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MICHAEL MANN

NEW STUDIES IN SOCIOLOGY

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STATE, BUREAUCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

A Critical Discussion of the
Political Theory of Karl Marx

Victor M. Perez-Diaz

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To Marina

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> | ix |
| 1 Introduction | 1 |
| First general remarks | 1 |
| Early and mature writings of Marx: a first note | 3 |
| 2 The State and the Bureaucracy in Hegel and the Young Marx | 6 |
| Hegel's theory of the state and the bureaucracy | 6 |
| Note on the genesis and background of Marx's criticism of Hegel | 15 |
| Marx's critique of Hegel's political theory | 25 |
| Early and mature writings of Marx: a second note | 32 |
| 3 The State and the Bureaucracy in the Capitalist Mode of Production | 34 |
| My approach: the analysis of a historical text – 'The 18 Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' | 34 |
| The record of the events: a revolutionary situation – from a liberal democracy to a bureaucratic authoritarian regime: a general outline | 36 |
| The emergence of a bureaucratic authoritarian regime and the growth of state bureaucracy in terms of an interplay of strategies by collective actors: social classes and political groupings | 42 |
| 4 A Theory of the Polity and the Bureaucracy | 53 |
| Some general remarks | 53 |

viii CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| On the structure of the polity | 55 |
| Note on the British State as it appears in <i>Capital</i> | 64 |
| On the process of transformation of the liberal democratic regime into a bureaucratic authoritarian one, and the development of the bureaucracy | 67 |
| On the effects of the political system and the bureaucracy on the political culture | 76 |
| 5 Conclusion | 84 |
| Concluding and critical remarks | 84 |
| Some theoretical developments and suggestions for further inquiry | 92 |
| <i>Notes and References</i> | 99 |
| <i>Index</i> | 115 |

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I would like to add a final word which is also in a sense the acknowledgement of another, old, debt.

Some years ago Merleau-Ponty suggested Marx's work should be considered as that of a 'classic': an intermediary we needed if we wanted to go farther, so that even if we were to reject him we could do so only for reasons that were very much indebted to Marx's very arguments (*Signes* [Paris, 1960] pp. 15 ff.). I take Merleau-Ponty's suggestion and consider Marx as a classic in this way. I think of him not as a founding father whose time is past, but as a classic whose work has become a living part of our own present-day work for understanding and dealing with reality. Yet I also think his is a work not to be narrowed down to cast the mould

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of each new generation of epigones. It has to be respected and understood as it was left: powerful, fragmented, and full of promises it has neither been able to meet nor quite broken. In a word, we may have come to a point where it makes little sense to look at Marx's work either for confirmation or for refutation: we find both continually, and almost never in Marx's own terms. It is a work, then, to be taken seriously but not literally – neither its answers, nor even its questions. Rather it is, I think, to be seen as a source for inspiration, or as a landscape of starting points, building materials, drawing sketches, shapes and targets we are left with to do our own work and follow our own destiny.

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VICTOR MIGUEL PEREZ-DIAZ