ABSTRACT. Communism, in Marx' mind, did not mean simple liberation, but the economics of liberation. The realm of necessity (technē) was to become the primary field for emancipation (praxis), the latter taking form in new institutions, responsive to real socio-economic needs. In this sense, the problem of technocracy and the corporatist ethos in Marx are part of a broader discursive structure, which links the experiences of workers through the industrial revolution with the philosophies of praxis as they reach from Hegel through Marković.

I. INTRODUCTION

The problem of technocracy is common to political programs which mix the impulse to democratic renewal with the impulse to modernization. That Marxist theory elaborated a formula for liberation is my operating premise: its dialectic moved from exploitation to emancipation. The problem of technocracy in Marxist theory arises when inquiry is made as to how this emancipation is to be achieved.

Karl Marx appreciated the accumulated material wealth and technological expertise of capitalist society. The revolution was, in a sense, a means for their advancement, the foremost advantages of the ascending proletarian order being the productive forces willed to it by the bourgeoisie. In Marx' words, "men never relinquish what they have won." History was not simply the story of class struggle, but thereby the story of successive approximations toward an ever more modern, rational society. What the socialist regime acquired, it was also called upon to transform. Material forces of production (co-operative labor, technology, the factory itself) were to be expropriated by the new proletarian regime in order to abolish capitalist relations of production (wage-labor, commodity exchange). The mastery of one was necessary for the transformation of the other.

The question arises: is the formula for liberation reconcilable with the needs of such a modernizing regime? Reconversion and maintenance, after all, require economic planning, and the organizational and
technical minds to make it work. Modernization makes necessary a definite authority structure, and a separation of functions within economic life, both of which border on a reproduction of capitalist relations of production, and on a recreation of the division of labor.

Both Jürgen Habermas and Albrecht Wellmer have recently identified the source for such corruption not so much in the peculiar characteristics of the modernizing regime, as in Marx' own "positivistic" reliance on instrumental action as the primary means to liberation. Or as Wellmer has written, the "intellectual-historic (geistesgeschichtlich) origin for the technocratic corruption of socialism" can be found in "latent features of Marx' own theory".2

To read Marx with such unintended consequences and latent features in mind makes for a selective and accusatory reading, without proper regard for the full dimensions of his emancipatory dialectic. For the problem of technocracy in Marx, as we define it here, is not co-equal with the problem of technocracy in the modernizing socialist regime, as we find it in history. Marx' fictional regime, propelled by advanced capitalist development, does not share the peculiar needs of the historical regime, burdened with low material development, and therefore with the primary tasks of accumulation, industrialization, urbanization, depoliticization.

Moreover, for all of Habermas' theses to the contrary, Marx' philosophical assumptions may be said to imply a fusion between labor and interaction, instrumental and communicative action — a conjecture which we will explore in this essay. Marx may have been negligent or naive about the cost of putting his ideal into practice,3 but this fault does not deprive the ideal itself of its internal coherency.

The task of this article is to discriminate between Marx' varied images on the nature of work and public power, matching his rationale for a new technocracy with his greater democratic vision. We will define in what sense, long before Thorsten Veblen,4 Marx elaborated his own notion of a proletarian technocracy. Both men may have understood capitalism as an outmoded system, as a fetter upon the productive capacities of the mechanical engineer, the factory manager, and industrial worker. The skills required of Veblen's technocrat, in fact, were the same as the skills required of the public functionary in Marx' future Communist society. Yet Veblen's limited concept of a new