degree of flexibility may lead their superiors to accuse them of "indiscipline" or "formalism" (the latter meaning issuing directives without seeing they are followed up).

Such flexibility and "indiscipline" may help local elites to achieve the organization's long term goals, but it can also lead to corruption. Certain leaders may set their own or their primary group's (kin, household, neighborhood, village) interests ahead of those of the state. Bureaucratic procedures may be violated, or local organizations turned into resource banks for their members. Specific interests, instead of being pursued alongside those of the state, may be pursued at state expense. Romania should not be thought of as a "corrupt society", but it is a society where personal goals may be achieved at the expense of organizational goals. In this sense, it is a "society with corruption". The local elites can be the pivot by which

the healthy use of informal relations is turned into the subversion of organizational goals which denotes corruption.

Romanian rural cadres have not always been purely locally based. In the early years after the war, when the Romanian Communist Party was particularly weak in the countryside, rural cadres were often sent in from other districts or from nearby towns. Native born leaders were either politically unreliable or simply unwilling to antagonize fellow villagers in the pursuit of party policy (e.g. imposed quotas and forced collectivization). With the consolidation of Communist power, the drive toward economic development and the training of thousands of party and state activists, locally born cadres have come to replace anonymous city-dwellers in the villages. Pure coercion has given way to more sophisticated programs of mobilizing the population, self-sufficiency campaigns, popular participation in certain areas, and even competing candidates for election to local offices. Rural elites now have a higher degree of legitimacy in their posts, but they are also subject to village moral sanctions in a way they were not subject to them previously.

Rural elites are neither a "new class" (Djilas 1957) nor a privileged caste. Their salaries are moderate, their privileges limited, their responsibilities wide, and their chances of enriching themselves in office minimal. Living and working among their constituents, they are constantly "on display". Elites who would solicit large bribes, who trample on community sentiment, or who misuse their authority run the risk of losing their posts. Yet it should be emphasized that they can lose their posts not because they violate abstract laws but because they alienate the local population. For example, community morality sees nothing wrong with a peasant given a "gift" to the local mayor, but it can be ruthless if the mayor solicits a large *cash* bribe. The existence of these community moral sanctions makes a local elite's job much less secure than that of a career bureaucrat.

The lack of a bureaucratic orientation also appears in the local elites' work habits. Unpublished sociological studies and field observations in several villages show rural elites working a normal 10 hour day, six days per week. Frequently there are Sunday work brigades, evening cultural activities and numerous meetings in the village or at the nearby town. According to these surveys, local mayors spend more than two-thirds of their work time outside the office, visiting economic units, making personal calls to local citizens, and traveling between the component villages of their communes. One mayor spends each morning on the local village square as peasants go about their business or workers wait for commuter buses. In this way, he can "resolve their problems on the spot". Most local elites prefer "outside" work and complain of the "bureaucracy" of their jobs. The con-

tinuous requirement to fill out statistical profiles and report to central organs is seen as inhibiting them from fulfilling their tasks as party activists, state administrators or as chairmen of collective farms or consumer cooperatives.

In addition to their formal tasks, local elites' social position and moral authority also give them informal tasks such as helping an enterprise to run more effectively, helping errant youth find local employment, or counseling married couples and resolving family feuds. As neighbors, kinsmen, friends and moral examples to others in the community (and as party activists) local elites cannot (and should not) be insulated from their constituents.

At the end point of the state bureaucracy and as center of the community, elites can manipulate both types of structures to attain and hold onto their legitimacy. A "good leader" is able to allocate state resources in return for citizen contributions of labor, agricultural produce or political support. The "weak leader" is unable to deal with the inherent conflicts between state demands and local household strategies; he may alienate his constituents by pressing too hard, or provoke his superiors by succumbing to local interests ("indiscipline"). Finally, the "corrupt leader" manipulates local and state resources so as to actively inhibit the achievement of party or state objectives; or he achieves these by means which his superiors regard as unacceptable.

Local corruption may be defined differently according to whether it is the administrative apparatus or the community which does the judging. For example, a local leader who treats fellow villagers arrogantly violates community standards of equality and politeness, even though he achieves "results" for the state. Such individuals may be denounced for reasons which superiors find to be unjust. Alternatively, the local leader who via nepotism or favoritism promotes the interests of his own social group may be violating the code of bureaucratic neutrality but not necessarily the village's moral standards. In this case, only those villagers who are not beneficiaries of nepotism will feel offended. Finally, an elite who uses his authority for purely personal enrichment (embezzlement, bribery) will receive the moral sanctions of the entire village and the legal sanctions of the state. Here the elite is without local "protection". It is more likely that he will be denounced to higher authorities and prosecuted.

For all three types of leaders, personal relations play a crucial role. Even the good leader will try to personalize his services, so that villagers believe they are receiving special favors when in fact the leader is simply executing his ordinary duties (cf. Cole 1979). By playing on the citizens' preference for personal relations, the elite will elicit a moral obligation on the citizen's part to help when called to participate in a voluntary work brigade or to deliver

more livestock to state acquisition agents. In this sense, the good leader's mobilization is made more effective by supplementing legal requirements with personal appeals.

The good leader can also become a broker and help villagers obtain special services or resources from the county bureaucracy. A local party activist may give a villager the name of a friend in a county office, or the name of a "very good doctor" in town. For making available his own network, the activist will expect the citizen to render him some subsequent favor, either of a personal nature or one which can help the activist in his administrative tasks. That local elites can choose to use their broker and patronage functions is not in itself corruption, but only a means of supplementing administrative abilities with moral claims on their constituents. It seems to be tacit recognition of the population's lack of commitment to intervening institutions such as the party, factory or mass organization. Poland, for example, has been called "a nation of families" to symbolize this structural gap (The Experience and Future Discussion Group 1981:64). Since bureaucratic coercion gives insufficient returns, personalizing the bureaucracy becomes the strategy which elites and citizens use to overcome the structural inadequacy of organizations. For the elites, the problem is to prevent the flexibility of personal relations from being interpreted as (or becoming) corruption.

The elite's differential dependence on personal networks could be characterized in terms of two "styles" of mobilization which I call "administrative-bureaucratic" and "egalitarian". A bureaucratically oriented elite will tend to instruct citizens what they must do, basing the appeal on legal authority or the threat of negative sanctions. An "egalitarian" elite will tend to ask fellow villagers for their aid in accomplishing some common task. Rural elites differ from higher level bureaucrats because they have the potential to employ either of these mobilization styles; it is only in the village that bureaucratic and personal authority are so intertwined.

Not all elites can employ the egalitarian style with equal facility, of course. Those recently transferred into a village – or those who want to impress superiors with quick results at any cost – will tend to act in a bureaucratic manner. In contrast, elites in more isolated communities may be equally compelled to base their appeals on a more personal level. For example, the peasants in one mountain village ignore written invitations to come to local assemblies; they attend only if invited via oral invitation, either personally by the mayor or through a messenger.

Depending on the style of mobilization used, one can predict the kind of corruption which will occur. Elites who rely on administrative mobilization will tend to commit errors of "bureaucratism" (elbowing red tape) or "excessive centralism" (making decisions which exceed their jurisdiction).

These deviations do not constitute corruption, but easily lead administrative-bureaucratic elites into corrupt practices, misuse of authority and bribery. This category of elites is particularly prone to converting their bureaucratic services into commodities. A typical case of such "black-market bureaucracy" (Tilman 1968) involved a village mayor/party chief who sold propane gas canisters instead of distributing them to families according to a list. The complaint of the angry widow of a villager who had paid a bribe but never received the canister eventually led the county party organization to start an inquiry. The mayor was removed from office.

This particular individual had recently arrived from a larger town and did not expect to stay long in the village. Yet he would not have been caught if he had maintained more personalized relations with villagers. He might have gotten away with more corruption if instead of "commodifying" his bureaucratic functions he had "personalized" them. That is, had he offered the gas tanks to favored friends (of which he had few) or kinsmen (of which he had none), his chances of receiving the moral sanction of the entire village would have been reduced. Villagers would have been less outraged by his behavior and the matter may have led only to local gossip instead of an official inquiry.

Where the bureaucratic-style elite is tempted to turn his authority into a marketable commodity, the egalitarian elite abuses his power by personalizing it, i.e., by elevating social relations over the requirements of the bureaucracy. Corruption for the egalitarian elite involves not bribery and overbearing authority but nepotism, favoritism, and "looking the other way" (the latter known as "formalism" in Romania). It is a kind of corruption which is more difficult to discover because it violates only the bureaucratic ethos and not the values of the village community as a whole. Most villagers may be excluded from access to these resources, but their indignation is aroused not by seeing their unwritten rules violated, but at not being included in the game. (Perhaps this is why Romanian villagers are quick to condemn market forms of corruption such as bribery and graft, but seem much more "understanding" of the rampant familism in Romania's bureaucratic hierarchy or the nepotism of President Ceausescu, who is himself of peasant stock.)

Rural elites are thus subject to different kinds of pressures: official tasks, bureaucratic obligations, the temptation to exploit the state's monopoly of resources, the moral claims of kin and friends and their own career ambitions. These pressures can be resolved in numerous ways. One strategy is to resign or ask for a transfer. Village elites' salaries hardly match their responsibilities, and turnover among rural cadres is thus quite high. A considerable number of elites suffer from classic managerial diseases such as ulcers, heart conditions and high blood pressure (the latter aptly called "*tensiune*").

A second strategy is to retreat into "formalism" and routine, executing as few state demands as possible so as not to irritate fellow villagers (both these strategies are also employed by Soviet party agitators; see Inkeles 1950:67-134). A third possibility is to exploit administrative resources for the benefit of oneself or one's primary group, usually leading to corrupt behavior. Finally some elites try to enmesh themselves with the higher bureaucracy, hoping that the protective shield of the party will compensate for the lack of personal ties at the local level. Yet failure to maintain personal relations can backfire into anonymous, bureaucratic sanctions. Consider the following case, quoted in the Romanian Party newspaper *Scintea* (Sept. 24, 1980), about a local party activist who became "dizzy with success":

"... In the course of the investigation, we discovered... that Petre Enache had changed considerably, not being the same person of just a few years earlier. In his first years, he was a stimulus for the collective in their efforts to modernize production. Where there were difficulties he would appear - with good words, with his labor and with advice - and things would go forward. For this he was highly appreciated. From here he rose step-by-step, becoming a member of the County Party Committee, the City Party Committee and a Deputy in the County People's Council. However, without realizing it, this ascent made Petre Enache dizzy. First he became somewhat distant, then arrogant, less understanding of the needs of those close to him while very understanding with regard to his own particular interests. He acquired a tone of command and began to shout at people. This is how he behaved in his home village of Vlădești, scolding the mayor when she transmitted an invitation for "Him", too, to attend the meeting of the County People's Council. "Get out of here and mind your business," he yelled at her on the main street, within sight and hearing distance of the villagers, so that they would know just how important "He" had become.

People began to murmur, however. They said that Enache was doing things on the side. But he did not listen or did not want to listen to what he called "envious people". This spirit of disregard, the sicknesses of egotism and careerism, pushed Petre Enache toward his abuses. Misusing his posts as party secretary and president of the Council of Working People, he obtained advantages that others are not allowed to have.

... It became clear that part of the construction materials he procured came from the factory's inventories. Obtaining permission to buy these was made easier by the fact that the sales clerk is none other than Petre Enache's wife.

... Although the executive committee of the People's Council

formally refused to grant him a building permit, Petre Enache obtained one anyway by pressuring the vice-mayor and secretary at the town hall. "I'm not just anybody," he told them arrogantly. "I'm a member of the County Party Committee."

... If Petre Enache has changed, considerable responsibility lies with his fellow comrades. When they saw the party secretary manifesting deviant tendencies, why didn't they criticize him? Neither the director nor the other leaders at the factory manifested the necessary firmness. In fact, they even approved certain acts whereby he obtained construction materials illegally.

On the recommendation of the County Party Committee, the factory Party Committee decided to relieve Petre Enache of his post. His case will be discussed at the plenary session of the County and City Party Committees..."

Of course, not all Romanian local elites are corrupt. Petre Enache is a typical case of "dead wood" in the vibrant Romanian "forest". However, it is equally true that not all corrupt elites are caught. Petre Enache got caught because he failed to maintain personal reciprocity with people who were necessary for his advance into the bureaucratic hierarchy. Browbeating local villagers and fellow elites and using his wife's position to procure building materials led to the anonymous letters to Party organs. These letters were bureaucratic sanctions which in effect substituted for the moral sanctions which normally work in most Romanian villages. The institutionalization of "the informer" and the power of anonymous complaints in most socialist societies is one way by which individuals can use the bureaucracy for their personal vendettas.

The importance of personal relations for elites' legitimacy is well understood by rural party cadres. When asked about their "secrets of good leadership", elites tended to de-emphasize the importance of bureaucratic knowledge. Phrases such as "knowing the law" and "applying the law with firmness" occurred rarely in my interviews with local mayors and party cadres. Instead, they emphasized the value of personal relations with their constituents: "to know how to talk to people," "to come down to their level," "to be polite to everyone," "to say 'Hello' to everyone," "to consult with the people," etc. The rural cadres' "secrets" lay not in bureaucratic propriety but in social integration with their clients. It is an integration which has positive and negative consequences, for it can help expedite the achievement of state objectives or corrupt them.

The state's interest is to have elites who are reliable and efficient executors of state and party policy. At party training schools throughout Romania, rural cadres learn the ethos of administration, the fundamentals of management and "leadership science" (*științe conducerea*). The principal

emphasis is on applying Party policy and state laws. Nowhere is the basic structure of village social relations discussed, although it is these social relations that enable local government, party organizations or collective farms to operate in the day to day setting. Yet it is the party cadres who lead these organizations who themselves emphasize the importance of personal relations for good leadership, even though there is the risk that these relations can lead to corruption of individuals, procedures or organizations.

Since informal social relations can help achieve state goals or subvert them, state measures to limit corruption may unintentionally reduce the *positive* functions which personal relations play in accomplishing Romania's development objectives. Eliminating corruption in Romania would be disastrous for the bureaucracy.

Discussion: Corruption as a Transformation of Social Relations

The examples from Romania have revealed several types of corruption: payments of money or gifts, nepotism and favoritism, misappropriation of public resources and misuse of authority. It may be instructive to see these forms of corruption as the result of the interaction between three general types of social relations in modern society: administrative authority, market transactions and personal relations.

What are called "bureaucratization", "commodification" or "corruption" are nothing more than transformations of administrative, market or personal ties. For example, bureaucratization occurs when either personal relations or market ties are replaced by formalized, hierarchical arrangements. Alternatively, personal relations may become subjected to market transactions (e.g., dating services, prostitution) a process which could be called "commodification". Bureaucratic relations may also be "commodified", either legally as when public services are privatized, or illegally as we saw in Romania, when the mayor sold the gas canisters instead of allocating them. The case of rural elites gave examples of debureaucratization, in that bureaucratic relations were continually being personalized. In cases where debureaucratization led to nepotism, bribery and misuse of authority (the case of the errant Party activist), then we are speaking of corruption. A final transformation of these relations is also possible: market relations may become personalized, as when one friend says to another, "I can get it for you wholesale". These kinds of relations can exist in the contrived bidding for construction contracts as occurs in the West, or holding scarce items under the counter for friends, as is commonly the case in many Romanian shops. In such cases, the potential profits derived from black-market sale are sacrificed in favor of the personalized exchange of scarce items, i.e., a social economy.

The following chart illustrates the transformations of administrative,

personal and market ties and the processes which result in corruption. What appear to be widely disparate social phenomena are in fact transformations of certain basic social relations found in all modern societies. Moreover, it can be seen that these transformations can generate processes which are both restrictive and emancipatory. The "personalizing" of bureaucratic or market transactions can be either humanizing or corrupting, depending on the relation between organizational goals and the objectives of the constituent social groups or individuals involved.

Corruption as Transformation of Basic Social Relations

Basic social relations	Transformation factor	Result	Corruption
1. personal relations (kin, friendship, patron-client)	administrative ties market ties	bureaucratization commodification	No No
2. administrative authority (bureaucracy)	market ties unofficial market personal ties personal ties	commodification "black market bureaucracy" debureaucratization nepotism, favoritism	No Yes No Yes
3. market transactions	administrative ties personal ties	bureaucratization "social economy"	No Yes

The ambivalent character of personal relations has not gone unnoticed by theorists of corruption. Van Roy (1970:109) writes:

"corruption appears to maintain systemic stability and yet it also reflects change; it seems to be both functional and dysfunctional, equilibrating and disequilibrating, a permanent fixture of an ongoing arrangement and a transient symptom of changing times."

The problem of the functionality of corruption seems to imply the existence of an ideal or pure bureaucratic system. The implication is that corruption causes some systems to become "sloppy" while others remain "neat". The Romanian examples suggest that corruption could be more fruitfully analyzed in terms of levels of corruption and in terms of social transformations of bureaucratic, personal or market ties. Are we speaking, for example, of

corrupt procedures, corrupt individuals, corrupt organizations or corrupt systems? Are the processes involved ones of commodification of bureaucracy or personalization of bureaucracy? By seeing corruption as the result of transformations of fundamental social relations, we are in a position to make more comprehensive statements not only about Romanian corruption, but corruption in socialist states as compared with Third World societies. By implication, such a comparison is also a step toward analyzing how bureaucracy works in these societies as well.

Conclusion: Bureaucracy, Corruption and Muddling Through

Students of bureaucracy have continually emphasized the importance of informal organization. Yet in studying socialist systems we have been attracted by their bureaucratic organs and formal structures and neglected to analyze how these structures articulate with informal social relations both within and outside the organization. The vitality of informal social processes was wrongly equated with system inefficiency or with corruption, such that some systems were considered "sloppy", "inefficient" or irrevocably "corrupt". While remarking on the sloppiness, inefficiency and corruption which occur in East European societies, we have unjustifiably assumed the dominance of bureaucratic organization in these societies, both as an empirical fact and as a practical necessity for modernization.

In Romania, this bureaucratization has not appeared at the level of rural administration. Bureaucratic forms in the village quickly yield to debureaucratization. Villagers deal not with "the bureaucracy" but with individual bureaucrats with whom they have varying degrees of multiplex relations. Local elites, for their part, do not treat an anonymous "public" but fellow citizens with whom they live and work, in both harmony and tension. Administrative efficiency for local Romanian bureaucrats requires that they act quite differently from organizational cogs or Weberian-style functionaries. It is this difference that leads to "efficient leadership" and to "sloppy systems" and "pervasive corruption". Romania is not a "corrupt society", but it is a society that has corrupt individuals, corrupt procedures, corrupt organizations, bribery, nepotism, favoritism and misuse of public authority. While not a corrupt society, Romania is, *like all societies*, a "society with corruption". Romania's corruption is not a survival of a Balkan tradition, but intimately linked with the contemporary bureaucratic organization of a socialist political-economy. Indeed, Romania's bureaucracy persists both because of and in spite of its corrupt tendencies. Personal relations and informal structures help the state toward achieving its goals, but prevent the state from achieving them in rational, bureaucratic fashion.

Hence, to ask why "actually existing socialism" reproduces itself, why it "muddles through", we cannot be content to describe these systems as

"bureaucratic leviathans" (Hirschowitz 1980). Neither must we succumb to categorizing them as "corrupt", simply because actual behavior does not fit with Weberian models. Beneath the bureaucratic forms lie more complex social structures which integrate bureaucracy and corruption in a dialectical relationship. It is these structures – and not oppressive bureaucracy, functional corruption or system sloppiness – which enable societies like Romania to muddle through.

The dialectical relationship between bureaucracy and corruption should become a conceptual basis for anthropologists interested in the dynamics of modern societies. In this way it will be seen that corruption is neither an organizational aberration nor social pathology, but an integral part of formal organization. The real problem is not corruption but the relationship between formal and informal organization. The presence of bureaucratic social *forms* does not necessarily imply the bureaucratization of *social relations*. We must then ask: What are the mechanisms by which the formal organization structure masks the anti-bureaucratic processes, of which corruption is simply the most obvious? What are the processes by which formal organization is kept sacred and corruption stigmatized?

An anthropological approach to bureaucracy and corruption must avoid the notion of a "bureaucratized society". Instead, we should conceive of modern societies in terms of "societies with bureaucracies". Complex societies exhibit a coexistence of formal and informal organization much too complex to be categorized as "bureaucratic" or "corrupt".

It is with the notion of "society with a bureaucracy" that an anthropology of bureaucracy and of corruption can begin. There are no "sloppy systems", only sloppy models.

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