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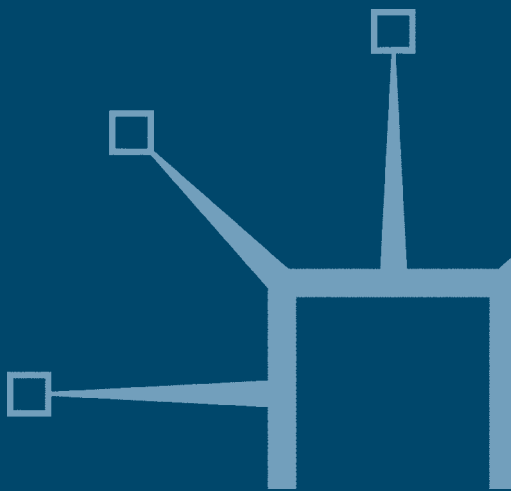
# Class, Power and the State in Capitalist Society

## Essays on Ralph Miliband

Edited by
Paul Wetherly, Clyde W. Barrow and
Peter Burnham



Class, Power and the State in Capitalist Society

*Also by Clyde W. Barrow*

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## Essays on Ralph Miliband

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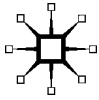



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*For Barbara (PW)*

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The papers in this collection derive, in the main, from panels organised at the Political Studies Association annual conference (State Theory Specialist Group) and the 'How Class Works' conference at the State University of New York (SUNY), both in 2004.

# Notes on the Contributors

**Clyde W. Barrow** (Ph.D., UCLA, 1984) is Chancellor Professor of Policy Studies and Director of the Center for Policy Analysis at the University of Massachusetts – Dartmouth, where he specializes in political theory and public policy. He is co-author of *Globalisation, Trade Liberalisation, and Higher Education in North America* (2003), and the author of *More Than a Historian: The Political and Economic Thought of Charles A. Beard* (2002), *Critical Theories of the State* (1993), and *Universities and the Capitalist State* (1990). He has published numerous articles on state theory and US higher education policy.

**Paul Blackledge** teaches politics at Leeds Metropolitan University. He is the author of *Reflections on the Marxist Theory of History* (2006) and *Perry Anderson, Marxism and the New Left* (2004). He also co-edited *Historical Materialism and Social Evolution* (2004) and *Alasdair MacIntyre's Engagement with Marxism: Essays and Articles 1953–1974* (2007). He is a member of the editorial boards of *Historical Materialism* and *International Socialism*.

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**Michael Newman** is Jean Monnet Professor of European Integration Studies and Professor of Politics at London Metropolitan University. His publications include *Harold Laski: A Political Life* (1993), *Democracy, Sovereignty and the European Union* (1996) and *Ralph Miliband and the Politics of the New Left* (2002). His latest book is *Socialism: A Very Short Introduction* which was published by Oxford University Press in 2005.

**Leo Panitch** is Canada Research Chair in Comparative Political Economy at York University in Toronto. His close relationship to Ralph Miliband began when he was his graduate student at the London School of Economics. He has been since 1985 the co-editor of the *The Socialist Register* (which Miliband founded with John Saville in 1964). His most recent books include *Global Capitalism and American Empire* (2004), *From Consent to Coercion: The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms* (3rd edition 2003, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism* (2001), and a new edition of his *Renewing Socialism: Democracy, Strategy and Imagination* is forthcoming with Merlin Press in 2007.

**Paul Wetherly** is Reader in Politics at Leeds Metropolitan University. He is the editor of *Marx's Theory of History: The Contemporary Debate* (1992) and author of *Marxism and the State: An Analytical Approach* (2005). He was guest editor (with Alan Carling) of a special issue of *Science & Society* on *Rethinking Marx and History* (April, 2006). Paul has published several articles on aspects of Marxism and state theory.

# Preface

*Leo Panitch*

This is a very timely book. After a quarter of a century of neoliberalism, the gloss is definitely off this reactionary capitalist project. And so is the gloss off social democracy's accommodation to that project, epitomized especially by 'New Labour' in the UK. Moreover, those intellectual and political approaches that sought to counter free market theory and ideology by insisting on the autonomy of the state, or of 'civil society', from capitalist determinations have also clearly reached a dead-end. Their inadequacy in terms of explaining the envelopment of social democratic governments, and of NGOs and other groups in civil society, by neoliberalism in recent years is further reinforced by their inability to offer a way out of the impasse of neoliberalism today. What is now increasingly clear is how misguided it was to jettison the innovative class analysis of political institutions that Ralph Miliband was so central to developing in the 1960s and 1970s. And it is no less important to return to his commitment to building new democratic socialist working class parties, and to build on the type of socialist theory and education that he fostered to that end.

It is very much to be hoped that those who are introduced to Miliband's work through this book will experience at least something of the excitement I felt as a young Canadian graduate student in the late 1960s, when I attended his lectures at the London School of Economics that were the basis of his highly influential book, *The State in Capitalist Society*. My generation had been brought up in an era enveloped in the illusion that the 'mixed economy' and pluralist liberal democracy had displaced the harsh disciplines of capitalist markets and class determinations. Even those of us who were critical of the nostrums of mainstream economics, political science and sociology, and so enthusiastically took part in the many demonstrations for which the decade of the 1960s is famous, were bereft of the conceptual categories that were needed to make proper sense of the way in which the Keynesian welfare state and pluralist political practices were structured within the class and market dynamics of capitalism. What Miliband was doing, through his non-dogmatic and sophisticated development of a Marxist political science, was giving us the theoretical framework we needed to begin to do this.

The importance of this was soon confirmed by the crisis of the Keynesian welfare state in the 1970s. And its importance today, after

almost three decades of neo-liberal advocacy of the virtues of political adherence to the disciplines of capitalism, is even greater. The illusion that the world is no longer capitalist is long gone, but now that the capitalist nature of the world we live in is so obvious, the predominant theoretical approaches in political science and sociology seem to take capitalism for granted, and thus fail to offer the conceptual categories needed to understand exactly how and why the state and civil society are so determinedly capitalist. A new generation once again needs to be exposed to the type of analysis that Miliband undertook in *The State in Capitalist Society* and his subsequent and greatest book, *Marxism and Politics*. The essays here that show how complex and sophisticated was Miliband's approach to developing a Marxist theory of the state, thereby refuting the caricatures of 'instrumentalism' that became for a period so common in academic circles, make an enormous contribution to this.

What this book will hopefully also help this new generation do is to make sense of social democracy's embrace of neoliberalism. Miliband's state theory was built on the foundation of his famous critique of the Labour Party in Britain, beginning with his classic *Parliamentary Socialism*, published at the beginning of the 1960s. Those reading it anew today will discover that 'New Labour' is not at all new. It has reinforced all the limitations of a political practice founded on an ideology of class harmony, and on forms of electoralism and parliamentarism that cut political representation off from democratic socialist education and mobilization. What has been jettisoned from 'old Labour' is only the commitment to reforms that secure the provision of various collective services within capitalism. What is meant by 'reform' today sustains and extends private market disciplines, while at the same time reproducing, indeed proclaiming as virtues, all the faults of Labour's old political practices.

Ralph Miliband's own politics were that of an independent socialist looking for a democratic way forward out of the impasses which he recognized, while a young man in the 1950s, that Communist as well as social democratic politics were soon bound to reach. Aligning himself with those who broke with the Stalinism and the orthodoxies of Marxism-Leninism, and always prepared to work with those who sought to advance democratic socialist politics within social democratic parties while skeptical of their ability to change them, he was consistently oriented to help prepare the intellectual ground for a new democratic socialist political formation. This was the motivating purpose behind the founding of the *Socialist Register* in 1964 as an 'annual survey of movements and ideas', which he co-edited for 40 years until

his death in 1994. Resolutely internationalist in orientation, with an absolute commitment to securing the highest-quality socialist analysis, free of moralizing and easy solutions, the Socialist Register remains his living legacy, with editions now available in India, Latin America (in Spanish and Portuguese), Greece, Turkey and Korea as well as the UK, the USA and Canada.

Every preface of the Socialist Register since 1964 has contained the sentence that neither its editors nor contributors necessarily agree with everything in each volume. That caveat is also appropriate for my own preface to this book on Miliband's work, especially as regards those essays that take him to task on anarchist grounds on the one hand, or on Leninist grounds on the other. To these charges, Miliband would happily have pleaded guilty. What was wrong with the notion of socialism's goal being 'the withering away of the state' was that it encouraged socialists to pay insufficient attention to the institutional framework of representation and government necessary for socialism to be as democratic as possible. And what was problematic about the Leninist conception of 'democratic centralism' and about insurrectionary strategies were the undemocratic legacies they bequeathed to socialist construction. But it is to the credit of this book that it looks critically at Miliband's work from widely diverse perspectives, even as it seeks to bring his work to a new generation. This is how Ralph Miliband would have wanted it.

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# 1
# Introduction

*Clyde W. Barrow, Paul Wetherly and Peter Burnham*

Ralph Miliband was a leading contributor to the development of Marxist political theory in the late 20th century, and an active participant in socialist politics from the position, in the main, of an independent Marxist. His writings have exerted an enormous influence on our understanding of a broad range of problems and issues in social and political theory, notably the state, democracy, class analysis and socialist political strategy. The status of Miliband's work is such that it demands serious engagement, critical reflection and assessment. This book brings together, for the first time, a collection of essays to re-examine central themes in Miliband's work and evaluate their ongoing relevance. Although many of the authors argue that Miliband left unanswered many of the central questions posed by his work, the papers in this collection demonstrate that his writings remain an essential reference point for contemporary work on the state and for related areas of political theory and practice. The editors hope that the collection will help to strengthen a noticeable revival of interest in Miliband's work in recent years.[1]

The essays in this collection do not present a unified 'position', for the contributors approach Miliband's work from a variety of standpoints. The collection evinces a general attitude of sympathy with, and respect for, Miliband's theoretical endeavours, but this does not preclude sharp criticism of aspects of his work and attempts to move debate on. In some respects, it has become necessary to provide a restatement of Miliband's arguments, combating oversimplified and distorted interpretations that have gained currency in recent years. This is perhaps most marked in relation to the so-called 'instrumentalist' theory of the state, a crude version of which was attributed to Miliband in the highly (but misleadingly) polarized Poulantzas-

Miliband debate. Many of the essays collected together here are essentially theoretical in character, reflecting Miliband's status as a social and political theorist. However Miliband did not pursue 'abstract theory' and his work is above all characterized by the attempt to offer theoretically informed empirical study, and by socialist political engagement. Our collection, in this respect, has sought to highlight the diversity of Miliband's work.

## Miliband's intellectual and political engagements

Ralph Miliband began his career as an expatriate and refugee, who fled Nazi repression early in his life. Born in Belgium in 1924, Miliband came from a Polish-Jewish background.[2] He joined his first socialist youth organization at age 15 and fled to England with his father in 1940 literally on the last boat to leave Belgium before Nazi troops captured Ostend. Even at this young age, Miliband was deeply moved by the *Communist Manifesto* and he claimed always to have remembered the young socialist militant who first lent him a copy of the *Manifesto* and who died in a Nazi concentration camp (Piven, 1994, p. 25; Blackburn, 1994, p. 22).

When Miliband arrived in Britain as a 16-year-old Jewish refugee he had already adopted a broadly Marxist perspective. The following year, he entered the London School of Economics (LSE), where he studied with Harold J. Laski.[3] Laski had taught government at Harvard University until 1920, where he was loudly accused by local officials of being a 'Red' for supporting the Boston police strike in 1919. In fact, Laski was critical of both American democracy and Communism, although like many Anglo-American 'new liberals' of the time, his intellectual development traversed a long path from pluralism to collectivism. By the 1930s, Laski had embraced a non-Soviet version of Marxism. He was a highly influential member of the British Labour Party's National Executive Committee from 1937 to 1949 and was elected chairman of the party in 1945–46.

Miliband interrupted his studies at LSE to complete three year's service in the Royal Navy (1943–46), but returned to graduate in 1947. Laski arranged a teaching position for Miliband at Roosevelt University in Chicago, but in the early 1950s he returned to England to teach at the LSE. Miliband did not favour party politics but joined the Labour Party in the early 1950s as a way of pushing for socialism with those on the Labour Left associated with Aneurin Bevan. Disillusioned, he left the Labour Party around 1960 and remained independent of polit-

ical parties for the rest of his life. As with Laski, Miliband rejected Soviet Communism and was strongly critical of Soviet actions in Eastern Europe in the 1950s and 1960s and of the activities of the Communist Party in Britain. As a result, Miliband was always in search of intellectual and political movements that might bring about a socialist political transformation from below, or at least provide an opening for extra-parliamentary activity and left-wing debate. For this reason, he was enthusiastic about the new journal, *Universities and Left Review*, which emerged in 1956–7 and offered a Marxist critique of the Labour Party's 'revisionist' orthodoxy. Shortly thereafter, Miliband was promoting and speaking in the newly formed New Left Clubs.

On another front, Miliband was optimistic about the 'de-Stalinization crisis' that swept through the western Communist parties in 1956. In Britain, this led to the departure of leading intellectuals from the Communist Party, such as E.P. Thompson and John Saville, who founded the *New Reasoner* as an anti-Stalinist journal of dissident Communism. Miliband joined the editorial board of *New Reasoner* in 1958 delighted that, for the first time in his early career, there was now a large group of independent Marxist intellectuals with their own editorial outlets. However in 1959 the *New Reasoner* merged with the *Universities and Left Review* to form the *New Left Review* and Miliband, standing virtually alone, opposed the merger. As Leo Panitch (1995, p. 10) recalls, 'Miliband understood that the two journals represented two very different currents of thought and experience', with the *New Reasoner* group being intellectuals **of** the labour movement and the Oxbridge group intellectuals **for** the movement. His concerns were well founded when Thompson finally broke with the New Left Review (NLR) in 1963 and Perry Anderson became editor. This setting provided the context for Miliband's proposal in April 1963 that a new journal be founded to 'embody the spirit which had informed the *New Reasoner*' (Panitch, 1995, p. 10) – a proposal which of course led to the publication of the *Socialist Register* under the co-editorship of Miliband and Saville.

It was during this first phase of the New Left that Miliband also began writing *Parliamentary Socialism* (1961). *Parliamentary Socialism* was a critique of the Labour Party and its policies, but it was also a profound analysis of the electoral and bureaucratic mechanisms which divert left parties generally from pursuing more radical objectives once they become institutionalized in the electoral and governing process. Despite being highly critical of the Labour Party, Miliband still nurtured a hope that it could become a viable political agent of democratic socialism in Britain. Thus, he encouraged the New Left Clubs to help

turn Labour into a socialist party by applying pressure from within and outside of the party, although he did not believe that the New Left Clubs could ever substitute for, or become, a party of the left. During this time, Miliband also became increasingly active in the British peace movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and numerous other campaigns against social and political oppression.

However, as noted above, by the early 1960s Miliband had decided to leave the Labour Party convinced that socialism would require mobilization on a much broader front. While many factors no doubt played into his decision to leave the party, a primary reason was Harold Wilson's decision to support the American war in Vietnam. With the AFL-CIO also firmly supporting the Democratic Party's war effort in the United States, this was a period when Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) became a touchstone of New Left ideology. Marcuse argued that Marx's proletariat had ceased to be an agent of social change, because it was now completely integrated into the capitalist system of economics and politics by its relative affluence. The embourgeoisement of the proletariat in the advanced capitalist societies was nearly complete because

> as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life – much better than before – and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change (Marcuse, 1964, p. 12).

The corollary of Marcuse's theoretical argument was that revolutionary change could only be initiated by non-integrated agents, such as the underclass, ethnic and racial minorities, the radical intelligentsia, and cultural outcasts along with exploited agents outside the system, who lived in the developing countries (Marcuse, 1969, 1972). As Newman notes in his chapter, Miliband 'totally rejected this view' and he did not change his mind after the May Days of 1968. While abandoning the Labour Party, Miliband remained firmly committed to the working class and the labour movement as the principal agent of socialism and of social transformation.

Paradoxically, at a time when the New Left social movements were abandoning Marx, Miliband emerged as one of the major thinkers to revive Marxist political theory. Miliband had conceived of writing *The State in Capitalist Society* as early as 1962 (Newman, 2002, p. 185), but it was published in 1969 on the cusp of a rising wave of global political

upheaval. Miliband acknowledges at a number of points that his own work was building on a subterranean intellectual movement that had been gaining momentum since the publication of C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite* (1956).[4] However, Miliband's book effectively linked these disparate tendencies into a *theory* that explained why a nominally 'democratic' state was responding more to the economic and political preferences of 'elites' than to popular mass movements expressing their vehement opposition to existing state policies.[5]

The concept of the state had been central to political science and political sociology until it was temporarily displaced in the 1950s by a concept of the 'political system' that is mainly identified with the works of Talcott Parsons and David Easton. Parsons' sociology identified the political system with individual and collective behaviours that provide a centre of integration for all aspects of the social system.[6] David Easton (1953, p. 106), who played a major role in initiating the behavioural revolution in political science, declared that 'neither the state nor power is a concept that serves to bring together political research'. In urging political scientists to abandon the analysis of state and power, Easton (1953, p. 106) proposed that scholars examine instead 'those interactions through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society'.

However, in accounting for the persistence of political systems, Easton (1965, pp. 21–3) claimed that one had to assume they successfully generate two system outputs: (1) the political system must be able to allocate values *for a society* (i.e., decision-making and authority) and (2) the political system must *induce* most members of a society to accept these allocations as binding most of the time (i.e., legitimacy). In this respect, behaviourism and systems analysis were tied closely to various theories of authority, but most notably to pluralist theory, which views decision-making as the outcome of bargaining and conflict between interest groups in society (Truman, 1951; Dahl, 1958, 1959, 1961). Importantly, pluralists argue that key sources of power, such as wealth, force, status, and knowledge are, if not equally distributed, at least widely diffused among a plurality of competing groups in society. This purported pattern of 'dispersed inequalities' means that no one group controls a disproportionate share of all key resources, while all groups in society possess some key resources. This pattern of dispersed inequalities ensures that no one group dominates the political process (i.e., authoritative decision-making), while no group is completely powerless within that process. In the view of many scholars and public officials, the Western consensus on pluralist democracy and managed capitalism – namely,

the Keynesian welfare state – was so complete that politics was at 'the end of ideology' (Bell, 1960).

However, the worldwide political upheavals of 1968 called into question the dominant assumptions of academic social science at precisely the moment when behaviouralists were celebrating their triumph at meetings of social science associations. The idea that the Western political systems had achieved system equilibrium through pluralist democracy and managed capitalism literally went up in smoke on university campuses, and in the streets, of those very countries (Singer, 1970; Touraine, 1971; Young, 1977). The Tet Offensive fueled increasing worldwide resistance to American military involvement in Vietnam, while the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia simultaneously plunged 'Communism' into an ideological crisis that further eroded its declining image as a viable alternative to 'capitalism'. At the same time, an accelerating nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union reinvigorated the 'anti-nuclear movement' in all of the Western countries.

In France, the May Days of 1968 brought an entire nation to a standstill, caused the DeGaulle government to temporarily flee the country, and left the French Communist Party in disgrace after its refusal to assume control of a provisional government. There were increasingly violent confrontations between students and police in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Mexico. In Japan, students joined farmers in violent resistance to the land takings necessary to construct Narita International Airport outside Tokyo. Meanwhile, homespun terrorist groups, such as the Red Army Faction (Germany), the Red Brigades (Italy), and the Weather Underground (US), splintered from these larger movements to launch domestic bombing campaigns against military, corporate, and government installations, and assassination and kidnapping attempts on government and corporate officials. In the United States, Robert F. Kennedy, a US Presidential candidate who opposed the Vietnam War, and Martin Luther King, the pre-eminent leader of the US civil rights movement were both assassinated in the same year.

In the wake of these events, David Easton (1969, p. 1051) opened his Presidential Address to the American Political Science Association by declaring that

> A new revolution is under way in American political science. The last revolution – behaviorism – has scarcely been completed before it has been overtaken by the increasing social and political crises of our time. The weight of these crises is being felt within our dis-

> cipline in the form of a new conflict in the throes of which we now find ourselves. This new and latent challenge is directed against a developing behavioral orthodoxy.....The initial impulse of this revolution is just being felt. Its battle cries are *relevance* and *action*.

Easton's surrender to 'the post-behavioural revolution', was symptomatic of a crisis in bourgeois ideology in the wake of historic political events that overtly contravened its basic tenets. In the wake of this crisis, Miliband's *The State in Capitalist Society* pierced the veil of bourgeois ideology with a Marxist analysis of the Western system of power. Miliband (1969, p. 1) observed that even as the state's power and activity was being vastly extended in advanced capitalist societies, 'the remarkable paradox is that the state itself, as a subject of political study, has long been very unfashionable'. In this respect, mainstream social science was concealing the sources, structure, and operation of political power, not by what it studied, but by what it had ignored for most of the post-World War II era. Consequently, we continue to talk about 'the tragedy of political science', 'the crisis of political science', and 'the flight from reality' in political science (Ricci, 1984; Seidelman, 1985; Shapiro, 2005; Monroe, 2005). If Miliband's corpus can provide some guidance in surmounting this crisis, it is imperative that we reconsider his work.

The ideological power of Miliband's work is that it did not sidestep a direct confrontation with mainstream social science by merely elaborating an alternative theory, but rather established the necessity for such a theory through an immanent critique of pluralism, systems theory, and even neo-classical economics. Thus, while Miliband's *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969) was among the most important books to pose an *empirical* challenge to pluralism during this time (Barrow, 1993; Jessop, 1984), at the *theoretical* level, it also returned the concept of the state to a prominent role in Anglo-American political science and sociology (Ross, 1994; Easton, 1981; Evans *et al*., 1985; Almond, 1988). Miliband was already one of the pre-eminent intellectual figures of the British New Left when he published *The State in Capitalist Society* (Newman, 2002), but by the mid-1970s, his name also appeared on a list of the most prominent political scientists in the United States (Roettger, 1978). At the height of his intellectual influence, Miliband was possibly the leading Marxist political scientist in the English-speaking world due to this book (Blackburn, 1994, p. 15).[7]

However, as a leading proponent of the so-called 'instrumentalist theory of the state', Miliband's influence on the left waned as quickly

as it had waxed, following the Poulantzas-Miliband debate. Miliband's dispute with Nicos Poulantzas was aired in the *New Left Review* in a series of widely heralded polemical exchanges that mainly focused on unresolved epistemological issues within Marxism (Miliband, 1970b, 1973; Poulantzas, 1969, 1976). The debate mainly revolved around Poulantzas's (1969, pp. 70–1) claim that Miliband's empirical and institutional analysis of the state in capitalist society failed to comprehend 'social classes and the State as *objective structures,* and their relations as an *objective system of regular connections*' (see Barrow, 2002).

Most Marxist theorists today, as Jessop suggests in his essay, tend to agree that the debate was overblown and that both theorists were either talking past each other or debating issues that had little to do directly with the theory of the state. Nevertheless, 'instrumentalists' and 'structuralists' quickly divided into competing schools of thought (Gold *et al.*, 1975a, 1975b; Jessop, 1977), although Frances Fox Piven (1994, p. 24) observes that an objective historical outcome of the debate is that a highly abstract type of structuralism came 'to dominate the intellectual fashion contest' by the late 1970s. Moreover, as Barrow's chapter in this collection documents, a terribly oversimplified caricature of Miliband's thinking emerged from the debate and, unfortunately, this caricature is now widely accepted as an accurate description of Miliband's state theory. Thus, by 1985, when Robert R. Alford and Roger Friedland (1985, pp. 254*n*8, 278, 279*n*5, 292, 486) published their widely acclaimed *Powers of Theory*, Miliband's work warranted two footnotes and exactly three sentences in the text of a 450-page book, while the 'instrumentalist view of the state' received one erroneous entry in the index.

In the midst of the Poulantzas-Miliband debate, Miliband moved from LSE to the University of Leeds, where he taught from 1972 to 1977 and, at the conclusion of the debate, he moved to Brandeis University near Boston to accept the Morris Hillquit Professorship.[8] The 1970s and 1980s brought the political issues raised by the New Left to the foreground of Miliband's thinking, because no one could deny that the 'new social movements' were gaining traction in the West, while traditional labour movements appeared to be in decline (Boggs, 1986). A revivified women's movement had emerged directly from the events of 1968 in response to the fact that the student Left remained as male-dominated as the Old Left. The new social movements were raising issues of great significance that were traditionally regarded as 'peripheral' issues by socialists (e.g., gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, ecology), while also challenging the hierarchical character of established left-wing organizations.

During this period, Miliband grappled, first, with his own conception of Marx and state theory by returning to an analysis of the classics of 'the Marxist tradition' in *Marxism and Politics* (1977b). In this work, Miliband (1977b, 1) interrogated the texts of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Gramsci to answer the question: 'What are the politics of Marxism?' In responding to the challenge of structuralism and the new social movements with his own reading of Marx, Miliband left many particular questions unanswered, but he came away more convinced than ever that 'class' was the pivotal concept of a Marxist politics and that only a working class political party was capable of transforming capitalism into socialism, whether by reform or revolution.

Thus, in 1982, Miliband supported the establishment of a new Socialist Society in Britain, which convened several conferences to provide a new voice for socialists in the Labour Party. His goal was to establish a kind of 'think tank' to help Tony Benn sustain and develop socialist policies on the left of the Labour Party and, in this regard, he became a leader in the subsequent Independent Left Corresponding Society. This group met regularly in Benn's house until the late 1980s to devise socialist strategies and policies. Finally, it was also Miliband who initially proposed the Chesterfield Socialist Conferences in 1987 and 1988 and persuaded Benn to associate himself with these events (Newman, 2002, pp. 299–308). Thus, Miliband at least played a part in attempting to build an alliance between intellectuals, activists, and office-holders with a range of different left-wing perspectives. However, he remained troubled by some of the 'new left' ideological currents and continued to argue for a more traditional concept of socialism.

Miliband's analysis of *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (1982) examined the problem of how social and political peace has been sustained or, in other words, how the lid has been kept on class conflict. Miliband analyses the British political system as a 'system of containment' that has functioned with a high, indeed unique, degree of success 'to prevent rather than facilitate the exercise of popular power' (p. 1). The need to contain 'pressure from below' has been the central preoccupation of 'the people in charge of affairs', for 'all else depends upon it' (p. 3). The paradox that Miliband examines is that 'democracy', which has the potential to be used as a weapon by the working class (and, of course, has provided a mechanism for real improvements) has, in the main, helped to contain pressure from below. An important component of this 'system of constraint' has, of course, been the Labour Party. Indeed, that the Labour Party showed no signs of becoming a socialist party was, for Miliband, 'one of the most significant facts about the British political scene' (p. 16).

In response to the arguments of Post-Marxists and post-industrial socialists (e.g., Gorz, 1982), Miliband recognized that the traditional proletariat was undergoing an accelerated process of de-composition *and* re-composition characterized by a decline in the old industrial sectors and rapid growth of the white-collar, distribution, service, and high technology sectors. However, this was not the first time the working class had undergone comparable processes of de-composition/re-composition and, in terms of its location in the productive process, the 'new working class' remained as much of a working class as its predecessors. As Miliband observed in *Divided Societies* (1989, pp. 3–4): 'In the classical Marxist perspective, the main protagonists of class struggle are the owners of the means of production on the one hand, and the producers on the other….the relationship between owners and producers is essentially one of exploitation.' Although Miliband (1989, p. 4) continued to believe that 'The Marxist emphasis on the extraction of surplus labour as of paramount importance is … altogether justified' (1989, p. 6), he was also willing to concede that

> the focus on the exploitation of workers by employers which this entails is nevertheless too narrow, on a number of counts. For one thing, it tends to occlude or cast into shadow struggles which are not directly related to the process of exploitation at the point of production, for instance, over social welfare and benefits, collective services, the incidence of taxation, trade union and civic rights, and many more, all of which are clearly part of class struggle….[T]hese struggles may involve many people who, though members of the working class, are not workers at the point production – unemployed or retired workers for instance, and other workers who are not 'direct producers' (1989, pp. 6–7).

By this time, Miliband (1989, p. 7) also acknowledged that the Marxian emphasis on economic exploitation 'occludes the general phenomenon of domination'. These concepts are closely linked because domination is necessary to maintain exploitation, but domination also encompasses 'struggles by various movements based on gender, race, or ethnicity, or on causes such as ecological protection or disarmament' (*Ibid.*, p. 7). Thus, while Miliband defended the primacy of 'the economic' in Marxist analysis, and the centrality of class struggle, he now conceded that the new social movements had to be recognized as important forms of protest and pressure and incorporated theoretically into political analysis. As an important step in this direction, Miliband

(1989, Chap. 2) abandoned the term 'ruling class', which he had used in *The State in Capitalist Society*, and replaced it with a far more sophisticated analysis of the 'dominant class' in capitalist societies. He also came to recognize that following World War II, the 'international dimension' of class struggle was becoming increasingly important to understanding the *internal* political dynamics of the advanced capitalist societies (1989, Chap. 6).

In *The State in Capitalist Society*, Miliband (1969, p. 23) had defined the 'ruling class' of capitalist society as 'that class which owns and controls the means of production and which is able, by virtue of the economic power thus conferred upon it, to use the state as its instrument for the domination of society'. This definition of the ruling class was originally the cornerstone of what came to be called the 'instrumentalist' theory of the state. However, 20 years later, in *Divided Societies,* Miliband (1989, p. 19) modified this concept by again drawing on the work of C. Wright Mills. What he had previously called the 'ruling class' and 'state elites' were now combined in a single concept of the 'power elite', which was itself the leading and most powerful segment of 'the dominant class'.

The power elite was defined as comprising those persons 'who wield corporate power by virtue of their control of major industrial, commercial, and financial firms; and the people who wield state power' (*Ibid.*, p. 20). What makes the power elite a distinctive component of the dominant class is their occupation of the *strategic command posts* of society's major institutions – the corporation and the state.[9] The remainder of the dominant class consists of persons 'who control, and who may also own, a large number of medium-sized firms…forming a substantial part of total economic activity', as well as the 'large professional class of lawyers, accountants, middle-rank civil servants and military personnel, men and women in senior posts in higher education and in other spheres of professional life' (*Ibid.*, p. 21).

Miliband was not only reconceptualizing the dominant class in his later works; he refined and expanded his conception of the social bases of power. Miliband (1989, p. 27) now argued that the effectiveness and cohesion of the dominant class, and particularly its power elite, depended on its control of '*the three main sources of domination:* control over the means of economic activity…control over the means of state administration and coercion; and control over what may broadly be called the means of communication and persuasion'. These sources of power are consistent with Marx's conceptualization of society as composed of economic, political, and ideological structures, but Miliband's new formulation avoided

the alleged 'economic reductionism' of his earlier work by according each societal level an independent form of power – economic, politico-military, and ideological.[10] These modifications, or at least clarifications, of his class analysis opened it theoretically to an exploration of non-economic forms of domination and resistance.

Similarly, while Miliband did not develop a concept of globalization in his later works, he (1989, p. 167) did increasingly recognize 'that the international dimension of class struggle has assumed extraordinary, unprecedented importance'.[11] Miliband (1989, p. 171) suggested that international class relations in the post-World War II era were shaped by a consensus among national power elites that they had 'to ensure by all possible means that the radicalism produced or enhanced by the war should be strictly contained, and prevented from bringing about revolutionary change anywhere in the world'. This meant primarily that the Soviet Union and China had to be contained within their existing boundaries and that 'third world' revolutions had to be prevented or suppressed through inducements (e.g., development aid and government loans) and coercion (e.g., support for authoritarian governments or direct intervention). Moreover, this class-political strategy required the acceptance of American leadership by the power elites of other major capitalist nations, despite occasional disputes among them, because only the United States' immense military and economic power could underwrite and guarantee capitalist class dominance throughout most of the world.[12] Thus, Miliband's analysis of international class relations allowed him to identify third world liberation movements as another point of struggle against the Western system of power.

In making these theoretical adjustments, Miliband was demonstrating that Marxism had the theoretical tools to offer a sophisticated and more comprehensive analysis of domination and politics in capitalist societies, but he simultaneously acknowledged the enormous *political* obstacles to integrating the old and the new left. On the one hand, Miliband (1989, p. 95) agreed that Marxists and others on the traditional (socialist) left 'have often given the impression that they viewed the strivings and struggles of these [new social] movements as of no great consequence' and, for this reason, he (1989, p. 2) was concerned about 'the enduring strength of sexism, racism, and nationalism, not least among the working class and in labour movements'. Yet, even if the left was to modify its traditional views, as Miliband proposed, he (1989, p. 8) was equally concerned that the new social movements also tended to reject 'the view that *labour* movements could be the appropriate instrument for the advancement of their own aims.' In contrast

to the anti-labourism of the new social movements, Miliband (1989, p. 109) remained convinced that 'there are strong grounds for saying that if they are to achieve their aims, the 'greens' and all other new social movements are absolutely and inescapably dependent on the potential strength of labour movements and their political agencies' (cf. Frankel, 1987).

Thus, by the final decade of his life, when Miliband moved to the CUNY Graduate School, he was convinced that neither traditional labour parties, nor the new social movements were capable of effecting a significant transformation of capitalist society. At the end of his career, when he wrote *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (1994b), Miliband was calling for a new socialist party based on an alliance of organized labour and the new social movements (Allender, 1996). This has, arguably, remained the major political project for the left in the period since Miliband's death in 1994.

## Summary of the book

Michael Newman provides an exceptionally clear account of Miliband's attitude to, and engagement with, the New Left in its various manifestations, and in doing so sets out his views on socialist strategy. There was a high degree of continuity in these views throughout Miliband's life – indeed Newman quotes Miliband's own self-assessment at age 59 that his views had not changed substantially since he was 16. Apart from the short time he spent as a member of the Labour Party in the 1950s he was an 'independent Marxist'. This meant that Miliband engaged with the New Left in so far as it corresponded with his own views, but this was never completely. Thus Newman comments that Miliband is 'justifiably regarded as one of its pre-eminent figures' and yet maintained 'a critical detachment from it'. Although the New Left is difficult to define, a key characteristic is the rejection of Soviet communism and social democracy, and in this respect Miliband was firmly of the New Left. But on other questions Miliband's relationship was more ambivalent. Miliband changed his mind about the possibility of Labour becoming a socialist party, but he remained committed to the key role of a political party as a vehicle for socialist advance. He accepted the need to engage with the 'new social movements', but he remained convinced of the fundamental role of the working class as the agency of socialist struggle. Thus belief in the centrality of class and party was consistent in Miliband's thought and involvement with socialist politics. He therefore rejected 'anti-organization' tendencies in the New

Left, and the downgrading of class politics. As Newman comments, Miliband 'believed that the elusive key to success lay in the tradition of an "old Left" as much as a new one'.

Peter Burnham revisits Miliband's first book, *Parliamentary Socialism*, which, he says, stands out as 'Miliband's finest achievement both in terms of analytical rigour and engagement with the most fundamental and difficult issues surrounding the limits of social democracy and the politics of socialism'. Although Miliband remains better known for his debate with Poulantzas, for Burnham *Parliamentary Socialism* provides a more significant legacy. *Parliamentary Socialism*, it is argued, is not a book simply of and for its time but rather its analysis of 'parliamentarism' and the related ideology of 'labourism' remains relevant to understanding the latest incarnation of social democratic politics in a British context in the guise of New Labour.

For Burnham, Miliband's focus on the 'Labour leadership's commitment to parliamentarism and labourism' was the essence of his 'original and persuasive' explanation of the failure of Labour to develop socialist politics. This represents a 'prior ideological and political commitment' meaning, for example, that Labour's lack of radicalism cannot be attributed to unfavourable circumstances. Burnham emphasizes Miliband's related claim that Labour's commitment to parliamentarism and labourism has 'de-radicalized the working class'. This is not an argument about the existence of latent support for socialist politics within the working class betrayed by Labour. Rather, Labour leaders, as bourgeois politicians, have never attempted the task of socialist education, and the experience of Labour policies has led to the disillusionment of Labour supporters. Is it feasible that Labour could be transformed into a socialist party? Burnham examines the oscillation of Miliband's view on this question, but shows that he settled on the view that 'a new socialist party must be brought into existence'. The inability to transform Labour is explained, in part, by the very strength of the leaders' ideological commitment to parliamentarism and labourism.

For Burnham, Miliband's analysis in *Parliamentary Socialism* and later writings 'succeeds in its attempt to demystify the character and policies of the Labour Party and Labour governments'. However Burnham finishes with two lines of criticism: the relationship between political power and the class character of the state, and the politics of the transcendence of capitalism. The first point is that Miliband focuses on the character of the state elite, to the neglect of a view of the state as an 'aspect of the social relations of production', meaning that its class character is inherent in its very form. The second point follows: that

the limits of social democracy are not to do simply with leaders and policies, but the limits of a style of politics that accepts and reproduces the division between civil society and the state.

Paul Blackledge is highly critical of Miliband's life long 'flip-flopping' on the role of the Labour Party. Blackledge discusses Miliband's ideas on socialist strategy and organization, focusing on Miliband's 1976 essay 'Moving On' and his *Marxism and Politics* of the following year. Here Miliband set out the case for the creation of a new socialist organization, rejecting the belief (that he formerly held) that it was possible to transform the Labour party. Yet by the time of his last (posthumous) publication, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*, Miliband had abandoned this quest as no longer viable and returned to focus on strengthening the left within social democratic parties. Blackledge argues Miliband's retreat was not just a response to contemporary political developments and the crisis of the left, but can be understood in terms of 'weaknesses with his earlier theorization of socialist organization'. Hence Blackledge's purpose, while maintaining a deep respect for Miliband's work, is to move on beyond these limitations. Miliband rejected the alternatives of Stalinism and social democracy, but ultimately failed in his quest to create an independent socialist organization. According to Blackledge:

> Miliband conflated revolutionary socialism with Stalin's version of 'Leninism' and argued that this 'insurrectionary' perspective had been proved inadequate for the West by the Comintern's embrace of Popular Front reformism in the 1930s.

Blackledge argues that in taking these positions Miliband failed to recognize the Stalinist distortion of Leninist ideas and practice, and also failed to see the embrace of Popular Front reformism as a Stalinist distortion of revolutionary politics guided by the *realpolitik* desire to forge an alliance with the Western powers against fascism. These twin errors led Miliband to fail to appreciate the space for a Leninist conception of socialist organization and strategy, and the potential for revolutionary politics in the UK. These theoretical errors ultimately led Miliband back to focusing socialist hopes on the Labour party. For Blackledge, it is tragic that Miliband finished up at this point. Moving on now entails reasserting the continuing relevance of a Leninist revolutionary strategy in advanced capitalist societies, and, as a corollary, the continuing irrelevance of the Labour party to this conception of Marxist politics.

Clyde Barrow and Paul Wetherly both discuss the 'instrumentalist' theory deployed in Miliband's analysis of the state in capitalist society.

While recognizing that Miliband's approach cannot be characterized just in terms of this theory, and that instrumentalism has suffered from caricature and simplification, Barrow and Wetherly both defend the instrumentalist theory as fundamental and are sceptical about claims to have moved beyond this approach. Such claims are misleading because they rest on a caricature of instrumentalism and/or because no theory of the state can dispense with an instrumentalist dimension.

Barrow points out that Miliband 'never actually used the term 'instrumentalism' to describe his theory of the state', though he does refer to the state as an instrument of the ruling class in summarizing the central claim of the classical Marxist tradition that he drew upon in his work. Indeed, Barrow sets out the classical Marxist pedigree of the instrumentalist conception, belying the claim that Miliband failed to transcend a pluralist framework. In this connection, Wetherly's way of putting it is that instrumentalism is a framework shared by pluralism and Marxism. Barrow identifies four criticisms that have been directed at instrumentalism: the problem of the subject; the problem of the ideological apparatuses; the problem of state autonomy; and the problem of economic and social reform. Barrow discusses each of these 'problems' to demonstrate that they rely on a misreading or simplification of Miliband's arguments. For example, 'the problem of the subject' relies on ignoring the references in Miliband's work to the structural dimension and the necessity for the state to sustain business confidence. This legacy leaves instrumentalism as a problematic concept since it has been devalued by its association with a highly simplified thesis. Should it be abandoned as irretrievably tainted by this association, or retained and defended as a more sophisticated theory grounded in classical Marxism? Barrow concludes that, taking into account the full range of argument and nuance in Miliband's analysis of the state in capitalist society, 'subsequent theorising … does more to supplement, clarify, or deepen Miliband's original analysis, rather than supplant it'.

Wetherly restates and defends the Marxist instrumentalist theory of the state in capitalist society as exemplified by Miliband. He starts by setting out the key claims of instrumentalism and noting the possible variants of this approach, notably Marxist and pluralist. In Wetherly's view, an instrumentalist approach concerns (more or less successful) attempts by social forces or agents to influence or control specific aspects of the state and/or state power to realize their interests or purposes, as against rival or conflicting interests. He argues that on this definition 'some form of instrumentalism is indispensable' at least in any theory that allows some space for agency. This is because 'only

those who deny that political struggles are fundamentally attempts by agents to use state power to realize some intended effect(s) reject instrumentalism altogether'. However this does not mean that instrumentalism alone can furnish an adequate theory of the state – it is necessary, but not sufficient. Wetherly defends core building blocks of the Marxist approach: the conception of the state as an 'instrument', concepts of class structure and class interests, and the notion of a relatively unified capitalist class capable of formulating general class interests. In doing so, Wetherly confronts and, in some cases, utilizes some arguments from Jessop. Against Jessop's concept of 'contingent necessity' Wetherly defends the possibility of a general theory of the state. This general theory does not claim that capitalists win all political battles or are able to exclude the influence of other interests. It makes 'the more restricted claim that key institutional bases of power within the state system are used, in the context of a specific accumulation strategy, to secure just those purposes which pertain to the general interests of capital'.

Bob Jessop re-examines the famous Miliband-Poulantzas debate of the 1970s that became a key reference point in Marxist discussions of state theory. Jessop's new reading of the debate shows that it was misrepresented '(including by its main protagonists) as a conflict between structuralist and instrumentalist accounts of the same analytical object'. The instrumentalist-structuralist dualism (or duality) has continued to frame much discussion of the state to this day. However, Jessop argues that there was a deeper dispute at stake in the debate, for Miliband and Poulantzas 'conceived the capitalist state in such radically different and fundamentally incommensurable terms that they were actually discussing two different types of theoretical object'. Whereas Poulantzas was concerned with the 'capitalist type of state', Miliband analysed 'the state in capitalist society'. Analysis of the 'capitalist type of state' involves a concern with formal adequacy, which refers to the compatibility of the form of state with the capitalist mode of production. In contrast, analysis of' the state in capitalist society is concerned with the political process through which the functional needs of capital are secured. The more abstract concern with formal adequacy (Poulantzas) is contrasted with the more concrete concern with functional adequacy (Miliband). The instrumentalist-structuralist distinction is wrongly applied because Miliband's approach was not just concerned with agency but went on to emphasize constraints on the voluntarist exercise of power. At the same time, Poulantzas was not just concerned with structure, but went on to analyse political action. In fact the debate was polarized because

'it drew attention to the starting points rather than to the full set of arguments and their implicit as well as explicit theoretical logic'. The presentational strategies of the two authors were different, in effect moving in different directions between abstract and concrete. 'In short, whereas Miliband moved from elites as social categories to broader social forces and only then to structural factors, Poulantzas moved from structural factors to the struggle among social forces and then to specific social categories'. Because of the misunderstanding, the debate at the time was a diversion and its subsequent influence was unproductive. However clarification of the real issues at stake allows state theory to move on, and for this, Jessop argues, the 'two analytical strategies must be adopted and combined'. The sterile Miliband versus Poulantzas debate needs to be replaced with a productive synthesis.

While Blackledge criticizes Miliband for being insufficiently Leninist, John Hoffman makes Miliband's commitment to Leninism central to his critique. Hoffman defends the desirability and plausibility of the 'withering away' of the state and the vision of a post-capitalist stateless society. He draws on anthropological research and evidence to show that the idea of a stateless society does not involve 'a mysterious leap from reality into utopia' since the state is only a recent invention. The question is whether Marxism has an adequate conceptual framework and political strategy to make the transition to a future stateless society thinkable and achievable. Hoffman argues that classical Marxism, as reflected in Miliband's work, is deficient conceptually and politically. Rather, what is required is 'the development of … a 'post-Marxist' view of the state which rejects in particular Marx's theory of revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and … a narrow view of class'. There are 'pre-liberal' elements in Marx, retained by Miliband, that are 'authoritarian and despotic'. In contrast, according to Hoffman, 'The idea that an emancipated society is a society without a state is … a post-liberal one since it argues that the tension between force and freedom can only be resolved if we address conflicts of interests through negotiation and persuasion'. This post-liberalism endorses but goes beyond liberal values.

At a conceptual level, resolving the tension between force and freedom requires the related distinctions between force and coercion, and state and government. A stateless society would dispense with force, but would not be without government (understood as law-making) and coercion (such as 'ostracism and the withholding of economic co-operation'). The absence of these distinctions in Miliband hinders the conceptualization of a stateless society. What is worse, the political

strategy militates against its realization. The problem here is Miliband's defence of a Leninist insurrectionary strategy and the creation of a strong state to oversee the transition (the dictatorship of the proletariat). 'All this makes the development of a stateless society more rather than less difficult, since the illiberal consequences of a strong state and acute polarization result in the fact that it would be even more troublesome to cement the common interests essential for negotiation and arbitration'. This is also where the narrow view of class, and the primacy of class, is problematic. For 'agents of emancipation are multiple and pluralistic, and it is important that we respect the particular grievances of each' rather than 'privileging' class. According to Hoffman this approach holds out the possibility of 'a dynamic and expanding concept of common interests' centred on empowerment through provision of resources.

The essays by John Manley and George Gonzalez take up the challenge of empirical and historical analysis of particular states in capitalist societies (in each case, the United States) and, thereby, scrutinize the enduring usefulness of a Milibandian analysis for understanding political development and contemporary public policy. Manley surveys the broad sweep of the development of the US welfare state in the last century, arguing against the 'exceptionalism thesis' which holds that American experience departs from that of Europe in the underdevelopment of class politics and welfare policy. While noting the difficulties in constructing a general theory of the state, and that a range of approaches can provide insights depending on historical context, Manley emphasizes 'what liberal democratic capitalist welfare states have in common over their many differences'. What they have in common can be summed up in these terms: 'The primary driving force behind the expansion (and contraction) of welfare states … is class conflict'.

Thus, in line with Miliband's analysis, the state in capitalist society exhibits a class bias – it has to manage the internal contradictions of the system. The welfare state is central to this because it has been 'a central and ubiquitous way industrial capitalist societies have managed class conflict'. Manley's 'general theme is that welfare states originate in fear, class fear. Their primary object is to prevent or contain Socialism, thereby perpetuating the economic system whose mixed performance generated the welfare state'. Manley provides support for this claim through a detailed historical survey of three key social movements in America from the late 19th century through into the last century: the labour movement, progressivism and populism. This review shows that

class conflict and the threat posed by socialism were central to the development of the welfare state in America, just as much, despite the many particularities, as in Europe. Consequently, Manley rejects the long-established theory of American 'exceptionalism', including its more recent incarnation in the state-centred theory of Theda Skocpol. However, social reform is not merely a prophylactic for capitalism because the class struggle does produce genuine victories from time to time through pressure from below. Manley emphasizes the vagaries of the class struggle, with reform as a response to militancy and welfare retrenchment during periods of declining working class strength. Reform is seen as one aspect of the state's response to class conflict with the other response being repression. Yet, the main point of the essay is to demonstrate the relevance of Miliband's class analysis of the state and welfare in capitalist society and that 'this is no less true of the United States than of western European countries'.

Gonzalez has a more restricted focus than Manley in temporal, spatial and policy terms. His chapter is a case study of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). This plan was approved by Congress in 2000 ostensibly as an environmental policy to restore the health of the Everglades eco-system in South Florida. It was presented in this way due to growing public concern over the environment. In fact, the plan was a 'utilitarian project' – a means of accommodating urban growth and facilitating capital accumulation that actually poses 'some significant hazards for the environment in the Everglades'. Through a detailed analysis of the historical evolution of water manipulation in South Florida, and the political process through which the CERP was developed, Gonzalez shows that the policy process is consistent with a business dominance view of the policy-making process that owes much to Miliband. The case study sheds light on how this dominance is exercised by economic and political elites.

Gonzalez follows Miliband's line of argument that 'business, particularly large-scale business, enjoys a [decisive] advantage in the state' owing to its cohesiveness as a class or elite and its possession of key political resources, especially wealth and income. More specifically, Gonzalez charts the dominant role of 'local growth coalitions' and 'policy discussion groups'. He argues that

> Local growth coalitions are able to have their desire for local growth dominate the political agenda because … [they] … possess the political resources of wealth and income. These resources are readily converted into such key political tools as campaign finance, organization,

> status, access, publicity, and scientific and legal expertise. As a result, local and state governments promote strategies for local 'economic growth' over other political agendas

such as environmental ones. In the case of CERP, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Environmental Affairs Group, the Environmental Economics Council (part of the Audubon of Florida), and the Florida Water Council acted as key policy discussion groups formed by economic interests promoting the plan. The ability to represent a policy geared to the needs of urban growth and capital accumulation as a conservation measure relies on the deployment of 'symbols, rhetoric and symbolic inclusion'. Gonzalez shows that the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, a mechanism for providing public oversight of CERP, incorporated only those environmental group representatives supportive of the plan, while excluding critical groups. This 'symbolic exclusion', together with environmentalist 'symbols' and 'rhetoric', made it possible to create an image of consensus and helped cement public support for the plan, while minimizing political opposition. Finally, the dominance of business is related to the weakness of progressive forces, particularly the environmental movement, that might have mounted effective opposition to the plan. In particular, the case of the CERP demonstrates the need, as argued by Miliband in his later works, for the development of a 'red-green synthesis' based on an alliance between the environmental movement and working class organizations.

In essence, these essays document that class is an enduring component of politics in capitalist societies, even America, and many categories such as ethnicity, gender, life style, etc. can be incorporated into a concept of class, or utilized alongside it, when these concepts are developed through an empirical or historical perspective. The juxtaposition of class to ethnicity, gender, and nature is often an artificial analytic dichotomy that fails to hold up when subjected to empirical and historical analysis of actually existing class struggles. It is important to note, however, that Miliband was always a critic of the parliamentary road to socialism and he never viewed electoral politics as sufficient for a transition to socialism, precisely because state power is more than governmental power and class power is more than state power. In sum, Miliband recognized the need to build alliances with new social movements but he steadfastly recognized the structural weaknesses of such movements when they remain single-issue campaigns and fail to tackle the central source of oppression emanating

from capitalist social relations of production backed by state power. In this respect, we believe that Miliband's writings have an enduring relevance to all those interested in the analysis and transcendence of capital.

## Notes

1 In this connection see Newman (2002), Coates (2003), and the new edition of Miliband's *Marxism and Politics* (2004).
2 Biographical information on Miliband is from Newman (2002), supplemented by Blackburn (1994), Piven (1994), Panitch (1994) and Kovel (1994).
3 Miliband (1993); see, Zylstra (1968). For context, see Kloppenberg (1986, Chap. 8).
4 *The State in Capitalist Society* is 'dedicated to the memory of C. Wright Mills', who described himself as just a 'plain marxist'. For an analysis of this term see Mills (1962, Chap. 5). Mills includes a highly eclectic group within this term, including Joan Robinson, Isaac Deutscher, William Morris, Antonio Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, G.D.H. Cole, Georg Lukacs, Christopher Cauldwell, Jean-Paul Sartre, John Strachey, George Sorel, E.P. Thompson, Leszek Kolakowski, William A. Williams, Paul Sweezy, and Erich Fromm. Interestingly, Mills (1962, p. 98) observes that 'politically, the plain marxists have generally been among the losers. They may have been through The Party, of one sort or another, yet as plain marxists they have really stood outside it; they have not been enchurched'.
5 Miliband's footnotes and other references draw on a fascinating and diverse array of contemporary radical scholars for theoretical insight, including C. Wright Mills, Murray Edelman, Andrew Schonfield, P.K. Crosser, Barrington Moore, Gabriel Kolko, Paul Baran, Harry Magdoff, and Ernest Mandel.
6 Parsons (1951, pp. 75, 126–7) states that political science 'is concerned with the power relations within the institutional system and with a broader aspect of settlement of terms….Neither power in the political sense nor the operation of government as a sub-system of the social system can be treated in terms of a specifically specialized conceptual scheme…precisely for the reason that the political problem of the social system is a focus for the integration of all of its analytically distinguishable components, not of a specifically differentiated class of these components. Political science thus tends to be a synthetic science, not one built about an analytical theory as is the case with economics'.
7 In Roettger's (1978) study, Miliband's name appears among an aggregrated group of influential 'left radicals', which includes Ira Katznelson, Herbert Marcuse, C. Wright Mills, James O'Connor, and Bertell Ollman. However, members of this group were mentioned by only 5% of the political scientists surveyed for the study. Thus, Roettger (1978, p. 8) concludes that 'their inclusion, paradoxically, testifies to the general disaffection with the Left which characterizes American political science. Despite their prominence in the larger society, the individual members of the Left Radicals have made only a minor impression on the vast majority of the members of the APSA'. Cf. Kadushin (1972), where 'Left Radicals' enjoy much greater prominence in the larger 'intellectual community'.

8 Morris Hillquit was a leading Marxist theorist in the American Socialist Party until 1920, where he was often described as the 'American Kautsky', see Pratt (1979).
9 Miliband (1989, p. 20) observes that 'the state element of the power elite is here taken to be part of the dominant *class*, even though its members are not located in the process of production'.
10 Miliband's later conception of class bears a remarkable similarity to that of Ossowski (1963), although Miliband does not cite his work.
11 Miliband (1989, p. 184) did note that 'external economic and financial pressure – particularly on reforming governments – constitutes a permanent part of class struggle; and given the ever-greater integration of the world into a "global economy", such pressure must be expected to be even greater in the future than in the past'.
12 It may (or may not) be viewed as a limitation of Miliband's (1989, p. 182) class analysis that he considered the international dimension of class struggle as 'for the most part *supplementary to internal class struggles*. It is usually in order to help indigenous conservative forces to repel challenge from below that intervention has occurred. Such intervention, in other words, must be seen as part of the class struggle from above which is waged by local dominant classes'. In other words, he continued to see the nation-state, and particularly American hegemony, as central to understanding the international class struggle.

# 2
# Ralph Miliband and the New Left

*Michael Newman*

If Edward Thompson, Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and Perry Anderson are perhaps the first names associated with the British New Left, Ralph Miliband is also justifiably regarded as one of its pre-eminent figures. He became involved at an early stage in 1957, playing a particularly important role in bridging different elements in the so-called 'first New Left' (Kenny, 1995). He brought together the generations, introducing Isaac Deutscher, whom he had known for some years, to the younger people who established Universities and Left Review; he helped Raphael Samuel to build the New Left at LSE after he had moved from Oxford; and he was crucially important in internationalizing the movement through his friendships with such figures as C. Wright Mills in the USA, Leszek Kolakowski in Poland and Marcel Liebman in Belgium. He also stayed the course, remaining involved with various incarnations of the movements until his death in 1994 (Newman, 2002). Yet if there are good reasons for identifying Miliband with the British New Left, there are also some difficulties in so doing.

The first problem concerns the concept of the 'New Left' itself. This appears relatively clear with reference to the first period between 1957 and the early 1960s, but it became much more nebulous as this era became more distant. Secondly, Miliband himself was highly individual in his political and theoretical beliefs. Certainly, he was associated with each phase in the development of the New Left, but this did not mean that he ever abandoned a critical detachment from it. However, these problems also provide the rationale and purpose for this article, for it attempts to clarify some of the difficulties in defining the New Left by exploring aspects of Miliband's ideas in the context of some of the major phases in its history. It does this by considering three periods: that of the 'first new left'; that of the 1960s, with the era of 1968 as the pivotal 'moment'; and the difficult years in the 1980s.

## Miliband and the first New Left

It is generally agreed that the 'first New Left' was created in the aftermath of the crisis of Communism in 1956, following Krushchev's 'secret speech' and the invasion of Hungary, and was characterized by its rejection of Soviet Communism on the one hand and mainstream Social Democracy on the other (Kenny, 1995; Chun, 1993). Furthermore, the movement was given some organizational anchorage, with the establishment of the two journals, Universities and Left Review and New Reasoner, which merged to form New Left Review (NLR) in 1960. But even in this first phase, the New Left eluded clear definition. It was evidently opposed to the two dominant forces on the Left and in favour of new definitions of socialism, which, for example, involved heterodox interpretations of Marxism, which had been repressed since the Bolshevik revolution. Yet although the early New Left supported the most significant movement of the era – the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament – this was not specifically socialist, let alone Marxist. Nor was there any clear strategic conception that unified the movement in these years. This means that attempts to encapsulate it inevitably focus on a constellation of values, ideas and activities, including a new culture or mood, rather than a distinct theory, doctrine or organization.

For Miliband, the creation of the British New Left in 1956–57 was an invigorating and wholly positive experience. He eagerly associated himself with it, and by 1958 he had contributed to both Universities and Left Review and the New Reasoner. Furthermore in December 1958 he became the only person who had never been in the Communist Party to join the editorial board of the New Reasoner. In order to understand the nature of Miliband's role in, and attitude towards, the New Left, it is necessary to appreciate the reasons for his enthusiasm. A brief summary of his background is a helpful starting point.

He had arrived in Britain in 1940 as a 16-year-old Jewish refugee from Belgium, which was then being overrun by the Nazis. At that stage his only political involvement had been with Hashomer Hazair, the left-wing Zionist movement, but he had already adopted a broadly Marxist framework of analysis. Subsequently, he had been quite close to the Communist Party, without ever joining it, but after the War he became increasingly alienated from Communism for a variety of reasons, including Stalinist dogma over all forms of art and science, the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe, and the denunciation of Tito. He had joined the Labour Party in the early 1950s, playing a role in the Bevanite movement, and he had spoken as a delegate for the Hampstead Consti-

tuency Labour Party (CLP) at the 1955 Labour Party Annual Conference. However, he found the general political climate in Cold War Britain stultifying. He had rejected Communism, both because of Soviet actions and because he believed that it was unviable in countries with a democratic tradition, and he had turned to the Labour Party as the mass working-class party in Britain. But it seems probable that he was in the Labour Party *faute de mieux,* rather than from genuine enthusiasm, for he was quite isolated politically. As someone outside the Communist Party (CP), and never attracted to Trotskyism, but who was nevertheless some kind of Marxist, he had no obvious outlets in the Cold War climate. Thus his few writings in this period were rather muted in their politics (Miliband, 1954, 1956). Certainly, there was a discernible left-wing emphasis, which was compatible with Marxism, but this was never made explicit. He clearly felt constrained by the general environment.

1956–1957 was therefore of crucial importance to him, for it opened up new possibilities: a collective movement that might bring about the kind of transformation he always sought and new forums in which left-wing views could be expressed and debated quite openly. He was therefore certainly keen to encourage the development of Universities and Left Review and, a little later, the formation of New Left Clubs, where he spoke frequently. However, he was still more enthusiastic about the exit of so many people – and above all, intellectuals like Edward Thompson and John Saville – from the Communist Party. For this then meant that there was now a significant group of non-Trotskyist Marxist intellectuals, who were outside the CP and independent of the Soviet Union. It was this that was of such importance to Miliband and he was delighted to join the editorial board of the New Reasoner in 1958. However, his enthusiasm was also for a particular kind of project on which he was defeated. By delineating this, it becomes possible both to clarify a key aspect of Miliband's long-term position, and the specificity of his involvement in the first New Left.

Miliband's hope was for a new kind of socialist organization with firm roots in the labour movement. His aspiration was for a Marxist-inspired grouping, freed from Stalinism, and with links to the Labour Party. His first initiative was therefore to try to unite the New Reasoner group with the Labour Left, which had recently re-established an organization known as 'Victory for Socialism', in which Miliband was involved. This attempt to bring about unity between the Labour Left and the ex-CP dissidents was rebuffed by both sides, but is significant in demonstrating the course he really favoured. Of equal importance was his subsequent defeat on another organizational issue: the decision in 1959 to

merge Universities and Left Review (ULR) and New Reasoner (NR) to create New Left Review. Miliband was opposed to this notion from the start and in a retrospective account, he explained his position as follows:

> The idea soon came up that the two journals should merge. On the surface, this seemed a very reasonable and natural development. In fact, it was not. However amicable and close the relations between the two boards might be, its members did belong to two different political and cultural traditions; and while there was some overlapping between them, there was also a core of difference constituted by the fact that the New Reasoner board was mostly made up of Marxists who had in one way or another been deeply involved in the labour movement, personally and directly, and who also had a strong sense of political agencies as, coming out of the Communist Party, they could not help but have. Universities and Left Review, on the other hand, was a venture that had originated among students at Oxford. Their own responses to the promptings of the times were fresh, innovative and unencumbered by the weight and wounds of a battered tradition. But while the New Reasoner people were intellectuals of the labour movement, the ULR people were intellectuals for the labour movement, naturally so, given their youth and background; and they were also part of a more or less anti-organization current, which was then flowing very strongly (Miliband, 1979, p. 26).

However, when he expressed such views at the time, Thompson immediately cautioned him about sharpening the differences or lobbying too vigorously for a 'hard' political line which might prejudice negotiations with the ULR group.[1] This had little impact on Miliband and on 18 February 1959 he told both Thompson and Saville:

> The more I have thought about this, the more convinced I have become that the time will soon be at hand for a journal with a clear political line on a number of issues of importance to the Labour movement here. I am also sure that we shall come to look back on the last two and a half years as a useful, inevitable necessary preparation for something a good deal more oriented….[2]

This was really a continuation of the argument over co-operation with the Victory For Socialism group. Miliband, though liking some of the ULR group personally, believed in a clear socialist 'line', while

Thompson, at least in theory, believed in letting a hundred flowers bloom. This divergence pinpoints a deeper difference between Miliband and many others in the First New Left. Miliband certainly welcomed the new atmosphere and culture – the sense of opening up and renewal. But the key questions for him were always: where is it going and how can it be organized in such a way as to maximize the possibilities for a socialist advance? These issues were less important for most of the other major figures in the first New Left.

These differences were closely connected with underlying divergences on theoretical matters. Miliband was convinced that there was a fundamental difference between capitalism and socialism, despite the changes that had taken place since the war. In his view, the only way to effect a transformation was through the Labour Party, but this in turn depended upon converting its members to socialism. Once again, some of his exchanges with Thompson help to pinpoint Miliband's distinctive position and some of his worries about the New Left as a whole. Thompson was beginning to question the traditional Marxist analysis of the distinction between the two systems, placed great emphasis upon popular protest and spontaneity to bring about change, was increasingly wary of organizations, and had no attachment to the Labour Party. These differences were manifested in their correspondence from the time they met. Thus Miliband refused to speculate about how an ultimate transition to socialism would take place, regarding this as an abstract question in a situation when any such transition was wholly remote. He thought it far more important to concentrate on the more immediate issues of socialist education and organization and on the radicalization of the Labour Party. When Thompson showed him a draft of a chapter on revolution that would ultimately be published in *Out of Apathy* (Thompson, 1960), Miliband thus took issue with him on a number of points, including organization:

> ... the question of organization, political etc organization. This too is something that is bloody difficult at this stage of our affairs but your formulations suggest a total degree of spontaneity right through ..... Now, I accept every one of these formulations. But not by themselves. 'A revolution' you say... 'does not happen, it must be made by men's actions and choices'. What are [the] instrumentalities?.....Surely not 'the people' tout court? We both, I take it, reject the view that the kind of thing we are talking about is going to be the result of people emerging spontaneously in the streets. This is a very large subject, this subject of political organization,

> made more difficult for us by our recoils from the bureaucratic organizations which exist. But it is a problem that, sooner or later, we'll have to thrash out..... I think it is absolutely inescapable.[3]

But Thompson was equally critical of Miliband for maintaining too traditional an analysis of the distinction between capitalism and socialism without exploring some key questions. For example, he held that it was possible to have a bureaucratic socialism from the top which would not lead to a socialist ethos at all:

> I am suggesting that these are the kind of problems which ... are agitating many people today: the younger ULR sort of students, who were bred up on '1984': the disillusioned ex-Sovietists (of all varieties): and even the workers in nationalized industries...
>
> What it seems to add up to is a trend of thought which says: we agree that socialism – in the sense of public ownership – is inevitable, and (as opposed to private ownership) generally desirable: it is coming anyway....What we doubt is whether it matters. Megalithic industrial society, with its accompanying bureaucracy, is too big for any of us to influence much in any direction. The individual has got to make his own life somewhere in the interstices of the industrial machinery, despite the state, whether a board of directors or a board of technicians or a board of black-coated trade union bureaucrats are running it.[4]

He concluded that it was necessary to prepare for a time of 'transition' by propagating antidotes to bureaucracy, and promoting forms of direct democracy, and socialist values, which could rapidly be built into the new society.[5] And, more generally, he argued, that they were constantly on the verge of a revolutionary situation:

> ...one important part of realising this, redirecting the energies of the Labour movement to take advantage of it, is to break with the evolutionary and also the errors in the revolutionary model. Therefore it is not only important but could be a theoretical task of prime importance. I am suggesting there is a way open....which we cannot see because our theoretical glasses have got misted up. There was a cataclysmic revolution lying around in Russia in 1916–7 but it took Lenin to see it. I am suggesting that there may be a new kind of revolution lying around in Britain in 1969 or 1974, and that [it] won't get it unless I can prod Miliband or some other potential theorist to see it.[6]

The differences in their underlying assumptions certainly affected their attitudes to the merger of the two journals. Because Thompson was more sympathetic to the 'anti-organization current', he hoped that the merger of the two journals could enrich the New Left, while Miliband saw this as a step backwards from the kind of alliance between ex-communists and Victory For Socialism that he had favoured.[7] He would not therefore facilitate the merger – although Thompson implored him to do so – and when the final vote took place at the joint meeting of the two editorial boards, he was alone in opposing it. However, he remained a member of the merged Editorial Board, which initiated NLR. He also contributed articles to the journal and addressed meetings in New Left Clubs. He thought all this was worthwhile. But, as a potential vehicle for socialism, he still believed that the Labour Party was of greater importance and that the New Reasoner should have continued. And, in retrospect, he argued that the main reason why it was not kept going was that:

> there was no adequate perception that a new socialist organization was needed, and where there was some kind of perception of it, there was no clear view as to what it should specifically stand for, in programmatic and organizational as well as in theoretical terms (Miliband, 1979, p. 27).

Organizational matters thus carried great significance in relation to Miliband's politics. What he really thought was necessary was an organization with a socialist commitment, broadly inspired by Marxism, and a working-class base. This was the reason for his preference for unity between the ex-CP dissidents and Victory For Socialism (VFS), and for his opposition to the merger between ULR and NR.

The important point about Miliband's interventions within the first New Left is that they reveal some fundamental assumptions within his politics that would continue. While his contemporary writings and correspondence show that his position on theoretical issues was certainly not mechanistic or orthodox, it is clear that he was adhering to a more traditional position than Thompson on two key points: the need for organizations and parties to bring about socialist change, and the difference between capitalism and socialism (Miliband, 1958). If Miliband's position were to be compared with others in the first New Left – for example, Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams on culture – his stance would also appear confined to a more traditionally defined view of the 'political' than theirs, which embraced culture more fully. Thus

although he was certainly fully involved in the first New Left and enthusiastic about it, it is also evident that his position was quite specific. Lin Chun has argued that, while 'a major failing of the New Left was its lack of any organizational strength' Miliband was almost alone in posing the question of organization in a direct way (Chun, 1993, pp. xvi and xviii). This is true and perhaps not surprising since issues of agency for change were central to his political thinking. But, of course, it also means that if diversity and 'letting a hundred flowers bloom' are regarded as defining characteristics of the New Left, Miliband was only partially within it.

## The Second New Left and the 'moment' of 1968

As already noted, the definition of the New Left becomes increasingly difficult after the first phase. The most obvious complication was the break-up of the NLR editorial board in 1963. Perry Anderson, and his closest associates, who now took control of NLR (creating NLR Mark 2), subsequently represented one element in the New Left, but their specific version of Marxist theory certainly did not embrace the whole phenomenon and it becomes increasingly difficult to define its boundaries. However, the eruption of direct action movements, with the Vietnam war as the most obvious catalyst, is normally held to be a key element in the evolution of the New Left. Above all, many have viewed the world-wide protest movements in 1968 as its culmination (Davis M., 2003, p. 40), and there are clearly connections between the ideas and political culture of 1968 and those manifested during the first phase in the 1950s. Yet Trotskyist and Maoist groups also took part in these protests, and these can hardly be described as 'New Left', particularly if this is understood in part as a reaction against hierarchical organizations. In any case, throughout this period Miliband continued to develop his own stance, which might sometimes appear surprising in relation to conventional categorizations of New Left politics.

When the differences within the editorial board of NLR became increasingly acute in 1962 – with Perry Anderson and Edward Thompson the central protagonists on each side – it seemed that Miliband was aligning himself firmly with the older generation. He thus lined up with Thompson and Saville in the meeting in April 1963 that ended the precarious alliance and enabled Perry Anderson and his closest associates to take complete control of the Review, and to reject the British Marxist tradition as too empirical and untheoretical. And when Miliband almost immediately proposed the establishment of the Socialist Register as an

alternative, it was to both Thompson and Saville that he turned to join him as editors. However, it soon became evident that the alignments were more complex than they appeared for, although Saville accepted the invitation, Thompson refused to do so – with a variety of pretexts. For Thompson was now moving away from a Marxist tradition, was increasingly anti-Soviet, and was convinced that Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn were rejecting pluralism and emulating Stalinist dogmatism (albeit in a new form). He felt that Miliband differed from him on this, and some of his suspicions were justified for, by the mid-1960s, Miliband had put the break with NLR mark 2 behind him and was expressing unalloyed admiration for the theoretical sophistication of Anderson and his associates. The reality was that Miliband – perhaps partly because of his background – was not prepared to join Thompson in condemning continental traditions of Marxism as suspect. And it was quickly apparent that, under his influence, Socialist Register would also publish a variety of contributions from across the world, rather than deal solely with the British labour movement. However, it also differed from New Left Review in paying close attention to the domestic situation, rather than tending to imply that the only serious forms of thought were across the channel.

Miliband would continue to edit Socialist Register (first with Saville and later with Leo Panitch) until his death and it became an outlet for his ideas. Although it had no definite 'line', his own reflection on 'Thirty Years of The Socialist Register' in the 1994 edition recalls that Saville and he had:

> a largely unspoken agreement…that we would mainly publish work that would fall within the broad Marxist tradition to which…we both belonged. (Miliband, 1994a, p. 2)

This meant that they tended to publish authors whom they regarded as 'independent Marxists', rather than mainstream Communists or Social Democrats. This was in line with a key aspect of a central definition of the New Left, but it was a rather specific interpretation of it. In Miliband's case, the specificity becomes still more apparent when his positions on other crucial issues of the era are examined. This is evident in the evolution of his attitudes towards the Labour Party.

During the first phase of the New Left, while writing Parliamentary Socialism (1961), he had remained quite convinced that the Labour Party – despite its inadequacies – was the only possible agency through which socialism could be established in Britain. He frequently told

audiences at New Left Clubs that their function was to help turn Labour into a socialist party by constant pressure and campaigns, but he was quite certain that the New Left could never be a substitute for the party. This followed from his fundamental beliefs about organization, which had led to the differences with Thompson discussed earlier. In particular, he was always quite adamant that only a political party could provide the agency for change. But while the majority of the Left – old and new – thought that Harold Wilson's elevation to the Labour Party leadership in 1963 was a step in the right direction, Miliband was much less sure about this. He had argued in Parliamentary Socialism that the 'labourism' of the Labour Party was an ambiguous coalition that united socialists with a right-wing leadership, and that it was necessary to move one way or the other. As far as he was concerned, Wilson was a past master in masking the reality with rhetoric, and he saw his emergence as leader as retrograde, since it meant that 'labourism' was likely to be given a new lease of life. Although he welcomed the election of a Labour Government in October 1964, he soon took a step that was of crucial importance in his political evolution.

By the end of May 1965, Miliband decided to abandon Labour on the grounds that it would never become a socialist party. The catalyst for his change of attitude was Wilson's support for the American war in Vietnam. For Miliband there was no question of compromise, for the Americans were external aggressors who were upholding a corrupt puppet government in the south that was trying to resist social revolution and national liberation. The only justifiable policy for anyone on the Left was total opposition to American policy. Miliband viewed this as the decisive issue of the era but, although his attitude to the Labour Party had been tentative and ambivalent in 1960, abandoning it was also an enormous leap to take. Given that he believed that parties were crucial agencies for socialist transformation and that he had little faith in any of the existing alternatives, he had no obvious place to go. This was something that he would have to live with for the rest of his life.

Of course, there were many others from the original New Left who abandoned the Labour Party during the 1960s – many of them finding new homes in the proliferation of Trotskyist and Maoist movements that developed in opposition to the Vietnam war. However, there were two distinctive features in his position. First, his rejection of the Labour Party came particularly early, for most of the Left only became really disillusioned and angry about the Wilson government after its second election victory in March 1966. Secondly, Miliband now began to evolve ideas that would eventually lead to a series of abortive projects for a

new socialist formation (see below). However, of still greater significance in relation to the New Left was the fact that he was also ambivalent about the movement of 1968.

Certainly, he was delighted when the students rejected the existing order and were prepared to take risks in an attempt to establish a new world. Having been so frustrated by the constraints of the Cold War and consensus politics in the 1950s, and so enraged by the stance of Social Democracy in relation to the American action in Vietnam, he eagerly welcomed the new climate of direct action. This, he believed, provided a real potential for social transformation and demonstrated the weakness of theorists of both Left and Right who had argued that the development of industrial capitalist societies had suppressed the sources of social conflict. Yet he was not unreservedly positive in his evaluation of the student movement. When the 'explosion' occurred in Paris in May 1968 he had been experiencing student-led protest at LSE for almost two years and had already formed some views from his own experience which influenced his attitude to the events in France.

Although he was one of the few members of staff who actively supported the protests, his position was quite different from that of the majority of the student movements. In part, this was because organizations such as the International Socialists (which later became the Socialist Workers Party) became increasingly powerful within the student body as the conflict escalated and he disagreed with their theoretical and political interpretation of both the capitalist world and the Soviet bloc.[8] But the differences were wider than this. In one way or another – whether or not their position was deeply theorized – the student protest movement was raising issues which did not fit easily into Miliband's outlook on the world. He was by now seeking a new political formation based on a rather classical Marxist analysis of class and party. Some of the revolutionary groups amongst the student body agreed about this, but not about the way to bring about change, and the majority of ordinary students were less interested in theories than in immediate injustices and the need for direct action. And, of course, student action also involved a challenge to the older generation's attitudes to dress, sexual relations, and drugs. Miliband was still deeply conventional about what he wore, was quite puritanical, and always wanted politics to be discussed rationally and carefully. Despite his support for the students he was not really on the same 'wave-length' as they were.

These differences also involved a crucial theoretical point. Marcuse now become a guru for many in the movement of 1968, with his argument that the workers were so integrated into capitalism that revolutionary

change could come about only through the non-integrated forces, such as ethnic minorities, outsiders and the radical intelligentsia (Marcuse, 1964). Miliband totally rejected this view and on the eve of the 'events' in Paris, he replied to someone who had put this argument to him:

> You argue that the workers have become finally reconciled to capitalism. If so, there will be no socialism….For I am quite convinced that the other groupings you refer to are simply incapable of shifting and transforming the nature of these societies without the working class or a substantial part of it. Nor do I find the evidence in the least as conclusive as you do that the working class is permanently 'lost'…. I am not saying this is the only class that can be relied on to make the change….But I do argue that without that class, the business of socialism cannot march in [advanced capitalist] countries.[9]

His perspective did not change significantly with the 'events' of May 1968 in France and he was not really surprised when the Right eventually defeated the uprising. At the height of the 'events' he thought it very unlikely that the explosion would lead to a real transformation and a month later, as the forces of order regained control, he continued to express his complete lack of faith in all the small leftist groups. And even though he condemned the role of the French Communist Party in the events of May–June 1968, he retained some hopes that it might change and he was not prepared to write it off completely. Once again, therefore, we find Miliband attaching importance to the classical Marxist view that the working-class and an organized political party were the essential components in bringing about socialist change, and that an inchoate protest movement could never effect this by itself. In fact, he was deeply critical of some elements in the student movements, believing them to be very weak in theoretical terms, and sometimes as intolerant as the forces that they were denouncing. It is thus an irony that just as he was completing *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969), a text that would be so influential in popularizing Marxist thinking amongst the younger generation, he was out of sympathy with much of the direct action movement. Yet if he was not fully engaged in the movement of 1968 another event that year brought him closer to a central element in New Left politics: a decisive rejection of the Soviet Union and Communist Parties.

Miliband had been critical of the Soviet Union since the 1940s, but until the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 he had

generally adhered to the line that the USSR and the rest of the bloc were moving gradually and fitfully towards socialism and greater democracy. Subsequently he abandoned this view, coming to regard them as 'bureaucratic collectivist' states. As such, he did not believe that they would necessarily generate socialism – or anything that he would be prepared to term 'socialism' – any more quickly than bourgeois democratic states.[10] This also affected his attitude to Communist Parties in Western Europe and, more generally, it elevated an element in his thinking that had always been present, but now became of absolutely central importance: a commitment to democracy and freedom of discussion and intellectual enquiry as defining elements in socialism.

How, then, should Miliband's position be categorized in relation to definitions of the New Left in the 1960s? If the movement of 1968 is taken as its essence, he must again be regarded as ambivalent. While welcoming its challenge to established authority, he had deep reservations about both those who saw the protest in terms of life-style and those who theorized it with reference to Trotsky, Mao or Marcuse. On the other hand, he was certainly delighted that Marxism now seemed to be back on the agenda. Furthermore, Miliband was a frequent and passionate speaker at rallies against the war in Vietnam – one of the central elements in the international movement of 1968. Finally, his complete antipathy to the Soviet model after the crushing of the Prague Spring was also in harmony with the predominant mood in the protests of the era. Once again, as with the first New Left, Miliband had many points in common with the movement of 1968, but also continuing differences.

## 'Bennism' and new social movements in the 1980s

In the first half of the 1970s, it seemed that the spirit of 1968 was being broadened and deepened, with the growth of new social movements, and an intensification of militant industrial protest, culminating in the defeat of the Conservative government in 1974. However, the end of the post-war boom and the collapse of Keynesian demand management then led to an unsettled period in which there was considerable unrest and political polarization, without any clear resolution. The accession of the first Thatcher government in 1979 then led to the initiation of policies that would relentlessly drive back the Left during the 1980s. It is this growing dominance of the Right that makes it so difficult to define the New Left in this period.

The term suggests 'renewal', but the era was more one of 'an uphill struggle' or even a 'losing battle'. Increasingly, the term 'new' was

appropriated by those whose political project was quite different from that of the New Left in the late 1950s or in 1968. In the 1980s 'new realists' would argue that pragmatism involved the abandonment of traditional forms of socialism, and in the next decade 'New Labour' would define its 'modernising mission' within the economic parameters of global capitalism. Yet it was also during this period that traditional forms of socialism were challenged by a new kind of Left that reflected continuities with the ways in which the earlier New Left had contested existing patterns of behaviour and belief. For example, the women's movement (or sections of it) emerged directly from 1968, but partly in anger that the student Left had been as male dominated as the traditional Left. Furthermore, the new social movements of the era were raising issues that had been ignored or regarded as peripheral by traditional socialists (for example, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ecology); and they were also challenging the hierarchy and procedures of established left-wing organizations. In these respects, such movements may be regarded as constituting another phase of the New Left, but they also included both socialists and non-socialists. In this sense, the new social movements simultaneously both enriched and fragmented the forces of the Left. This also provoked dilemmas about alliances and, in particular, the relationship between the various sections of the Left and the Labour Party.

After Labour's defeat in the 1979 General Election, Tony Benn became a standard-bearer for many on the Left. However, 'Bennism' was not simply the latest form of Left Labour opposition to the leadership, for it was also an attempt to create alliances across a wide spectrum of left-wing forces. Although Benn's position within the party passed its peak after his narrow defeat by Denis Healey for the post of deputy leader in September 1981, his willingness to work with those outside the party probably increased after this. He supported the establishment of a new Socialist Society in 1982 (see below) and his involvement with this wider Left culminated in the socialist conferences in his Chesterfield constituency in 1987 and 1988. How, then, did 'Bennism' relate to the New Left? Some have effectively equated the two, arguing that the movement behind Benn reflected a strategic decision by the New Left to transform the Labour Party, on the grounds that there was no viable alternative to it (Panitch and Leys, 1997, p. 4). This is perhaps an oversimplification, since a variety of groups supported Benn's campaigns for quite different reasons. Moreover, many of the activists in the new social movements remained outside the Labour Party, and elements of their programmes were also taken up by sectors of the party who

opposed Benn. The strategic alliances and ideological definitions of the various 'New Lefts' were highly complex in this period. How did Miliband view the situation and what role did he play?

His attitude to alliances shifted at the beginning of the 1980s. In the previous decade, he had attempted to persuade others that the main way forward was to create a new socialist party, which 'would be Marxist, or Marxist-oriented', and which would include people with a wide range of views on the subject of how to bring about socialism, 'ranging from those who believe that "reformism" is a viable strategy to those people who utterly reject it'.[11] However, very few had accepted the practicality of his proposals, and he had, somewhat reluctantly, abandoned the notion of a new party as premature. He had, instead, taken part in a more modest scheme to establish Centres for Marxist Education, while adhering to the idea of a new party as a long-term aim (Newman, 2002, pp. 237–48). However, he had remained adamant that the essential prerequisite for any such development was the abandonment of any illusions that the Labour Party would ever be a vehicle for radical reform. He gradually began to modify these views after the 1979 General Election, particularly because he was deeply impressed by Benn himself. Thus, while he initially regarded the internal Labour Party battles as a side show, he now acknowledged both the progress and the transformation of the Left in the party. He therefore edged towards the idea of alliances and played a role in the establishment of the Socialist Society.

The discussions for some kind of new organization began early in 1981. The originators of the idea included Robin Blackburn and Tariq Ali from New Left Review, and also Hilary Wainwright and others who had recently published *Beyond the Fragments* (Rowbotham Segal and Wainwright, 1979) – a key text in socialist feminism. It thus involved various generations of the New Left from its inception. However, the potential divisions within the Socialist Society were already discernible before it was even launched. Was it fundamentally inspired by Marxist notions of class struggle or was it a much broader movement, incorporating the thinking of new social movements? Was it an adjunct to Bennism or was it designed to further socialism without being preoccupied by developments within the Labour Party? Miliband had made his own position clear in some notes that he had sent on points that the drafting committee would need to deal with. In these he had emphasized the need for a critical distance from the Labour Party, had called for the inclusion of a reference to Marxism, and had also sought to maintain the primacy of class struggle.[12] The need to include socialists from

both inside and outside the Labour Party was generally agreed, but Miliband failed to achieve his other two aims. Nevertheless, he regarded the meeting on 20 June as generally successful and a very heterogeneous Steering committee was charged with establishing a Socialist Society with a larger conference. When this was held in January 1982, Miliband's name was included in the invitation, which proclaimed:

> Without seeking to create a new party or faction, the Society would encourage socialist renewal inside the labour movement and help those fighting for socialist ideas in the Labour Party. It would help create a new forum and common framework for considering fundamental questions of socialist programme and purpose. It would address itself to the implications of new radical currents of thought. It would bring together intellectual workers and worker intellectuals, in the common task of developing the programme and promise of socialism. It would be open to all those prepared to subscribe to a Charter of socialist principles.[13]

The aim borrowing Gramsci's phrase from Miliband's original notes, was to help create a 'socialist common sense' through local and national cultural and educational work and through books and pamphlets. These should provide an arena for socialists in different situations and of different persuasions to work together, and to act as a clearing house and umbrella organization, encouraging the co-ordination of socialist activities in ways that would help to unify the left. The conference, on 23–24 Janary 1982 at the Institute of Education in London, was attended by about 1,200 people, including such familiar names from earlier phases of the New Left as Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Perry Anderson.

Miliband was thus involved in this attempt to create a new socialist coalition, and was the only 'big name' from the earlier phases of the New Left who stayed the course and remained active within it, even though it soon declined in strength. And in 1985 he took a new initiative in the attempt to build alliances across the Left, by proposing the establishment of a kind of 'think tank' to help Tony Benn sustain and develop socialist policies, and he was the prime mover in the subsequent so-called 'Independent Left Corresponding Society'. This met regularly in Benn's house until the late 1980s to devise strategies and policies, and Miliband was the person within the group for whom Benn had the greatest respect. Finally, it was also Miliband who initially proposed the Chesterfield Socialist Conferences and persuaded

Benn to associate himself with them (Newman, 2002, pp. 299–308; Benn, 1994). Thus Miliband certainly played a part in attempting to build an alliance between people with a range of different left-wing perspectives. However, he was deeply troubled by some of the ideological currents that were emerging and he struggled to fight a rearguard action in favour of a more traditional conception of socialism.

Even at the founding conference of the Socialist Society in 1982, he was perplexed by one very notable feature, which had little to do with strategic matters, and which he noted at the end of the first day:

> A major theme, perhaps the major theme, at today's Foundation meeting of the Socialist Society was the repeated sentence [?] by many people, young and old, that they did not know what socialism was. Again and again, people repeated this, not merely in terms of how to get there, i.e. what strategies should be adopted, i.e. the means, but also and even more important the ends – what is socialism? they kept saying. We know what we are against – capitalism, imperialism, racism, sexism, domination of every sort and so forth: but what is socialism, how is it to be organized, what does it look like, how does it relate to ordinary people's lives? and so on.
>
> The same people were perfectly prepared to join the Socialist Society, but much less as a means of propagating what they already know to be right, correct, good, socialism, and much more as a way of discovering collectively what they were for, and then hoping to make an impact on the politics of the day, the political culture, their friends or neighbours, or whatever.
>
> This is a very remarkable stance…[14]

Miliband himself remained convinced that a flexible and open-minded form of Marxism provided a valid theoretical and ideological 'compass' for socialists, and he still retained an aspiration eventually to create a new Socialist Party. But, in an era of new social movements and postmodernism, he was now encountering increasing disagreements about both ends and means. Moreover, as Right-wing ascendancy continued to grow, both in Britain and internationally, attempts to redefine a strategy and ideology for a Left-wing response also intensified. When these challenged the core of traditional notions of socialism, Miliband became deeply alarmed, particularly when the 'revisionists' had themselves previously been respected figures with a Marxist or New Left background.

By 1985 his frustration had turned to anger and he wrote a powerful article, 'The New Revisionism in Britain' in New Left Review, which

sought to counter the new currents and re-establish the socialist alternative (Miliband, 1985). This encapsulates his thinking and assumptions in this period and also highlights the differences between his views and those that were now becoming prominent in other currents of the New Left.

He began by acknowledging the difficulties of the era for the Left in Britain:

> Clearly, these are very hard times for the whole left, and it is very natural – and very desirable – that such times should produce intense thinking and re-thinking about what is wrong, and what can be done about it. However,… the tendencies which have been very strongly predominant in the writings of the left in the last few years do not offer socialist solutions to the problems now confronting it: they constitute a 'new revisionism'… and this…marks a very pronounced retreat from some fundamental socialist positions. Far from offering a way out of the crisis, it is another manifestation of that crisis, and contributes in no small way to the malaise, confusion, loss of confidence and even despair which have so damagingly affected the Left in recent years… (Miliband, 1985, p. 5)

He pointed out that those who formed part of the new revisionism were not right-wing social democrats, but included Eric Hobsbawm and Bob Rowthorn from the Communist Party and others like Raphael Samuel and Stuart Hall, who had been founder members of the New Left. These, and others, situated in various parts of the labour, feminist and peace movements, remained strongly committed to radical change and many retained affinities with one or other variant of Marxism, and none of them had abjured socialism. On the contrary, they all believed that they were helping its advance by the questions they were asking, the doubts they were expressing, the criticisms they were voicing, and the directions in which they were pointing. He nevertheless argued that they constituted a retreat from socialist positions and in this article and other writings he attempted to refute their arguments.

The central aspect of the dispute concerned the issue of class and Miliband subsequently wrote a whole book, *Divided Societies* (1989), which attempted to re-establish a modified Marxist interpretation of class conflict. Class politics, he argued, was repudiated by the new revisionism in its claim that organized labour no longer had 'primacy' in the challenge to capitalist power and the task of creating a radically different social order. This was based on various claims: that the working

class had not played a revolutionary role and gave no indication of wishing to do so; that the aims of organized labour had always been very limited, and could not be taken to encompass the needs and aspirations of all oppressed and exploited groups; that the working class was not therefore a 'universal class', whose own liberation would signify the liberation of all such groups; that the claim to 'universality' might lead to a denial of the pluralism which ought to be at the centre of the socialist project; that the 'working-class' in its traditional Marxist sense was in any case disappearing through technological development and a new international division of labour; and that 'new social movements' presented at least as great and as radical a challenge to the existing social order as organized labour. It was therefore time to drop the primacy of the working class and to replace it

> with a model of struggle based upon a diversity of interests, concerns and 'discourses', emanating from a multiplicity of social strata, groups and movements, with no hierarchical presumptions and pretensions, in a constantly shifting pattern of alliances (Miliband, 1985, p. 8).

Miliband acknowledged that important insights had been provided and that many necessary corrections and critiques had been made, but argued that the revisionist case was nevertheless fundamentally wrong. The working class, he accepted, had experienced an accelerated process of re-composition, with a decline in traditional industrial sectors and a considerable further growth of white-collar, distribution, service, and technical sectors. But this was not synonymous with its disappearance as a class. In terms of its location in the productive process, its very limited or non-existent power and responsibility in that process, its near-exclusive reliance on the sale of its labour power for its income, and the level of that income, it remained as much the 'working class' as its predecessors. Nor was there any good reason to believe that this recomposed working class was less capable of developing the commitments and class consciousness which socialists had always hoped to see emerge.

A key part of the critique by many proponents of new social movements was to argue that power relations and oppression were constituted as much by gender, ethnicity and sexuality as by class, and Miliband also sought to refute this claim. It was, he argued, naturally possible for women workers, black workers, or gay workers, to feel in relation to their innermost being that it was as women, blacks or gays that they defined

themselves, and that it was as such that they experienced exploitation, discrimination and oppression. But their feelings could not be taken as an accurate representation of reality and:

> To oppose gender and class, to make gender or race or whatever else the defining criterion of 'social being'; and to ignore or belittle the fact of class, is to help deepen the divisions that are present within the working class (Miliband, 1985, p. 10).

He accepted that Marxists had tended to exaggerate the degree to which 'social being' must produce class and socialist consciousness in the working class, but new revisionism went to the other extreme of complete indeterminacy.

> The direction in which this leads is a subjectivism in which notions of class, structure, and society itself, cease to be regarded as proper tools of analysis. In this perspective, ideology turns into a supermarket in which diverse ideological constructs or discourses are freely available, one (or some) of which the working class (assuming there is such a thing) will choose, more or less at will… (Miliband, 1985, p. 13).

Against this, there was nothing deterministic about saying that the multiple alienations engendered in the working class must produce 'pressure, challenge, struggle, conflict' and an availability to ideas of radical change, renewal and even socialism. The 'primacy' of organized labour arose from the fact that no other group was remotely capable of mounting as effective and formidable a challenge to the existing structures of power and privilege. This did not mean that new social movements and other groups were not important or ought to surrender their separate identity. But the organized working class remained the necessary, indispensable 'agency of historical change'.

Miliband disagreed with the 'new revisionism' on several other issues. In particular, he maintained that the state must play a key role in any transition to socialism, and he was deeply critical of new currents of thought that suggested it could be replaced either by localism or by transnational agencies, such as the European Union.[15] He also condemned the notion that 'Thatcherism' had conquered the hearts and minds of a very large part of the working class and labour movement, and that the only way to counter this was through a broad liberal-left alliance, rather than through the advocacy of socialist

policies. And, more generally, he feared that the general mood of pessimism would undermine the belief in socialism, which was itself a precondition of its success.

Throughout the 1980s, both in his writing and in his engagement with 'Bennism', he was really trying to uphold these ideas. He no doubt under-estimated the extent to which social, economic and political changes were eroding his version of the socialist project, but the relevant point here is that, once again, Miliband was ambivalent about developments around the latest incarnation of the New Left. He wanted to help construct a broad socialist movement and was now happy to work with Labour Party activists. He was interested in understanding the currents of thought emanating from new social movements and appreciated their critiques of traditional socialist and labour movement organizations. But he was also attempting to sustain a version of Marxist theory and class politics that he feared was being undermined by elements on the Left as much as by the Right. And until 1989 he still hoped that politics of this kind would find expression in a new movement that might eventually lead to a new socialist party. It was only with the collapse of the Communist regimes that he really began to question these assumptions, in the belief that 'socialism has to be reinvented'.[16] But even in his attempt to do this in his posthumous book, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (1994b), he maintained the core of his long-term convictions.

## Conclusion

Miliband's constant insistence on socialism, rather than broad social movements, might give the impression that he was narrow or sectarian. This, some might argue, was out of keeping with the New Left as open, fluid and diverse. However, his position was certainly always in line with a statement by William Morris in 1885, quoted with approval by Stuart Hall in the first edition of New Left Review in 1960. 'The real business of Socialists', Morris had said, 'is to impress on the workers the fact that they are a class, whereas they ought to be Society….The work that lies before us at present is to make Socialists' (Hall, 1960, quoting Commonweal, July 1885). If this goal is taken to be the essence of the New Left, then Miliband was both a central figure and an entirely consistent one. Furthermore, his form of socialism was surely in keeping with some of the defining characteristics of the first phase of the New Left – and, indeed, became more so as time went on. For if, in 1956–57, it was the rejection of both social democracy and

communism that provided the impetus for the new development, he became still more explicit about this later. Thus his antipathy to the Soviet model became ever more complete after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, while his condemnation of the timidity of Social Democracy remained. In his posthumous book, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (1994b), he put forward a totally honest appraisal of the weaknesses and criminal failings of the Left, while proclaiming both the possibility of, and necessity for, a truly democratic form of socialism in the future.

Yet if there is a good case for viewing Miliband as central in this tradition of the New Left, he was also ambivalent about each stage in its development. In the first phase, he was concerned about its lack of organization and its apparent indifference to strategic thought about agencies. In 1968, he welcomed the challenge to established authority and the reawakened interest in Marxism, but was unhappy about the emotionalism and intolerance of some of the spontaneous student protests, opposed the Marcusian theory that now attracted support, and believed that both Trotskyism and Maoism were misconceived. And in the 1980s, while interested in the new social movements and prepared to work with them and the 'Bennist' forces in the Labour Party, he differed from both. He was fearful that 'new revisionism' would undermine socialism in theory and practice and he still doubted whether the Labour Party could ever be captured or transformed. Thus Miliband remained semi-detached from the New Left during each of its phases, for he was really always searching for something slightly different. We can gain an insight into what this was by considering his own self-description in some autobiographical notes written in 1983. These began as follows:

> I call this book a political autobiography because I mainly try to explain here the political priorities I have held since the age of sixteen – and I am now fifty nine. I think this may be of interest because the position I have always occupied is that of an independent Marxist, unattached to any party save for a few years in the fifties when …. I was a member of the Labour Party.
>
> In these forty odd years, I have not of course occupied exactly the same position throughout: but the variations have not been very great either. I have moved within a rather narrow spectrum, in some ways very narrow indeed. I don't claim this as a great virtue: such consistency may well be considered a failure of imagination, or of adventureness [sic] or a failure to learn. I take it less harshly. But however it is judged, the fact remains that what I thought as a

> young boy of sixteen does not, I believe, very greatly differ from what I think now, and has never very greatly varied. I have learnt a great deal, and I think much more (??) clearly and more intelligently than I did then: but on the great issues that make up one's 'world view', the variations are relatively small; or so at least I think....[17]

The key point here is that Miliband was suggesting that his views had remained almost the same since 1940: in other words, they had hardly been affected by the emergence and trajectory of the New Left. His conjunction of 'independent' and 'Marxist' as a self-designation is also significant. It suggested his view that there was a strand of Marxist thought that had been squeezed out by mainstream Communism and Social Democracy. If this could be recaptured and located in a political formation that would supersede the weaknesses of these dominant currents, it would, he thought, be possible to build a truly socialist society. During his abortive search for an organization through which 'independent Marxism' could be resuscitated he made a very significant contribution to socialist and New Left thought. But he believed that the elusive key to success lay in the tradition of an 'old Left' as much as a new one: in recapturing the spirit of mass socialist parties before they had been corrupted by Soviet Communism and Western Social Democracy.

## Notes

1 E.P. Thompson to Miliband, 25 January (?) 1959, Ralph Miliband's private papers. (All references to correspondence are from Miliband's papers, unless otherwise stated. The papers are now lodged in Leeds University Library).
2 Letter to E.P. Thompson and John Saville, 18 February 1959.
3 Letter to E.P. Thompson, 1 April 1960.
4 E.P. Thompson to Miliband, 12 June 1958.
5 *Ibid*.
6 E.P. Thompson to Miliband, 13 April 1960.
7 There were also practical issues involved, which Miliband failed to appreciate fully. The burdens on Thompson in producing *New Reasoner* had been overwhelming and the merged journal appeared to offer great advantages financially and organizationally, as well as politically.
8 He disagreed with all the Trotskyist and Maoist groups about the possibility or desirability of insurrection as a means of revolutionary change in advanced capitalist societies, and he differed from the International Socialists (IS), on their interpretation of the Soviet bloc countries as 'state capitalist'.
9 Letter to Mr Truman, 2 May 1968.
10 However, he was enthusiastic about the changes effected by Gorbachev in 1987–88 and, for a short time, again believed that the Soviet Union might be moving towards socialist democracy.

11 'The Case for an Independent Socialist Party: A Discussion Paper', n.d. June 1974 (Miliband Papers).
12 Notes sent to Robin Blackburn, 5 March 1981 (Miliband Papers).
13 The membership charter invited 'all those who believe that the building of a genuine socialist strategy must be the collective work of all those oppressed or exploited by capitalism, and who are prepared to work actively for the creation of a society in which: 1) The domination of a ruling class and the institutions of the capitalist state have been replaced by democratic control of economic, political and social life; 2) Capitalist ownership and control of the means of production, distribution and exchange have been replaced by their public ownership, popular control and workers' self management; 3) Women have full and equal status as a result of the transformation of social, family and sexual relationships in ways that ensure that all forms of sexual oppression and violence have been eradicated; 4) All types of discrimination, oppression and privilege have been removed, including those based on class, race, gender, sexual preference, age, disability and religious belief; 5) There is popular control of, and access to, education and cultural institutions and the means of communication; 6) There is freedom of expression and association; 7) Participation in the production and consumption of goods and services moves progressively towards the point at which it is based on the socialist principle of 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs'; 8) The indiscriminate exploitation of the environment has been ended by the consolidation of the socially and ecologically responsible use of resources; 9) All forms of militarism and state coercion have been replaced by a popular militia and democratic communal control of necessary legal processes; 10) All imperialist and neocolonial relationships have been replaced by international socialist policies and solidarity with liberation movements' (Miliband Papers).
14 Hand written notes, 23 January 1982 (Miliband papers).
15 For Miliband's views on the EU, see Newman (2002: 332–4) and Miliband (1994b: 109, 179–8).
16 Letter to John Saville, 13 September 1989.
17 Notes towards an Autobiography (1st draft), April/May 1983 (unpublished; Miliband papers).

# 3

# Parliamentary Socialism, Labourism and Beyond

*Peter Burnham*

> The experience of societies that have undergone a revolutionary change under socialist leadership … has been well documented … but less has been written about the attempts made to bring about social change in bourgeois democracies, when social democratic governments have been elected to office on radical political programmes, that might, if implemented, have actually changed the balance of power in a significant way (Tony Benn, 1989, p. 130).

As a discipline, political science, unlike sociology, neither attracts nor produces many radicals, let alone Marxists. Ralph Miliband was a notable exception. Leo Panitch (1995, p. 1) notes that he stood as a beacon on the international Left, and there is little doubt that at the time of his death he was the most well known Marxist intellectual in Britain. Given Miliband's enormous contribution and influence it is a little ironic that he is now principally remembered for his role in the rather sterile 'Miliband/Poulantzas state debate' and for his critique of pluralism in *The State in Capitalist Society*. Published in 1961, *Parliamentary Socialism* has largely been consigned to the category of dry, specialist, labour history text seen as having little relevance to contemporary debates and thought by many to have been superseded by his later work. However, a close reading and re-reading of *Parliamentary Socialism*, particularly in the light of the experience of the Blair government, reveals this to be Miliband's finest achievement both in terms of analytical rigour and engagement with the most fundamental and difficult issues surrounding the limits of social democracy and the politics of socialism. In short, this chapter will argue it is high time that the Miliband/Poulantzas debate was recognized as a footnote in Miliband's career

and we returned to the more significant issues that preoccupied him throughout his academic life and that led to the production of *Parliamentary Socialism*.

From the early 1940s until his death in May 1994 Miliband considered himself to be a 'revolutionary socialist or communist', although he was never a member of the Communist Party (Miliband quoted in Panitch, 1995, p. 4; Miliband, 1994a, p. 2). As he explained in his review of 30 years of the *Socialist Register*, 'I had always viewed myself as an independent socialist, who had joined the Labour Party in the early 1950s as a way of working with Labour Left people whose leader (insofar as he was willing to lead at all) was then Aneurin Bevan; and I had left the Labour Party around 1960, when this no longer seemed worth doing' (Miliband, 1994a, p. 2). Working with John Saville and others, who occupied a position on the political spectrum well on the left of social democracy, Miliband penned *Parliamentary Socialism* to analyse the consequences Labour's deep commitment to parliamentarism had had for the party and the Labour movement since the formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900. The book was not intended to be a comprehensive history of the Labour Party or the labour movement but nevertheless Miliband recognized the importance of historical analysis inasmuch as 'the present difficulties can only be properly understood by seeing them in the perspective of what has gone before' (Miliband, 1972, p. 16). In essence, *Parliamentary Socialism* addressed the fundamental issue facing those interested in the transition to socialism in Britain (and, by implication, elsewhere): to what extent could the Labour Party – a non-socialist organization since its inception – be transformed into a socialist party, to re-cast the social order and become the agent for the creation of a Socialist Commonwealth? This, in many ways, is still a crucial question and Miliband's answer repays careful consideration.

## Why no socialism?

Miliband begins his long historical analysis by rejecting three assumptions that are often made in respect of the Labour Party, the labour movement and socialism. Firstly, while accepting Henry Pelling's observation that the Party was subject to an influx of liberals in the period 1900–14, Miliband does not see this as a sufficient explanation for the failure of the Party to develop socialist policies. In fact, he notes, 'in the bitter conflicts of those years – the most stormy period of British politics in this century – it was inevitable that the Labour Party

should side with the Liberals against the Conservatives. What was less inevitable was that the Labour Party's voice should be reduced to a muffled plaint, which could barely be heard above the impassioned chorus of debate that rose over such issues as the reform of the House of Lords and Irish Home Rule' (Miliband, 1972, p. 23). Liberals may have exerted a moderating influence on the Party but it was the Labour leaders' acceptance of the parliamentary system and their rejection of any other kind of political action (for instance, industrial action for political ends) that Miliband focused on as constituting the essence of Labour's politics and the reason for the de-radicalization of the labour movement. In this respect, Miliband's analysis has been confirmed by more recent research (for instance Aris, 1998) which shows the extent to which Labour leaders were all too easily co-opted by the state and accepted in full the separation, crucial to the maintenance of capitalist rule, between industrial and political action. Secondly, Miliband rejects the common determinist assumption that external events, adverse circumstances and crisis can explain the failure of Labour governments to live up even to their own modest aspirations. In modern guise this argument often surfaces in terms of the impact of so-called globalization and external constraints on national governments. Whilst acknowledging the importance of context, Miliband responds by noting, 'governments do have to take account of a variety of more or less compelling circumstances; but their actions and policies are very seldom wholly determined by them – those who find themselves in command of the political executive do have a certain degree of freedom of choice' (Miliband, 1966, p. 12). Above all, for Miliband it is the prior ideological and political commitments of individuals that conditions and determines their reaction to events. Explanations couched in terms of adverse circumstances, entrenched conservatism of civil servants, machinations of speculators, slender parliamentary majorities etc, are not in his view sufficient to account for the direction of policy. No doubt these factors are real but, 'they would have been tackled very differently had these men had a genuinely more radical approach to affairs. Not only would the solutions have been different: the problems themselves would have been differently perceived' (Miliband, 1972, pp. 360–1). Moreover, it is 'quite fallacious' and 'part of the dream world in which many people in the Labour movement choose to live' to believe that more favourable circumstances would have produced more radical programmes and 'new socialist boldness' (Miliband, 1966, p. 12). This view has clearly influenced many modern radical authors, particularly in respect of perceptions of the constraint of 'global-

ization'. Panitch (2001, pp. 374–5) for instance, is certainly in the Miliband tradition when he argues that, 'nation states are not the victims of globalization, they are the authors of globalization … this means that any adequate strategy to challenge globalization must begin at home, precisely because of the key role of states in making globalization happen'. Thirdly, Miliband is at pains to refute the view that the Labour Party's moderate stance is a result of the need to 'adjust' to the demands of the 'affluent society' and of the changing composition and character of the working class, which it is commonly assumed, has eroded drastically the support Labour might expect from its 'natural' constituency. Again, he is careful to acknowledge that the Labour Party has suffered a steady loss of electoral support from its peak achievement in 1951, when it secured 48.8% of votes cast (in 1997 it only polled 43.2% of votes cast [Parliamentary Research Services, 2003, p. 9]). It is also of course the case that 'traditional' occupations and industrial production have declined and been replaced to some extent by the so-called service sector. This much is not in doubt. The question however is 'what impact these and other changes in the working class may have had on its political attitudes' (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 106), and it is here that a 'shoddy sociology' is often invoked by 'anti-socialist politicians and commentators in the Labour Party and outside as part of an endeavour to rid the Labour Party of those of its commitments which ran counter to their own "moderate" positions' (Miliband, 1983b1, pp. 104–5). For Miliband the historical record indicates that there is no direct relationship between 'poverty', 'affluence' and political commitment. A substantial part of the working class has never supported Labour. Even in the interwar years of depression, mass unemployment and the Means Test orchestrated by a 'National' Conservative government, Labour fared badly securing only 30.7% of the vote in 1931 and 37.9% in 1935 compared to the National Conservatives who with the National Liberals polled 60.7% in 1931 and 53.5% of the vote in 1935 (Parliamentary Research Services, 2004, p. 10). Put simply, 'poverty' and 'affluence' are too abstract as categories to explain social behaviour and political commitment: 'just as the belief that poverty, as such, produces militant reactions is contradicted by the evidence, so the attribution to "affluence" of a soporific social effect is equally doubtful' (Miliband, 1964, p. 101). Furthermore the language of 'modernization' and 'rethink' is as old as the Party itself with the 'newness' of the electorate invoked after each election defeat as the reason to further dilute policies and programmes and adopt more 'moderate' positions.

The weaknesses identified by Miliband in these attempts to explain the Labour Party's lack of socialist promise and the increased disillusionment

of the labour movement, led him to develop an original and persuasive explanation focused on the Labour leadership's commitment to parliamentarism and labourism. Above all, he claims, it is this commitment which has de-radicalized the working class in Britain and which is responsible for Labour's shrinking vote.

## Parliamentarism and labourism

Devotion to the parliamentary system, and the rejection of all other forms of political action, is for Miliband the hallmark of the British Labour Party. It is a characteristic shared by Labour's political and industrial leaders. Both, Miliband argues, have been equally determined that 'the Labour Party should not stray from the narrow path of parliamentary politics' (Miliband, 1972, p. 13). In this respect the Party's integration into the parliamentary system had its parallel in the, albeit uneven, integration of the trade unions into the framework of modern capitalism. This commitment to parliamentarism is allied to an ideology of adaptation which he terms, labourism: an ideology which has moved Labour's leaders for over a century. Although largely implicit in the 1961 version of *Parliamentary Socialism*, it is nevertheless possible to identify five principal aspects of the ideology of labourism.

Firstly, as an ideology of adaptation, labourism is far from a systematic body of thought. In fact, its adherents make a virtue of their 'practical' sense, their rejection of 'theory' and their freedom from all 'isms' – apart of course from parliamentarism which is their fixed point of reference (Miliband, 1972, p. 13; Miliband, 1983b1, p. 107). Central to this empirical, flexible pragmatism is the detestation of Marxism and of all serious attempts to move towards a socialist society. Miliband is emphatic: Labour leaders are 'not socialists who for some reason or other have lost their way … they are bourgeois politicians … they have no intention whatsoever of adopting, let alone carrying out, policies which would begin in earnest the process of socialist transformation in Britain' (Miliband, 1972, p. 373). Secondly, labourism is concerned first and foremost with 'the advancement of concrete demands of immediate advantage to the working class and organized labour' (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 107). In other words, on the political level Labour leaders will seek to ameliorate the immediate ills and some of the most glaring injustices of capitalism (a concern with public services and allowances/benefits) whilst industrial leaders will accept the limits of 'responsible' unionism restricting their actions to bargaining over terms and conditions of employment. This reformist agenda does not constitute an

alternative approach to the development of a new social order. Rather, Miliband notes, from the late 1940s Fabianism was rejected by the Party and reformism was adopted as a piecemeal strategy representing an adaptation to capitalism: 'the leaders of the Labour Party ... may occasionally prattle on about socialism, but this, on any serious view of the matter, lacks all effective meaning' (Miliband, 1972, p. 373). Thirdly, labourism involves a general acceptance of capitalist 'rationality'. This helps explain why reforms were generally so modest based on perceptions of 'affordability', and why Labour governments 'so quickly and so regularly moved from being agents of reform to being agents of conservative retrenchment, more concerned to contain pressure from below than to advance labour's demands' (Miliband, 1983b1, pp. 107–8). This acceptance of the logic of capitalism also helped foster a paternalistic, managerial approach to 'society' and its 'problems'. Labour leaders could now be cast in the role of reformist social planners (in the capitalist context of course) solving problems with 'the kind of good will, intelligence, knowledge and compassion which their Conservative opponents somehow lacked' (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 108). Fourthly, the ideology of labourism is based on a restricted view of democracy which sees liberal capitalist democracy (the British model) as the most developed and rational form of government conceivable. Grass roots activism, direct democracy and extra-parliamentary activity all fall outside the ideological spectrum of labourism. Politics, in this model, is the preserve of the Parliamentary Party and in general terms there is neither interest nor enthusiasm in extending the political sphere to the working class or in mounting a sustained campaign of education on behalf of a socialist or even a reformist programme. Miliband (1983b1, p. 118) is emphatic: 'ever since the Labour Party became a substantial electoral and political force, Labour leaders have taken the view – and have persuaded many of their followers to take the view – that government was all; and that politics is about elections: on the one side, there is power, on the other, paralysis'. Furthermore, even within this framework, Labour leaders have shown little concern to reform the organization of the British state 'so as to change the closed, oligarchic and profoundly conservative character of its administrative, judicial, police and military branches' (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 108). Finally, labourism has a profoundly conservative and nationalistic approach to defence and foreign affairs. Sensitive to charges of being unpatriotic, Labour governments have sought to reassure foreign governments and investors and have continued long established trends in foreign policy (for example, the American alliance and NATO).

In combination, these elements constitute an ideology of modest social reform squarely within the confines of capitalist society enabling the Labour Party to play a major role in the management of discontent. Although socialist ideologies have been present within the labour movement, they have nevertheless been marginal in comparison with labourism. It is labourism, Miliband contends, that slowly made its way in the working class, became an acceptable perspective to a substantial part of it and it is labourism which, from its peak in 1951, has been losing support in the working class (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 109). This is a powerful and far-reaching critique of the politics of Labour and is as relevant today as it was in 1960. Two particularly important questions arise from Miliband's analysis. Firstly, what evidence is there that labourism is responsible for the crisis of the labour movement in Britain? Secondly, is it necessarily the case that the Labour Party and its leadership will remain committed to labourism?

## The consequences of labourism

The years 1945–48 are seen by Miliband as the climax of labourism. In housing, education, welfare and health, Attlee could boast a list of achievements (alongside the consolidation of political independence for India, Burma and Ceylon). These achievements, Miliband (1972, p. 286) notes, were 'real and of permanent importance'. Yet, even in these first crucial years of reform the 'Government's impact upon post-war Britain was profoundly ambiguous' (Miliband, 1972, p. 286). Contrary to views of Labour intellectuals such as Anthony Crosland (1956; Saville, 1995, p. 229), who argued in the 1950s that Britain was no longer a fully fledged capitalist society, Miliband (1972, p. 287) emphasized the modest character of the social advances and the extent to which the Attlee government 'made it its business to moderate and discipline' the working class in respect of their claims and their expectations. Nationalization was employed, not to transform, but to improve the efficiency of the capitalist economy and in general terms government intervention in economic affairs 'presented no serious challenge to the power of the men who continued to control the country's economic resources' (*Ibid.*, p. 291). By 1948 the government's reforming zeal was all but exhausted and 'consolidation' became the watchword as Attlee's team headed towards defeat in 1951. Of particular interest to Miliband (1994b, p. 146; Saville, 1995, p. 235) was the role played by Labour in containing Left militancy, a role which became more pronounced after 1945 turning 'social democratic parties into invaluable

allies of conservative parties'. On all major issue, he notes (Miliband, 1994b, p. 146) 'there existed in fact a fundamental consensus between social democratic leaders and their conservative opponents … [and] … the Communist bogey was a most valuable weapon in the hands of social democratic leaders'. Labour governments would pursue policies broadly acceptable to domestic and international capital (on whose help and co-operation they relied) and 'in so doing, they were naturally compelled to turn themselves into agencies of retrenchment and containment' (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 109). After three successive election defeats in the 1950s – and the publication of research which indicated that between seven and eight million people in Britain were still living below a defined 'national assistance' standard (Saville, 1995, p. 230) – it was clear to Miliband that labourism had revealed itself altogether inadequate as a basis for policy and action. It was, he concluded (Miliband, 1972, p. 344), becoming 'increasingly difficult to evade the question of Labour's ultimate purpose'. The social and economic changes associated with Attlee had not eradicated the fundamental conflict of interest between the working class and capital and if politics in the 1950s seemed a 'decreasingly meaningful activity, void of substance, heedless of principle, and rich in election auctioneering, the responsibility is not only that of the hidden or overt persuaders: it is also, and to a large degree, that of Labour's leaders' (*Ibid.*, p. 349). Unable to articulate a socialist alternative to Conservative politics the Labour Party not only lost elections but also failed in the fundamental task of political education.

The Wilson governments 1964–70 and the Wilson/Callaghan administration 1974–79 further alienated and antagonized masses of actual or potential Labour supporters both inside and outside the working class (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 110). Among the 'failures, derelictions and betrayals' of these governments, Miliband notes Wilson's subordination to the existing economic system (no wish to mount an assault on the commanding heights of the economy), his concern for class harmony (matched only by Ramsey MacDonald), his acquiescent foreign policy (particularly in relation to the US) and his concern to deal firmly with labour 'indiscipline'. It was, of course, the Wilson/Callaghan government, elected on the basis of one of the most radical sounding manifesto programmes ever devised by Labour, that inaugurated monetarist policies, launched repeated attacks on public expenditure affecting health, education, housing and transport, and waged war on industrial activism. Moreover, none of these policies could claim any measure of success: 'after a combined period of eleven years of Labour Governments

from 1964 until 1979, with a Conservative interruption of only four years, there was no major improvement in the British condition to which Labour could point' (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 110). Meanwhile, Miliband notes, the rich prospered and so did a Labour state bourgeoisie loud in its denunciation of militants and wreckers. In short, from 1948 onwards Labour has failed to deliver for the working class with the result that there has been a progressive alienation of Labour supporters and, more significantly, disillusionment with socialism in its labourist guise.

The history of the Labour Party since Thatcherism confirms the analysis made by Miliband (1972, p. 344) in 1960 that 'there is at least logic in revisionist demands for the Labour Party's retreat, in practice if not in rhetoric, from Labourism to a suitably contemporary version of Liberalism'. A 'genuine compromise' between revisionism and socialist purposes is of course impossible, but a 'verbal compromise' accompanied by a concerted effort to disempower activists would ensure the predominance of policies favoured by a revisionist leadership (Miliband, 1972, p. 345). Panitch and Leys (2001, p. 237) suggest that the organizational changes pushed through by Kinnock, Smith and Blair have indeed disempowered activists and paved the way for a policy accommodation with neo-liberalism. New Labour's 'Third Way' (supposedly steering a way between market efficiency and social justice) bears many of the hallmarks of MacDonald's and Wilson's rhetoric of class harmony but in a context which looks increasingly to the market to resolve difficult governing problems. New Labour's third term has also begun to draw comparisons with Wilson in respect of the public's disillusionment not only with a subservient and disastrous foreign policy but also with the scandal of the Private Finance Initiative and inability to deliver on public services and basic welfare. Even after almost a decade of the Blair administration, 11.4 million people in Britain were living in households below the low income threshold – a much higher rate than in the early 1980s (http://www.poverty.org.uk – accessed August 2006). In electoral terms this disillusionment is reflected in Labour's share of the vote plummeting from 43.2% in 1997 to 40.7% in 2001 and down to 35.2% in 2005 (http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk – accessed August 2006). Once again Labour looks to be facing the progressive alienation of masses of potential Labour voters from the Labour Party, a situation Miliband discussed at length in the early 1980s (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 110). His argument, to be clear, was not of course that 'the working class wanted more socialism and turned away from Labour because Labour Governments did not give it to them' (*Ibid.*, p. 110). Rather the negative side of the government's record disillusioned Labour

voters, producing a crisis in the Party which could no longer be easily differentiated from the Conservative and Liberal opposition. The consequence of the failure of labourism (and New Labourism) is a crisis of social democracy for the Party and the labour movement. This discussion leads on to the second important area of analysis developed by Miliband: to what extent can the Labour Party ever become a party of socialist transformation?

## Labour and socialism

A year before his death in 1994 Miliband outlined three distinct positions in respect of the Labour Party and the politics of the transition to socialism (1994a, p. 7). Firstly there was the view that socialists had no alternative but to work inside the Labour Party and try to push it in more radical directions. The second position called for the creation of a new socialist party and was based on the view that neither the Labour Party, nor any other – and certainly not the Communist Party – would be able to establish a socialist presence within the labour movement. Finally, he identified a version of 'Beyond the Fragments' in which new social movements and grass roots organizations would take the place of, and become more important, than parties.

Miliband's own view oscillated between the first and second positions identified above. In 1960, he ended the first edition of *Parliamentary Socialism* noting that the growth of trade union radicalism combined with the radicalization of youth around issues such as nuclear war had the potential to transcend the orthodoxies of labourism. The battle for the Labour Party, and in particular the strength of opposition to Gaitskell's proposed revision of Clause 4, led Miliband (1972, p. 347) to conclude that the trade union movement (rather than trade union leaders) could form the basis for 'consistent pressure for more radical Labour policies' including more democratic control, greater measures of nationalization and new initiatives in international affairs. However, less than ten years later, in the Postscript to the second edition, he noted that the groundswell of militancy had been 'curbed and subdued' by the policies and activities of the Wilson government 1964–70. It was now clear, he argued, that 'the belief in the effective transformation of the Labour Party into an instrument of socialist policies is the most crippling of all illusions to which socialists in Britain have been prone' (Miliband, 1976, p. 128). Miliband advanced three reasons to support this statement. First, those who believe that Labour leaders can be persuaded or compelled to accept socialist policies 'grossly underestimate

the strength of the Labour leaders' ideological and political commitment to the positions they hold, and which do not include the perspectives which animate their socialist followers' (Miliband, 1972, p. 373). Labour leaders would resist with utmost determination all attempts to foist socialist policies on them and even if the Labour Left assumed a stronger position, the Labour Right would still remain deeply entrenched and committed to labourism. In such circumstances Labour would be torn by fundamental dissension and be undermined from within and would not therefore be an appropriate instrument for advancing socialist policies in Britain (Miliband, 1977a, p. 47). Second, the argument that a new radical Labour leader could transform the Party ignores the fact that such a change would have to 'engineered from within the ranks of the Parliamentary Labour Party' and this is precisely where the Left is at its weakest (Miliband, 1972, p. 375). Left parliamentarians, Miliband notes, operate within the rules of a game designed to limit their capacity and willingness to challenge leaders – 'they are required to behave "loyally" and to accept compromise in order to maintain the "unity" of the Party' (*Ibid.*, p. 375). Exceptions such as Tony Benn are rare – and Miliband held Benn in high esteem noting that he had been explicit, specific and thorough in his denunciation of the economic, social and political power structure in Britain (Miliband, 1985, p. 16) – and are likely to remain bitterly at odds with the permanent majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) that shares its leaders' commitment to labourism. Similarly, it would be a mistake to believe that the bulk of the trade union movement had the inclination or the power to bring about sweeping changes in the leadership of the Party. In general terms trade union leaders, despite their bluster, saw themselves as representatives of organized labour not as political rivals bent on taking control of the Labour Party. Finally, Miliband (1977a, p. 47) notes, those who believe in the potential transformation of the Party, grossly overestimate the strength of socialist forces in the Party and in the labour movement at large. It is not the case that 'powerful socialist forces are already assembled and only waiting for new and resolute commanders in place of the old ones to move to the assault of capitalism' (*Ibid.*, p. 47). In fact, the socialist movement, he notes, is 'quite weak' and will remain so if trapped within a Labour Party dominated by labourism. A challenge to British capitalism, which is of course also 'a challenge to international capitalism' (Miliband, 1972, p. 374), could not be undertaken without a substantial and far-reaching programme of socialist education supporting a Party capable of attracting a mass following.

Although Miliband wavered somewhat in the early 1980s – always looking for the activism that had inspired his qualified optimism of 1960 (see Miliband, 1983b1, p. 117) – the position he adopted in 1972, and reaffirmed throughout the 1970s (1976, 1977a), that a new socialist party must be brought into existence, remained with him until his death in 1994. However, Miliband was quite aware that he (and his colleagues at the *Socialist Register*) had not adequately addressed the question of socialist construction 'with anything like the rigorous and detailed concern that it requires' (Miliband, 1994a, p. 6). Nevertheless, he indicated that the Party was most likely to be a product of people new to political parties as well as defectors from Labour and Left groupings. This would lend the Party, at least initially, a 'federal form and join in a more or less loose alliance different groupings of people' (Miliband, 1977a, p. 49). Secondly, the Party could not be built on narrow doctrinal sectarianism or 'adventurist sloganeering'. Authoritarianism and dogmatism would not attract mass support and so a new Party would have to start with the acknowledgement that 'it is a group of people bred in different traditions, attracted to different perspectives, and even belonging to different factions' (Miliband, 1976, p. 138; 1977a, p. 50). In terms of orientation, programme and policies, Miliband identified three starting points. Initially, a main concern would be the 'democratization of the whole structure of government' (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 117). This would involve the abolition of anti-trade union legislation; the curbing of police powers and the placing of the police under effective democratic control; and the end of the British military presence in Northern Ireland. In respect of the economy, the Party would be pledged to the re-nationalization of privatized industries and the extension of public ownership in a variety of forms with the greatest possible measure of democratic control. Finally, in terms of defence and foreign policy, the Party would be committed to the nuclear disarmament of Britain and the end of British support for aggressive US foreign policy (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 117).

In order to build support for such policies Miliband (1983b1, p. 118) recognized that a socialist party would have to defend socialist perspectives and a socialist programme over an extended period of time and in any case 'a socialist party would not only be concerned with office, but with the creation of the conditions under which office would be more than the management of affairs on capitalist lines'. A socialist party could exert influence on everyday life irrespective of the 'party of government' particularly by building on what Miliband (1978a, p. 402) termed the 'state of de-subordination' of the working class. Those in

subordinate positions, he explained (*Ibid.*, p. 402; 1983b1, p. 119), 'notably the people who work in factories, mines, offices, shops, schools, hospitals and so on do what they can to mitigate, resist and transform the conditions of their subordination'. This resistance can be the ground on which socialist work could effectively proceed. In short, socialist work would not be the political work typical of labourist parties. Rather it would mean intervention in all areas of life touched by class struggle: 'for class struggle must be taken to mean not only the permanent struggle between capital and labour, crucial though that remains, but the struggle against racial and sex discrimination, the struggle against arbitrary state and police power, the struggle against the ideological hegemony of the conservative forces, and the struggle for new and radically different defence and foreign policies' (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 120).

Miliband's commitment to building socialism and socialist consciousness had clear overlaps with those who advocated a 'Beyond the Fragments' viewpoint. However on two crucial issues he differed from the 'rainbow coalition', civil society camp. Firstly, he was adamant that 'the primacy of organized labour in struggle arises from the fact that no other group, movement of force in capitalist society is remotely capable of mounting as effective and formidable a challenge to the existing structures of power and privilege' (Miliband, 1985, p. 13 quoted in Panitch, 1995, p. 16). The support of trade unionists, rather than trade unions, would be vital to the success of the organization. Secondly, it would be equally vital for the state to have a role in the whole process of transition. In sum, it would be necessary to 'combine state power with class power from below, in a system of dual power which brings into play an array of popular forces, parties, trade unions, workers' councils, local government, women's groups, black caucuses, activists of every sort in a democratic exercise of power and maximum self government in the productive process and every sphere of life' (*Ibid.*, pp. 15–16 quoted in Panitch, 1995, p. 16).

## Assessing *Parliamentary Socialism*

*Parliamentary Socialism* is a classic text which succeeds in its attempt to demystify the character and policies of the Labour Party and Labour governments. In relation to Benn's comments that open this chapter, it is one of the few texts that aims to chart historically the limits of social change in bourgeois democracies. This, of course, is not undertaken purely for academic purposes but as guide to action: 'the necessary first step … is to take a realistic view of the Labour Party, of what it

can and of what it cannot be expected to do. For it is only on the basis of such a view that socialists can begin to discuss their most important task of all, which is the creation of an authentic socialist movement in Britain' (Miliband, 1966, p. 24). Miliband's analysis of the character and consequences of labourism may have provoked controversy at the time of publication (note Saville, 1995; and Coates, 1973) but in the wake of Labour's defeat in 1983 most radical commentators had begun to argue that 'the future of the Left lies in the consolidation of a new strength outside Parliament' (Coates, 1983, p. 101). The views expressed by Miliband also proved remarkably prescient in respect of the future of the Labour Party. Sensing the 'marked and accelerating drift to the right in Britain' (Miliband, 1976, p. 140), Miliband indicated that a likely scenario would be 'a thorough purge of the left in the Labour Party, extending far beyond the Militant Tendency' involving a redrawing of constitutional rules to reduce the influence of activists and to increase the powers of the Labour leadership (Miliband, 1983b1, p. 116). A consolidation of the Labour right along such lines would, he noted, be welcomed by trade union leaders, a large majority of parliamentarians and the media: 'and an enticing vision of electoral victory and a Labour Government would be held out as the reward for reasonableness and moderation' (*Ibid.*, p. 115). The extent of Blair's commitment to neo-liberalism could not have been foreseen but Miliband's (1972, p. 376) central view that 'the Labour Party remains, in practice, what it always has been – a party of modest social reform in a capitalist society within whose confines it is ever more firmly and by now irrevocably rooted' could not have been more apposite.

There are however two areas of Miliband's analysis that call for more critical attention. The first concerns the relationship between political power and the class character of the state, and the second the politics of the transcendence of capitalism. Miliband's study of labourism and in particular of why the Left would be unlikely to transform a Labour government is of lasting significance to those interested in socialist advance. It does however posit a fairly straightforward relationship between state power and the introduction of socialist policies. In other words, it carries the assumption that if the state were captured by a socialist Labour government it could transform capitalism and be the agent of socialist transformation. This view represents a simplified version of Miliband's theory of the state as discussed in *The State in Capitalist Society* and is the essence of his criticism of the Attlee government's policies of 'consolidation' begun in 1948. As Miliband (1973b, pp. 50–1) later clarified, 'state power' lies in the institutions which

make up the 'state system' (government, military, police etc) and it is wielded by those occupying leading positions in those institutions – the 'state elite'. The conclusion of much political sociology, he argues (Miliband, 1973b, p. 61), is that 'in terms of social origin, education and class situation, the men who have manned *all* command positions in the state system have largely, and in many cases overwhelmingly, been drawn from the world of business and property, or from the professional middle classes'. In short, it is the social composition of the state elite that creates 'its general outlook, ideological dispositions and political bias' (Miliband, 1973b, p. 63). This, above all else for Miliband (*Ibid.*, p. 69), explains why governments should 'wish to help business in every possible way' and see the 'national interest' as bound up in the fortunes of capitalist enterprise. Deriving largely from similarities in social background and shared bourgeois values, the state elite exhibit a political bias to those who control economic power. Economic power is increasingly concentrated and in this context of generalized inequality the state acts as the 'guardian and protector' of the economic interests which are dominant in class societies.

This view strongly implies that the 'state system' is in theoretical terms almost an empty vessel, existing 'external' to the 'economy', and whose character depends fundamentally on the 'general outlook, ideological dispositions and political bias' of the 'state elite'. As an approach to the state it has long been criticized in Marxist circles for its overt 'politicist' overtones (see for example Holloway and Picciotto, 1977). This is not to reaffirm the usual 'structuralist' Marxist critique of Miliband since Poulantzas is also guilty of 'politicism' in his analysis of the 'relative autonomy' of the state. Rather it is to stress the importance of viewing the state as a social form which may appear in capitalism to be an autonomous independent 'thing' unrelated to other 'things' but which Marx's method reveals to be a historically determined aspect of the social relations of production. As Clarke (1988, p. 130) succinctly clarifies, 'the class character of the capitalist state is not a matter of the subordination of the state to the power of a particular class, but is inherent in the very form of capitalist state power'. The process through which the capitalist state emerged represented a change in the form of the state, 'underlying which was a change in the social relations of production' (*Ibid.*, p. 130). In terms of the transcendence of capitalism, this analysis argues that the limits of social democracy are not simply the limits of leadership or political programmes but are the limits of the capitalist state form itself. The task of socialism therefore is not a matter of developing new policies to be imposed on the working class through

the alienated form of the state but to 'challenge the division between civil society and the state' by giving working class struggles a political form which expresses the unity of the movement against the sectionalism and fragmentation of its component parts (Clarke, 1988, pp. 364–5). Crucial to this view is overcoming the separation between political and industrial struggles (which in itself reproduces the dualism of state and civil society).

Miliband (1994b) began to recognize this in his final publication which as noted above pointed to the necessity of a 'dual power' approach combining state power with class power from below. However, a more thorough-going critique, and one based on a firmer understanding of the class character of the capitalist state would need to recognize the current position of labour in the context of 'globalization'. It is in this sense that Panitch's (2001) current work on a Strategy for Labour builds on the foundations carefully laid by Miliband whilst resisting those elements of Miliband that could be interpreted as overly 'statist'. It is a valuable legacy which enables Panitch and others to argue for the need to refound, reorganize, democratize and politicize labour, socialist and other radical movements to forge a 'unity of purpose out of strategies of inclusiveness rather than representing diversity' (Panitch, 2001, p. 370). A transitional 'structured movement', rather than a 'state', to develop anti-capitalist strategies would not seek to represent or exclude broad-based coalitions and organizations nationally and internationally but would act as a focal point for capacity building enabling such groupings to take 'responsibility for democracy upon themselves' (Wainwright, 2003, p. xviii). Current reflections on how to 're-invent solidarity in this era of globalization' (Panitch, 2001, p. 389) may seem a long way removed from Miliband's attempt to chart the failures of Attlee and Gaitskell, but it is unlikely that socialist debate would have 'moved on' so quickly without Miliband's attempt in 1960 to dissipate the paralysing illusions about the true purpose and role of the Labour Party.

# 4

# On Moving on from 'Moving On': Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics

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> Miliband's writings have been a vital resource for all those who wished to rescue the cause of socialism from the accommodations of social democracy and the brutalities of Stalinism (Blackburn, 1994, p. 16).

This essay examines Ralph Miliband's attempt to provide a theoretical justification for the creation of a new socialist organization independent of both Stalinism and Labourism. Despite the fact that Miliband ultimately failed to realize this project, it is my contention that the questions he asked about socialist politics and the answers he suggested to these questions continue to offer a rich source of insight that commands serious and critical attention from the left.

While Miliband had been thinking about the possibility of building an independent socialist organization since the 1950s, it was not until the publication of 'Moving On' in 1976 that he explicitly argued for the formation of such a party. Moreover, his readers had to wait until the publication of *Marxism and Politics* a year later for a rigorous and comprehensive defense of this argument. Nevertheless, whereas Miliband articulated a powerful case for a new party in these essays, in the years leading up to his death in 1994 he concluded that the hope of constructing a socialist alternative to the Labour Party was no longer viable. Thus, in the posthumously published *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (1994b), he argued that 'the best the left can hope for in the relevant future … is the strengthening of left reformism as a current of thought and policy in social democratic parties' (Miliband, 1994b, p. 148).

One might interpret this evolution in his strategic thinking as a reasonable response to, first, the defeats suffered by the workers' movement in Britain and elsewhere in the intervening years, and, second,

the growing hegemony of neo-liberalism, as social democracy in the West and Stalinism in the East collapsed in the face of the Thatcher-Reagan Juggernaut. However, despite the superficial plausibility of this interpretation of Miliband's late political trajectory, it does not square with his initial reaction to these events. For, in the mid-1980s and again in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, he was amongst the most fervent critics of those left-wing intellectuals who moved to make their peace with social democracy (Miliband, 1985, 1989a, 1989, 1991a).

In this essay, I suggest that Miliband's retreat from the arguments of 'Moving On' reflected not a pragmatic response to the events of the last decade or so of his life, but rather that these events illuminated weaknesses with his earlier theorization of socialist organization. Specifically, I argue that throughout his oeuvre he did not adequately conceptualize the difference between Lenin's contribution to Marxism, and the ideology of 'Leninism' as it was articulated in Russia in the 1920s. Moreover, I suggest that this lacuna in Miliband's discussion of revolutionary politics is best understood in the context of his reluctance to provide a full account of Stalinism. Finally, I argue that Miliband's politics were only weakly anchored in an analysis of class struggles within the capital accumulation process. Nonetheless, I point out that Miliband had, in a number of articles from 'The Transition to the Transition' (1958b) through to 'Reflections on the Crisis of Communist Regimes' (1989a), suggested a method by which a more coherent answer to these questions might be conceived. In these essays, he argued that a sound theory of socialist political organization must include both a systematic account of Stalinism, and a socio-economic analysis of the context of social democratic practice. I argue that if socialists are to actualize his admirable call to move from theory to practice then we should follow these suggestions as a means of moving beyond the limitations of 'Moving On'(1976) and *Marxism and Politics* (1977b).

## The collapse of the Soviet Union

In *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* Miliband revealed that while he believed East European 'Communism' had 'nothing to do with what Marx meant by communism', the disintegration of the Stalinist states in Eastern Europe had had a 'deep influence' on his 'thinking about socialism' (Miliband, 1994b, p. 4; 2; cf. 1992, p. 108; 1983a, p. 225). Indeed, he suggested that the collapse of the Soviet Union marked 'the

end of a particular alternative to capitalism', which was best understood as one of the many 'defeats and disappointments which the left has suffered in recent decades' (Miliband, 1994b, pp. 43, 69–70). This conclusion implied that the Soviet Union and its satellites were, if not socialist states, then in some sense progressive social formations when compared to Western capitalism. To a degree, therefore, Miliband offered an answer to a question he had posed in 1989: what did 'the crisis of the Communist world signify for people who remain committed to the creation of a cooperative, democratic, egalitarian, and ultimately classless society?' Miliband correctly pointed out that an answer to this question 'requires first of all a clear perception of what kind of regimes are in crisis'. Explicitly, his characterization of the 'Communist' regimes appeared much more critical than his mourning of the collapse of these states would suggest. He argued that the East European states were 'oligarchical collectivist regimes', which were the products of revolutions that brought about 'fundamental changes in property relations', whether 'internally generated' or 'imposed by Soviet command from above'. However, although their structure could be traced back to the October Revolution on the one hand, and the social transformations wrought by the conquering Red Army in East Europe after the Second World War on the other, the leadership of these regimes was made up of a 'large state bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie' (Miliband, 1989a, pp. 28–31).

Whereas this description of the Eastern Bloc might be read as implying that Miliband absolutely dissociated his model of socialism from that practised in the Stalinist states, this was not the case. For instance, in 1974 he argued that these states were, despite their bureaucratic distortions, not a 'total repudiation' of socialism. Moreover, he suggested that though history had been unkind to those such as Isaac Deutscher who had predicted that the development of the productive forces in Russia in the 1960s would unleash radical progressive reforms across the system, such an optimistic perspective could not forever be discounted (Deutscher, 1960, pp. 21–3; Miliband, 1974, p. 393; cf. Newman, 2003, p. 68). Two decades later, he was careful to link the Stalinist and post-Stalinist regimes with Lenin's revolutionary government: 'What we are witnessing', he wrote in 1991, 'is the termination of the historical experience that was begun in 1917' (Miliband, 1991b, p. 17). More generally, he insisted that these states were 'regimes of the left', and that Stalin had interwoven 'his own rule, and the terror that went with it, with the building of "socialism" in the Soviet Union' (Miliband, 1980, p. 6; 1974, p. 386). Consequently, as Gorbachev's reforms rose to

their culmination, Miliband maintained a 'slender hope' that the crisis of the Communist states would not lead to 'capitalist restoration', but in the direction of 'something approximating to the beginnings of socialist democracy' (Miliband, 1991a, pp. 38, 388; cf. Miliband, 1994b, p. 45).

The failure of the Soviet Union to evolve in this direction in the late 1980s and early 1990s informed Miliband's partial rapprochement with social democracy. Miliband read the collapse of the Soviet Union as involving not only the failure of one possible alternative to capitalism, but also, and as a corollary of this, the dissolution of both the Communist parties and all revolutionary organizational alternatives to social democracy. Therefore, of the 'two types' of left-wing political parties known to the 20th century – Communist and social democratic – the demise of the Communist parties meant that 'to speak of parties of the Left nowadays is to speak above all of social democratic parties' (Miliband, 1994b, pp. 138, 143). In this context, it was Miliband's admirable search for a realistic response to Fukuyama's 'end of history' which led him towards an (unenthusiastic) reconciliation with social democracy.

## From *Parliamentary Socialism* to 'Moving On'

In 'Moving On' Miliband insisted that 'the belief in the effective transformation of the Labour Party into an instrument of socialist policies is the most crippling of all illusions to which socialists in Britain have been prone', and that far from activists capturing the Labour Party, the Labour Party tends to capture the activists (Miliband, 1976, pp. 128, 131). Consequently, he suggested that if socialists were to realize their hopes for a radical social transformation of British society then they would first need to build a new socialist party. This perspective had been implicit in his interpretation of Communist and Labour parties for the previous two decades. Thus, in 'The Politics of Contemporary Capitalism' (1958a), he argued that not only had the Western social democratic parties particularly uninspiring records, but so too had their Communist alternatives. Indeed, the one positive claim that social democratic leaders could boast was of their consistent success in thwarting 'socialist minorities' within their own organizations (Miliband, 1958a, p. 46).

In light of this 'success' story, Miliband argued in 1958 that socialist intellectuals should aim to explain Labour's record by locating its actions within the context of the 'wider socio-economic forces which have had a determinant influence in shaping the reality … of its role' (Miliband, 1958b, p. 37). Despite this avowed goal, his own analysis of

Labourism, as articulated in *Parliamentary Socialism* (1961), was, as David Coates pointed out, 'very much a buried and underdeveloped one' (Coates, 2003a, p. 73; cf. Coates 1975, p. 134). Miliband's claim that the Labour Party was amongst the most dogmatic of workers' parties, 'not about socialism, but about the parliamentary system', might have convinced a young Paul Foot to reject Labour's reformism for the revolutionary politics of the *International Socialism* group (forerunner of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP)). However, Michael Newman is right to point out against Foot's reading of the book, that 'Miliband actually saw his work as an eleventh-hour call for the party to be transformed into an agency for the establishment of socialism, rather than a plea to leave the party' (Miliband, 1972, p. 13; Newman, 2003, p. 57). To this end, in an essay co-written with John Saville and published in the 1964 edition of *The Socialist Register*, Miliband argued that the left needed its own organizations, but that these should act within the Labour Party to push it in 'socialist directions'. Further, the past failures of Labour governments were explained, mainly, by 'the inability of the left to sustain its pressures and demands' (Miliband and Saville, 1964, p. 156; cf. Miliband, 1965a, p. 193).

Miliband signaled his break with this reforming perspective in the postscript to the second edition of *Parliamentary Socialism* (1972). Here he argued that 'the Labour Party will not be transformed into a party seriously concerned with socialist change' because it was 'irrevocably rooted' in the 'capitalist system' (Miliband, 1972, p. 376). Despite this changed position, Miliband did not overhaul his analysis of the nature of Labourism. In 1972, as in 1961, he explained the limitations of the Labour Party by the ideology of parliamentarianism. Indeed, despite his 1958 call for a socio-economic analysis of the context of Labourism, Miliband articulated his understanding of the limits of Labourism primarily in ideological terms. Both the leadership of the Labour Party and their left-wing critics within the party dogmatically held to the belief that reforms could be actualized through, or at least primarily through, parliamentary channels. As he argued in 1966, 'socialists inside and outside the Labour Party have … tended to neglect the underlying pattern of ideological and political commitment of which the Government's policies and actions are the concrete expression' (Miliband, 1966, p. 11). Moreover, this deep-seated commitment to parliamentary democracy was evident not only within the Labour Party but also within the working class more generally. Consequently, the socialist left would have to address this ideology if they were to challenge Labourism for hegemony within the labour movement.

This argument contributed to Miliband's dismissal of the existing parties of the far-left, when, in 'Moving On', he argued for the creation of a new socialist party. In this essay, he rejected the Labour Party as a viable agency of socialist transformation because of its dogmatic attachment to parliamentarianism, and dismissed the Communist Party because of its undemocratic structure. Others who had similarly distanced themselves from Stalinism and social democracy had been drawn into the orbit of the existing revolutionary left. By contrast, Miliband argued that the alternative Trotskyist organizations, because of their commitment to the insurrectionary model of the October Revolution, exhibited an 'ultra-left' tendency to replace parliamentary cretinism with a form of 'anti-parliamentary cretinism' which had 'virtually no appeal to the British working class movement'. Indeed, this ideology helped ensure the continued inability of such groups to break out of the political ghetto (Miliband, 1976, p. 139).

Commenting on the debate occasioned by Miliband's essay and published in the next issue of *The Socialist Register*, Newman writes that the reactions to Miliband's thesis 'were rather predictable. Representatives of the Labour and Communist Parties defended their organisations as the only practical vehicles for change, while those of the "ultra-left" parties sympathised with his critique of the Labour and Communist Parties, but explained why his strictures did not apply to their particular groups' (Newman, 2002, p. 246). This argument is perhaps too dismissive, for while the response of the 'ultra-left' might have been predictable, it did suggest a potential flaw in Miliband's argument. The one member of the revolutionary left to contribute to the debate on the pages of *The Socialist Register* was Duncan Hallas of the SWP. He pointed out that term ultra-leftism was problematic because of its obvious ambiguity: the SWP was undoubtedly ultra-left in terms of contemporary debates in Britain, but it was not ultra-left in the sense that Lenin used the concept in 1920–21: what, he asked, did Miliband mean when he used this term (Hallas, 1977, p. 8)?

Beyond dismissals by 20th-century social democrats, Stalinists had denounced the type of (heterodox) Trotskyist politics latterly practised by the SWP as a form of ultra-leftism since the turn of the Comintern towards the Popular Front policies in the mid-1930s. This charge was, however, far from innocent. For, as both critics and supporters of the Popular Front are agreed, this strategy marked a qualitative break with the revolutionary socialism practised in the early Comintern. Thus, in a sympathetic account of the Popular Front, Eric Hobsbawm argued that it marked a realistic alternative to the utopian belief in revolution,

while, from the revolutionary left, Trotsky argued that the policy was 'counter-revolutionary' (Hobsbawm, 1989, pp. 105, 107; Trotsky, 1973, p. 311). Whether or not one accepts the diagnoses of the Popular Front proffered by Trotsky or Hobsbawm, it is clear that a socialist critique of the British far-left which hoped to move beyond the reformist assumptions of Labourism should also be distinguished from the equally reformist assumptions behind Popular-Frontist denunciations of Trotskyist 'ultra-leftism'. To the extent that Miliband did this, as we noted above, he equated ultra-leftism with the model of socialist transformation suggested by the Bolshevik Revolution: asserting that this model was inadequate for modern Western societies, where 'a strategy of advance has to include a real measure of electoral support' (Miliband, 1976, p. 139).

Commenting on this argument, Hallas wrote that 'if what is being said is that the Russia of 1917 and the Britain of today are so radically different that it is out of the question for the course of events in Britain to closely follow the pattern of the Russian events of sixty years ago then there is no dispute. … If, however, what is being suggested is that there is, after all, some non-revolutionary road to socialism then we have to part company. *Moving On* does not *state* this position but it gives – to me at least – the impression of a certain equivocation. I hope that is a mistaken impression. For this is fundamental. We already have one major and one minor party – Labour Party and Communist Party – committed to the "parliamentary road" … There is no political space for a third'. Specifically, Hallas agreed that a socialist party 'must strive for "a real measure of electoral legitimation"', but insisted that 'this necessary activity can never be its main thrust. That *must* be towards rooting the organisation in the workplaces and in the unions and in a wide variety of types of grassroots direct action. Nothing else makes sense unless you entertain the parliamentary illusion' (Hallas, 1977, p. 10).

Hallas' 'impression' that Miliband had 'equivocated' over the need for revolution was rooted in his belief that Miliband shared with the majority of leading figures of the New Left generation of 1956 a 'failure', and indeed a 'refusal', to 'take a clear and unequivocal stand against left-reformism. It refused to come to grips with the Communist tradition in its original Leninist form and with the Left Opposition tradition that arose from it. It largely ignored the whole historical experience from 1914 to 1956. Significantly, it hardly discussed the Communist International. In short, it failed to develop a clear and consistent theoretical and political foundation' (Hallas, 1977, p. 7).

In his reply to this point, Miliband clarified his use of the term ultra-left as a description of the British revolutionary left. Ultra-leftism, he

argued, involved 'working towards the formation of a "vanguard party" based on "democratic centralism" and preparing for a seizure of power … The model also includes … the "smashing" of the bourgeois state and the establishment of the "dictatorship of the proletariat"'. Together, these features were witness to a 'self-defeating and dangerous … deep contempt for the institutions which make up capitalist democracy' (Miliband, 1977a, p. 48). According to Miliband, therefore, the ghettoization of the far-left was in part self-imposed. It was their politics which excluded them from cultivating popular support. Miliband provided the theoretical underpinnings for this argument in *Marxism and Politics*; a book which *de facto* rose to Hallas' challenge of addressing the historical experience of the Communist movement between 1914 and 1956.

## Marxism and politics

Miliband opened *Marxism and Politics* with the assertion that Marxist political analyses had not generally been written as systematic treatise, but had been produced as a series of responses to a multiplicity of events, and as such did not exist as an easily summarized unity: they were, in a nutshell, 'unsystematic and fragmentary'. Moreover, the very term Marxist was a contested category, with no universally accepted criteria by which a Marxist could be defined (Miliband, 1977b, p. 1). Despite these problems, Miliband aimed to 'reconstruct' a systematic politics from the various writings of a selection of Marxist theoreticians; and this reconstruction was explicitly made against the authoritarian 'line' that had been 'a particular quality of Stalinism'; an approach to politics from which the New Left of the 1950s had broken (Miliband, 1977b, pp. 3–4). Miliband therefore located his discussion of Marxism in the context of the anti-Stalinism of the New Left. However, he rejected, nominally at least, the various left-wing characterizations of the Stalinist regimes. He claimed that while 'the subject badly requires serious and sustained Marxist political analysis', socialist anti-Stalinist debates on the nature of the Soviet regime had been 'paralysed by the invocation of formulas and slogans – "degenerate workers' state" versus "state capitalist" and so forth' (Miliband, 1977b, p. 14).

Unfortunately, Miliband could not so easily disentangle his ideas from the problem of conceptualizing Stalinism. As he himself recognized, the very idea of 'Marxism-Leninism' was a Stalinist construct, and thus to write about the Marxist conception of the party entailed some engagement with the problem of the relationship between Stalinism and 'Leninism' (Miliband, 1977b, p. 1). With regard to this

issue, Miliband's suggestion that 'the argument turns on the meaning which is given to Stalinism' is obviously true, but only serves to refocus our attention on his own refusal to outline a detailed model of the Soviet regime. Negatively, he wrote, Lenin neither held absolute power, nor showed 'the slightest sign' of striving for the kind of absolute power that Stalin came to hold; and although Russia did experience some repression under Lenin, the 'sheer scale' of the repression experienced under Stalin's rule 'distinguishes it most sharply from Leninism' (Miliband, 1977b, p. 145; 1983c, p. 199). However, he insisted that whereas the controversy over the nature of the Soviet regime was 'obviously of some importance … no conclusive answer to the question has ever been returned, or can be' (Miliband, 1977b, pp. 111–12). This final rider is interesting not only for its strange absolutism, but also because of the implications it raises for his analysis of Marxist politics generally and the question of the party more specifically. For Miliband obviously worked with some model of Stalinism, explicit or not, and as we have noted above this seemed to include the belief that the Stalinist states, despite their bureaucratic distortions, were regimes of the left. At the very least, therefore, he assumed some degree of continuity between Lenin's and Stalin's governments. Superficially, this proposition is of course unproblematic, there was no dramatic change in the nature of the Russian state at the moment of Lenin's death. Nevertheless, in the period between 1917 and the early 1920s, as Miliband himself argued, 'the Party itself was crippled by the weakness of the working class' (Miliband, 1974, p. 384). Similarly, in the decade that followed, the changes wrought by Stalin were so dramatic as to warrant an answer to the question, did not quantity transform into quality? That is, did the dramatically increased 'scale of repression', noted by Miliband, constitute the negation of all that was positive and progressive in the October Revolution? Miliband's implicitly negative answer to this question had direct repercussions for the rest of his discussion of Marxist politics.

For instance, in his analysis of the role of intellectuals within the Marxist movement, he claimed that the 'Leninist' injunction that intellectuals should 'serve the people' was, in one sense, unproblematic. However, he argued that within the Marxist movement after Lenin's death the interpretation of how the people were to be served had been increasingly redefined such that only the party leader, specifically Stalin or Mao, could decide what it actually entailed (Miliband, 1977b, p. 62). The differences between Lenin's party and those of Stalin or Mao were accordingly ones of degree rather than of quality: 'Leninism was a political *style* adapted … to a particular strategy …

Stalinism … made a frightful caricature of the style, and made of the strategy what it willed' (Miliband, 1977b, p. 169).

At the centre of this style, according to Miliband, was the structure of 'democratic centralism' which fostered a subservient 'attitude of mind to which Marxists have been prone' (Miliband, 1977b, pp. 64, 83). This argument, in prioritizing a discussion of the style of 'Marxist' parties over the content of their practice, meant that Miliband tended to lose sight of the fundamental nature of break between Lenin's political practice and the ideology of 'Leninism'. For Lenin's conception of organization, as Marcel Liebman, Miliband's friend and collaborator on *The Socialist Register*, pointed out in his book *Leninism under Lenin* (1975), was subordinate to his model of revolution (Liebman, 1975, p. 108). Indeed, the concept of democratic centralism was aimed at ensuring effective revolutionary action by guaranteeing, in Liebman's paraphrase of Lenin, 'freedom of discussion, unity of action' (Liebman, 1975, p. 51). Furthermore, and in contrast to Miliband's comments on the practice of democratic centralism, Rabinowitch pointed out in his 1976 study of Bolshevism that it was the Bolshevik Party's 'internally relatively democratic, tolerant, and decentralised structure and method of operation, as well as its essentially open and mass character' that underpinned its successes in 1917 (Rabinowitch, 2004, p. 311). Indeed, Lenin famously warned Bukharin and Zinoviev that demands for obedience within the Comintern would tend to 'destroy the party' by driving 'away all not particularly amenable, but intelligent, people' whilst leaving behind only 'obedient fools' (Lenin quoted in Hallas, 1985, p. 109).

In contrast to Liebman's discussion of Lenin's politics, Miliband's focus on the issue of political style acted to centre his analysis of 'Leninism' on the question of form at the expense of content. This opened the door to his characterization of the parties of the Stalinist Third International as Leninist, despite the fact, as he insisted, 'Leninism as a coherent strategy of insurrectionary politics was never seriously pursued' within that organization (Miliband, 1977b, p. 169). Indeed, he argued, both in *Marxism and Politics* and 'Freedom Democracy and the American Alliance' (1987), that with the Popular Front of the 1930s the Third International 'abandoned' insurrectionary politics, such that from this point onwards the Western Communist parties 'have not been 'revolutionary' (Miliband, 1977b, p. 172; 1987, p. 487). Nonetheless, in 'Reflections on Anti-Communism' he and Liebman claimed that because the Communist parties had remained committed to a fundamental transformation of Western societies, there was 'a weak sense' in which

they remained 'revolutionary' (Miliband and Liebman, 1984, p. 9). This apparent conceptual slippage is explicable if we look at Miliband's analysis of the Comintern's shift towards Popular Frontism in the 1930s. He explained this process as a belated, but realistic, recognition within the Communist movement of the importance of defending bourgeois democracy against the threat of fascism (Miliband, 1977b, p. 75). In so doing he effectively ignored the analysis of the evolution of Comintern policy outlined in Fernando Claudin's authoritative *The Communist Movement* (1975). According to Claudin, whose book Miliband cited in the bibliography of *Marxism and Politics* but whose arguments he did not engage with in the text, changes in Communist policy had little to do with the needs of the workers' movement. On the contrary, they emerged as a cynical realist attempt by Stalin, in the run-up to the Second World War, to foster an alliance with the Western powers against the growing threat of Germany (Claudin, 1975, pp. 176, 182–5).

The veracity of this argument is of more than academic interest, for a great deal rides on the characterization of the Communist parties after Lenin's death. If the Popular Front was primarily a practical response to the needs of the workers' movement in the 1930s, then the trajectory of the Communist parties from 1919 to 1956 can be read as an organic evolution of revolutionary politics in the face of changing circumstances. If, however, the Popular Front was primarily a cynical attempt by the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern to neuter the Communist parties of the West in the hope that this might aid the Soviet attempt to build alliances with Britain and France, then a study of the trajectory taken by the Communist parties from the 1930s is of little analytical value to our understanding of the nature of, and prospects for, revolutionary socialist organizations in the West. Miliband, despite his suggestion that the Popular Front marked a break with revolutionary politics, essentially accepted the former of these two propositions. He came to this conclusion, not by denying that Stalin had 'encouraged' the break with insurrectionary politics, but by suggesting that it was not 'really plausible to attribute' the ease with which this renunciation was effected to the power of Stalinist manipulation. Stalin had found it easy to push through his programme within the Comintern because insurrectionary politics did not 'correspond to very powerful and compelling tendencies in the countries concerned'. Moreover, the failure of the expected revolution in the West after the First World War confirmed that these countries did not fit the model for which 'Leninist' political organization had been constructed. Thus, with or without the help of Stalin, 'the politics of Leninism, insurrectionary politics,

failed in the countries of advanced capitalism' (Miliband, 1977b, pp. 170–1).

Whatever its strengths, this argument conflates the defeats of the early 1920s and the embrace of the Popular Front in the 1930s. While the former undoubtedly opened the door to the latter, the latter provides no conclusive evidence that the former was inevitable. On the contrary, any assessment of the revolutionary potential of the Western working class in this period must necessarily start from a detailed study of the mass movements of 1917 to 1923. In the absence of such a study, or at least a detailed engagement with the secondary literature, Miliband's schematic analysis tended towards impressionism. Indeed, while it is true that the Popular Front was embraced in the wake of a massive defeat for the left, the defeats of the early post-war years occurred before 'Leninist' parties had had time to coalesce, whereas the defeats of a decade later occurred after Stalin had re-forged the Comintern as an undemocratic and ultra-left caricature of exactly the type of politics against which Lenin had polemicized in *Left Wing Communism and Infantile Disorder*.

Miliband's rejection of 'Leninism' is therefore best understood as a corollary of the assumption that as insurrectionary politics had never offered a realistic solution to the needs of the Western workers' movement, some type of reformism was the only viable strategy for the left. In *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (1982), he argued that given the 'conditions of capitalist democracy', no path to socialism was conceivable other than via a democratically elected government 'pledged to carry out' radical reforms: in fact the existence of parliamentary democracy 'turns the insurrectionary project into a fantasy' (Miliband, 1982, pp. 156–7). Commenting on the possible actions of a democratically elected radical government, he argued that once it moved to 'carry through far-reaching anti-capitalist measures' it would 'arouse the fiercest enmity from conservative forces', such that the government's response to this would be 'crucial'. Miliband suggested that such a government could survive only if it mobilized its popular support; and in so doing it 'must lead to a vast extension of democratic participation in all areas of civic life – amounting to a very considerable transformation of the character of the state and of existing bourgeois democratic forms' (Miliband, 1977b, pp. 183–8). Idiosyncratically, he suggested that such a strategy could realize Marx's proposition that 'the working class cannot lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purpose' (Miliband, 1977b, p. 189).

Aside from what Miliband later admitted was the implausibility of this scenario (Miliband, 1994b, p. 158), Colin Barker pointed out that

this strategy was innocent of a realistic model of the role of social democratic parties and trade union leaders within the class struggle. 'Miliband forgets that such a government would be a government of parties who never intended … [and] have no tradition of mobilising mass movements'. Indeed, Barker pointed out that reformism 'is the politics of controlling rather than leading rank-and-file movements' (Barker, 1977, p. 28). Interestingly, Miliband argued much the same point in *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (1982) and *Divided Societies* (1989). In these two books, he wrote that trade unions acted not as radical agencies of socialist advance but as 'agencies of containment of struggle', while the leadership of the Labour Party played a similar role at a more explicitly political level (Miliband, 1982, pp. 33, 56, 67–6; 1989, p. 69). Nevertheless, despite acting thus, Miliband insisted that the divisions between leaders and rank-and-file members of both social-democratic parties and trade unions was not a simple consequence of oligarchic tendencies, but that it had an important ideological component (Miliband, 1982, p. 69). With reference to trade union leaders, Miliband argued that, alongside a commitment to constitutionalism, it was the ideology of 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay' that limited their radicalism within parameters set by the reproduction of capitalist relations of production (Miliband, 1982, p. 61).

As with Miliband's account of the parliamentarianism of the leadership of the Labour Party, this model provided him with a valuable point of departure for a rich description of the politics of the leadership of the trade unions, but did not offer a structural explanation of the consistently conservative role played by this social layer. In this respect it is instructive to compare his analysis of the nature of reformism with that offered by Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness* (1971); a book described by Martin Jay as 'the most articulate expression on a theoretical level of the world-historical events of 1917' (Jay, 1984, p. 103). While this appreciation of Lukács' work is shared by many on the revolutionary left, Lukács' name does not appear in the index of *Marxism and Politics* (2004) (although *History and Class Consciousness* is listed in the bibliography). Moreover, in the one place I know of where Miliband did comment on Lukács' early Marxism, it was to dismiss his concept of 'imputed' class consciousness as an elitist break with Marx's notion of socialism as the self-emancipation of the working class (Miliband, 1989, p. 44). This is unfortunate, for there is much more to the 'Leninism' of the early Lukács than an over-hasty dismissal of the concept of imputed consciousness implies. Indeed, Lukács, in his early Marxist essays, articulated just the kind of system-

atic defense of Marxist political theory which Miliband had suggested did not exist in the introduction to *Marxism and Politics*.

In 'Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organisation', Lukács argued that reformist organizations were best understood as structures which attempted to represent the working class, or rather the various strata that together make up the working class, as they existed as a partial negation of capitalism, but which remained engulfed within a reified bourgeois worldview. The problem with such organizations, he argued, was that while the class struggle is a dynamic process and the consciousness of those proletarian strata involved in struggle are open to transformation, the reformist bureaucracy itself tended to ossify; thus holding back the development of socialist class consciousness.

> While the organisations of the sects artificially separate 'true' class consciousness (if this can survive at all in such abstract isolation) from the life and development of the class, the organisations of the opportunists achieve a compromise between these strata of consciousness on the lowest possible level, or at best, at the level of the average man. It is self-evident that the actions of the class are largely determined by its average members. But as the average is not static and cannot be determined statistically, but is itself the product of the revolutionary process, it is no less self-evident that an organisation that bases itself on an existing average is doomed to hinder development and even to reduce the general level (Lukács, 1971, pp. 326–7).

A revolutionary party, according to this view, acts as a corollary of the uneven consciousness of the working class in the class struggle; and whereas reformist parties actively hinder the emergence of widespread revolutionary consciousness, revolutionary parties aim to foster this process. The revolutionary party therefore attempts to act in a way that is informed by lessons generalized from the high points of a century-and-a-half of such struggles. Moreover, as 'the process of revolution is – on a historical scale – synonymous with the process of the development of proletarian class consciousness', the struggle by revolutionaries for hegemony against the influence of reformists within the working class can only succeed with the success of the revolution itself (Lukács, 1971, pp. 286, 326).

Superficially, this perspective coheres with Miliband's argument, as outlined in the conclusion to *The State in Capitalist Society* (1973b), that 'a serious revolutionary party, in the circumstances of advanced

capitalism, has to be the kind of "hegemonic" party of which Gramsci spoke'. However, whereas Lukács (and Gramsci) insisted that the struggle for hegemony was the precursor to a necessary insurrection, Miliband maintained that the reform of the state 'is, of course, possible'. Furthermore, he argued that the limitations of such a reformist strategy ultimately derived not from the structural constraints placed on the state by capital, but because of the 'ideological and political integration of social democratic leaders into the framework of capitalism'. This increasing integration of social democracy into the capitalist system also meant that the historic role of the 'labour and socialist movement' as 'the main driving force of the extension of the democratic features of capitalist societies' was lessened (Miliband, 1973b, pp. 242–5; 1989, p. 68). Implicitly, therefore, Miliband's model of a revolutionary party was of a militant type of reformist party, which was not, unlike the Labour Party, hamstrung by its ideological attachment to capitalism.

This perspective, in effect, operated as a dismissal of Rosa Luxemburg's critique of reformism: 'people who pronounce themselves in favor of the method of legislative reform *in place and in contradistinction to* the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the *same* goal, but a *different* goal' (Luxemburg, 1987, p. 75). Miliband effectively answered Luxemburg's defense of revolutionary politics by characterizing the alternatives to his own position as 'insurrectionary' and 'constitutionalist'; a move which by focusing on the moment of transition obscured the differing day-to-day practice of reformist and revolutionary parties. Lukács' suggested that reformist parties emerged in periods of relatively low levels of class struggle as the organizational form of the struggle of labour against capital within an assumed, reified, naturalization of capitalist relations of production, while revolutionary parties emerged as the organizational expression of the break made by sections of the working class, based upon heightened class struggles, with this reified outlook. In contrast with this approach Miliband tended to reduce the debate between reformists and revolutionaries, or constitutionalism versus insurrectionism, to a technical question narrowly relating to the moment of transition. Consequently, while he described the policing role played by the leadership of social democratic parties and trades unions, he did not integrate this description into a dynamic model of their function within the capital accumulation process.

This lacuna in his discussion of reformism mirrored that found in his examination of the constraints placed on the state by capital. In an

early, and perceptive, review of *The State in Capitalist Society*, Isaac Balbus argued that although Miliband offered 'ostensibly a class analysis of advanced capitalist systems' in execution his thesis was a 'static', if 'sophisticated, version of elite-stratification theory' (Balbus, 1971, pp. 40–1). Similarly, Haldun Gulalp criticized Miliband for conceptualizing the state's role of 'maintaining and reproducing the relations of domination' in terms of its links with the dominant class, as opposed to through its 'relation to capital accumulation' (Gulalp, 1987, p. 311; cf. Harman, 1991, p. 4). We might equally point out that, just as Miliband's interpretation of the relationship between state and capital informed his belief that substantial reforms, up to and including the socialization of the means of production, were possible, assuming the existence of the kind of parties that aimed to realize this project, his discussion of reformism did not address the issue, raised by Lukács and others, of the role of structural, as opposed to ideological, factors in explaining the policing functions played by social democratic party and trade union leaders.

He therefore did not address the argument that Lenin's goal was not merely to build a party that could organize an insurrection, but that he also aimed to win hegemony away from the social democratic leaders of the workers' movement as a necessary precondition for the transition to socialism. The famous Twenty-one Conditions for entry into the Comintern were aimed, from this perspective, not, as Miliband suggested, 'to split all labour movements from top to bottom' (Miliband, 1989, p. 61), but rather to exclude reformist and centrist leaders from entry into the Comintern where they would be expected to continue their practice of subduing mass movements. For Lenin, the rationale of the Twenty-one Conditions was to create parties which could act as alternative poles of attraction that aimed to draw reformist workers away from the influence of reformist leaders: so although the split in the movement could appear as being *from* top to bottom, it was meant to facilitate a split *between* top and bottom. Miliband's contrary interpretation of this break informed his consistently expressed regret at the split between reformists and revolutionaries. As he put it in 1964, 'the split between Social-Democracy and Communism' not only 'tore the Labour movements apart', it also helped ensure that 'most Labour leaders had acquired a large stake in moderate reform within capitalism, and a deep fear of militant action' (Miliband, 1964, p. 95). Similarly, in *Marxism and Politics*, he argued that 'confronted with a Bolshevik and Communist presence' the leaders of the social democratic parties 'became even more "reformist" than they had been' (Miliband, 1977b, p. 170).

He therefore explained the strength of social-democratic constitutionalism, in part, by the very existence of revolutionary parties. This superficially plausible argument is sound only so long as we ignore the differing day-to-day activity of these parties. Social democratic parties, as Miliband described them, police mass movements, while revolutionary organizations attempt to fan the flames of revolt. To judge the effectiveness of the split between social democracy and Communism in Miliband's terms involves assuming away this differential practice, whilst simultaneously accepting that both social democrats and Communists, aim at the same goal, if at different rates and by different paths. Miliband reinforced this perspective with the assumption that the Comintern's embrace of the Popular Front in the mid-1930s was an organic development which reflected the realization that insurrectionary politics was a non-starter in the West, such that the only viable form of left politics was one or other form of reformism.

However, as we noted above, Miliband asserted but did not argue this interpretation of the Popular Front; or rather his argument was based upon the acceptance of a version of Hegel's aphorism that 'what is, is Reason': revolutions had failed in the West, and revolutionary parties had been consistently marginalized. Thus, in *Divided Societies* he argued that the 'insurrectionary bids for power' attempted by the German Communist Party in the early 1920s were 'doomed to failure'. However, he also suggested that Germany was the only example of 'an advanced capitalist country where a revolution might have succeeded' (Miliband, 1989, pp. 63, 74). Unfortunately, this revolutionary opportunity was squandered when the Social Democratic Party acted as 'the bulwark of the existing order' in 1918 (Miliband, 1989, p. 74). Miliband points out that the revolutionary opportunity was spurned by the Social Democrats before the formation of the Communist Party, and henceforth Communist sectarianism, culminating in the rhetoric of the Third Period, ensured that splits in the labour movement meant that a left-wing solution to the crisis of the Weimer state was all but impossible.

This assessment of Weimar history is doubly problematic. For surely, if the SPD had acted as the bulwark of the old order in 1918 then it is at least arguable that the Communist split was justified. Moreover, just as he primarily explained the Comintern's embrace of Popular Frontism in the 1930s in abstraction from Stalin's foreign policy, he explained the move towards Third Period ultra-leftism in the 1920s not in relation to the Stalinist counter-revolution but as the logical culmination of Leninist politics: 'The sectarianism which marked those early years reached new heights in the so-called Third Period' (Miliband, 1989,

p. 63). In thus abstracting his criticism of 'Leninism' from any serious analysis of how, in Claudin's words, Stalin 'vulgarly distort[ed] Lenin's policy' (Claudin, 1975, p. 154), Miliband elided over Lenin's own criticisms of ultra-leftism from *Left-Wing Communism and Infantile Disorder* (1920) through to his defense of the united front tactic in 1922. Ironically, in *Marxism and Politics*, Miliband approvingly quoted Trotsky's criticisms of the ultra-leftism of the Stalinist Third Period (Miliband, 1977b, p. 75), but did not explore how Trotsky's position, in cohering with Lenin's arguments of the early 1920s, illuminated the *fundamental* nature of Stalin's distortion of Lenin's politics into something called 'Leninism' from the 1920s onwards. Indeed, Trotsky first argued that revolutionaries must split from the Communist movement in 1933 because of the willfully criminal nature of Third Period politics (Deutscher, 1963, p. 200ff). According to Trotsky, just as the Second International's capitulation to nationalism in 1914 had created the need for a new international socialist movement, the Comintern's criminal compliance in Hitler's rise to power demanded the creation of a new revolutionary party in the 1930s.

By contrast with this position, Miliband believed that while the split between Communism and social democracy was understandable, it had the unfortunate consequence of reinforcing the constitutionalism of the reformist leaders, while simultaneously increasing the isolation of socialist militants. Moreover, in conflating the death of the Communist parties with the demise of the revolutionary alternative to social democracy, Miliband assumed away the significance of the break between Trotskyism and Stalinism. Whereas Trotsky defended the creation of independent revolutionary parties, the logic of Miliband's perspective tended in the direction of reuniting the various fragments of the left by healing the wounds of 1914. Ironically, therefore, 'Moving On' might best be understood as a utopian call to move back to the glory days of the Second International.

## Conclusion

In the editorial introduction to an anthology of *Socialist Register* articles on Labourism, *Paving the Third Way* (2003), David Coates commented that to republish 'Moving On' would, in engaging with the Communist and Trotskyist left, amount to reproducing a dialogue with the 'already gone'. Indeed, Coates commented that the accuracy of Miliband's critique of these groupings had been confirmed by their continued impotence (Coates, 2003, p. 278). By contrast with this dismissal of the extra-parliamentary left, in the conclusion to that anthology, Coates

and Panitch pointed out that writers working in the 'Milibandian' tradition 'have always been keen to ally with the Labour Left' (Coates and Panitch, 2003, p. 326). This is of course true. It is also, arguably, the source of their own impotence.

Commenting on the collapse of the first New Left with the benefit of two decades of hindsight, Miliband suggested that the foundations of a new socialist party might have been laid in the late 1950s and early 1960s. 'As I see it now, and as I only dimly perceived it then, the *New Reasoner* "rebellion" should have been followed by a sustained and systematic attempt to regroup whoever was willing into a socialist association, league or party, of which the journal might have been the voice. But this is no more than hindsight; and there was then no steam behind any such idea' (Miliband, 1979, p. 27). While this caveat is true, it demands its own explanation. As I have argued elsewhere, it was the left-reformism hegemonic within New Left circles that lent itself to over-optimistic hopes for Labour in 1960, and which in turn resulted in an extreme pessimism when, a year later, these hopes were crushed as the Party machine turned against the left (Blackledge, 2004; 2006b).

In the early 1980s Miliband's hopes for a new socialist formation once again brought him into the orbit of the Labour left, this time in the shape of the movement around Tony Benn. As in the early 1960s, and in a way that could reasonably be predicted by a reader of *Parliamentary Socialism*, despite the early vibrancy of this movement it was eventually broken by the Labour Party machine. In this context, Miliband came increasingly to feel politically 'squeezed' between the SWP to his left and the Labour Party to his right (Newman, 2003, p. 67; 2002, p. 307; Miliband, 1983b2, p. 303).

It was from an admirable desire to escape a similar feeling of impotence that Miliband wrote *Marxism and Politics* and 'Moving On' in the 1970s. The blame for his failure to realize the goal of building a new socialist party in the 1980s can hardly be laid at his feet: this was a particularly unpropitious time for the left. Nevertheless, that the author of *Parliamentary Socialism* ended his days hoping for the rebirth of the Labour left is tragic. This position might be understandable if, as Coates argued, the Trotskyist and the Communist left were no more. However, while the Communist Party was a casualty of the Cold War, as Coates' words were published the SWP was playing a pivotal role in one of the most massive social movements in British history: the Stop the War Coalition. To conflate its practice with 'Communism' generally or, more specifically, with the ultra-leftism practised in the Comintern between 1928 and 1934 cannot reasonably be justified.

Nonetheless, Coates' dismissal of the revolutionary left is informed by his reading of Miliband. In *Marxism and Politics* Miliband conflated revolutionary socialism with Stalin's 'Leninism', and argued that this 'insurrectionary' perspective had been proved inadequate for conditions prevailing in the West by the Comintern's embrace of Popular Front reformism in the 1930s. While I have challenged these arguments in this essay, I have nevertheless written from a position of deep respect for Miliband's work. For Miliband asked, as Coates and Panitch have pointed out, a fundamental question of the British left: 'Is activity within the [Labour] Party a precursor of the creation of a mass base for socialist politics, or a debilitating distraction from that creation?' (Coates and Panitch, 2003, p. 326). It has been my argument that while Miliband did not come to a satisfactory answer to this question, he did provide a mass of evidence from which one could be articulated. Moreover, in suggesting that such an answer demanded both a fully rounded model of Stalinism, and a contextualization of the 'wider socioeconomic forces' within which social democratic parties operated, Miliband pointed beyond his own increasingly isolated position in the hinterland between reformist and revolutionary socialism.

For those of us who remain committed to the socialist ideal, the call made by Miliband in 1976 to build a socialist organization independent of Labour is more urgent than ever. However, if we are to realize this goal we must move beyond his analysis of the problem. Such a movement would involve, first, a clear analysis of the nature of Stalinism from which we might unpick Lenin's legacy (cf. Blackledge, 2006a), and, second, a sociology of both state power and social democratic parliamentarianism which provides a firmer explanation for the capitalist nature of the former and the constitutionalism of the latter. These were characteristics which Miliband admirably described but inadequately explained.

## Note

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# 5

# Ralph Miliband and the Instrumentalist Theory of the State: The (Mis)Construction of an Analytic Concept

*Clyde W. Barrow*

The concept of instrumentalism that is so closely associated with Ralph Miliband's theory of the state is not merely an oversimplification and caricature of Miliband's political theory, but an artificial polemical construct superimposed on his and others' historical and empirical analysis of the state in capitalist society (Domhoff, 1990, p. 42). Many, if not most, of the criticisms directed at Miliband's political theory during the 1970s state debate were actually straw men created by polemical adversaries who introduced an analytic construct called 'instrumentalism' that Miliband himself never embraced, and for good reason, as an accurate conceptualization of his published work. G. William Domhoff (1986–87, p. 295; 1990, pp. 40–4) has even argued previously that Miliband's instrumentalism was willfully distorted and misinterpreted for the purely political purpose of exaggerating the theoretical originality of 'new' theories of the state that claimed to be 'more Marxist' and 'more revolutionary' than Miliband's theory. From this perspective, the instrumentalism that so many state theorists have sought to move beyond since the Miliband-Poulantzas debate (1969–76) is merely an abstraction that was steadily, artificially, and often deliberately constructed over the course of a polemic that accomplished little more than the fracturing of state theory (Barrow, 2000, 2002).

## The intellectual origins of instrumentalism

Prior to Ralph Miliband's *The State in Capitalist Society,* the instrumentalist theory of the state had been most prominently, if cryptically, articulated by Paul Sweezy (1942, p. 243), who asserts that the state is 'an instrument in the hands of the ruling class for enforcing and guaranteeing the stability of the class structure itself'. However, instrumen-

talism actually has much deeper roots in a classical Marxist tradition that directly influenced Miliband's thinking about the state and political theory. In the 1960s and 1970s, Miliband (1969, p. 5; 1977b, p. 1) challenged the dominance of 'bourgeois social science' by drawing on a classical Marxist tradition that he identified primarily with the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Gramsci and, to a lesser degree, with those of Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky.

Notably, Miliband's (1969, p. 5) theoretical reading of classical Marxism begins with the observation that Marx himself 'never attempted a systematic study of the state'. Miliband (1965b, p. 278) was well aware of the fact that Marx intended to develop a theory of the state, as indicated in the notes for Volume 3 of *Capital,* but Marx successfully completed only Volume I and this work deals primarily with the structure, functioning, and historical development of the capitalist *economy*. Consequently, Miliband (1977b, pp. 1–2) concludes that most of the *political* writings Marx left behind 'are for the most part the product of particular historical episodes and specific circumstances; and what there is of theoretical exploration of politics…is mostly unsystematic and fragmentary, and often part of other work'. Miliband identifies the main *political* writings of classical Marxism primarily with Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and the *Civil War in France* and with Lenin's *What is to Be Done?* and *State and Revolution*. Significantly, although references to the state in different types of society recur constantly in almost all of Marx's writings (Draper, 1977), Miliband (1977b, 5) concludes in the final analysis that:

> …as far as capitalist societies are concerned, his [Marx's] main view of the state throughout is summarized in the famous formulation of the *Communist Manifesto*: 'The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.'[1]

Miliband (1977b, 5) argues that this thesis 'reappears again and again in the work of both Marx and Engels; and despite the refinements and qualifications they occasionally introduce in their discussion of the state…they never departed from the view that in capitalist society the state was above all the coercive instrument of a ruling class, itself defined in terms of its ownership and control of the means of production'. Thus, for all the protestations that Miliband 'failed to transcend the framework that the pluralists use' (Gold, Lo, and Wright, 1975a, p. 34) and therefore 'does not advance the Marxist analysis of the state' (Jessop, 1977, p. 357), Miliband's theoretical position is firmly anchored in

classical Marxism. In fact, Bob Jessop (1982, p. 12), a noted critic of Miliband's instrumentalism, observes that the instrumentalist thesis can be traced back at least as early as *The German Ideology* (1845–46), where Marx and Engels (1970, p. 80) claim that the state:

> ...is nothing more than the form of organization which the bourgeois necessarily adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests....the State is the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests...

Indeed, Marx and Engels not only reiterate this proposition in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), but nearly four decades later the instrumentalist thesis continues to find an equally clear statement in Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). In this work, Engels (1972, p. 231) asserts that:

> it [the state] is normally the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which by its means becomes also the politically dominant class and so acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. The ancient state was, above all, the state of the slave owners for holding down the slaves, just as the feudal state was the organ of the nobility for holding down the peasant serfs and bondsmen, and the modern representative state is an *instrument* for exploiting wage labor by capital [italics added].[2]

Thus, even Jessop (1982, pp. 12–13), who claims to have moved beyond Miliband, acknowledges that much of Marx's and Engels' political writings are in fact 'concerned to reveal the various ways in which the modern state is used as an instrument for the exploitation of wage-labour by capital and/or the maintenance of class domination in the political sphere'. After Marx and Engels, Miliband (1969, p. 6) considered Lenin's *State and Revolution* to be merely 'a restatement and an elaboration of the main view of the state' found in the *Communist Manifesto*, while after Lenin 'the only major Marxist contribution to the theory of the state has been that of Antonio Gramsci'.[3] For example, in *State and Revolution*, Lenin (1974, pp. 12–15) describes 'the state as an instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed class'. Moreover, Lenin's analysis of the state in Part I, Section 3 of *State and Revolution* draws directly on several passages in Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* as noted earlier.[4]

Consequently, Miliband identifies the chief deficiency of contemporary Marxist political theory as the fact that nearly all Marxists have been content to assert and reassert, as more or less self-evident, the instrumentalist thesis articulated so succinctly in the *Communist Manifesto*. For Miliband, this meant that the primary way to advance state theory was 'to confront the question of the state in the light of the concrete socio-economic *and* political *and* cultural reality of actual capitalist societies'. In other words, Miliband argues that Marx provides a conceptual foundation for the socio-economic analysis of capitalist societies. Lenin provides guidance for a political analysis of capitalist societies, while Gramsci supplies the conceptual apparatus for a cultural and ideological analysis of capitalist societies. Therefore, Miliband was convinced that the central thesis and conceptual structure of Marxist political theory was effectively in place and that what Marxism needed was more empirical and historical analysis of states in capitalist societies to give concrete content to this thesis and its theoretical concepts. The intended purpose of *The State in Capitalist Society* was 'to make a contribution to remedying that deficiency' (Miliband, 1969, p. 7).

## Miliband's theory of the state

The most concise summary of Miliband's (1969, p. 23) theory of the state is that:

> In the Marxist scheme, the 'ruling class' of capitalist society is that class which owns and controls the means of production and which is able, by virtue of the economic power thus conferred upon it, to use the state as its instrument for the domination of society.

In empirical terms, Miliband identifies the corporation as the initial reference point for defining the capitalist class. In the United States, for example, the bulk of economic activity, whether measured in terms of assets, profits, employment, investment, market shares, or research and development expenditures was concentrated in the nation's 50 largest financial institutions and the 500 largest non-financial corporations (Means, 1939; Mason, 1964; Baran and Sweezy, 1966; Edwards *et al.*, 1972). Thus, members of the capitalist class are identified as those persons who occupy the managerial and ownership functions of corporations (Mintz, 1989, p. 208; Zeitlin, 1974; Useem, 1984). In this respect, the capitalist class is an overlapping economic network (i.e., structure) of authority based on institutional position (i.e., management) and property relations (i.e.,

ownership). Consequently, Miliband empirically identified the ruling classes of the advanced capitalist societies with wealthy families who owned large blocks of corporate stock and with the high-ranking managers of those same corporations – about 0.5% to 1% of the total US population (Domhoff, 1978, p. 4). However, it should be emphasized that the empirical composition and internal structure of the capitalist class is not fixed concept for Miliband. Instead, a Milibandian analysis of the socio-economic structure of capitalist societies must be empirically specific to particular countries and such an analysis must also be periodically updated to account for changes in the management and ownership structures of the capitalist economy.[5]

## Social class and political practice

In identifying the capitalist class, Miliband was directly challenging pluralists, who claimed that theoretical references to a 'capitalist class' were empirically meaningless, because the political representation of business interests is fragmented among competing corporations and divergent industry sectors, while corporate power is simultaneously checked by countervailing centres of social, economic, and political power. Thus, Miliband's empirical documentation of his thesis captured the attention of behavioural social scientists, because it cast doubt on the assertions of political theories that claimed to be based on empirical observation (e.g., Truman, 1951; Galbraith, 1952; Dahl, 1959). Moreover, in challenging these claims, Miliband was also debunking a widely held ideological belief, especially in the United States, that capitalist societies were more or less classless, pluralistic, egalitarian, and democratic. Thus, as bizarre as it may seem in retrospect, it was *theoretically* important within the Anglo-American intellectual context to reestablish the simple empirical fact that a capitalist class does exist and that numerous mechanisms can be identified which facilitate the economic cohesion of capitalists *as a class*.

However, assuming that one can document the existence of an economically dominant capitalist class, Miliband (1969, p. 24) contends that in conceptualizing the state most Marxists had failed 'to note the obvious but fundamental fact that this class is involved in a *relationship* with the state, which cannot be *assumed* in the political conditions which are typical of advanced capitalism', i.e., political democracy. Instead, if Marxist theory is to effectively challenge the claims of bourgeois social science, then the relationship between the state and the capitalist class has to be specified with historical and empirical precision (Miliband, 1969, p. 55).[6] Miliband emphasizes that in documenting this relationship

the claims put forward by a Marxist theory of the state carry a heavy empirical burden for the political theorist. This burden derives from the fact that Marxists do not merely assert that the capitalist class exercises substantial power, or even that it exercises more power than other classes, but insists that the capitalist class 'exercises a decisive degree of political power' *and* that 'its ownership and control of crucially important areas of economic life also insures its control of the means of political decision-making in the particular environment of advanced capitalism' (*Ibid.*, p. 48).[7]

## What is the state?

However, determining the magnitude of the relationship between a capitalist class and the state not only requires a clear definition of the capitalist class, but an equally clear definition of the means of political decision-making that constitute the state. Yet, Miliband observes paradoxically, that the modern state 'is a nebulous entity', because the state 'is not a thing, that it does not, as such, exist'. Instead, the state, as Miliband (1969, pp. 48–50) conceives it, is merely an analytic reference point that 'stands for…a number of particular institutions which, together, constitute its reality, and which interact as parts of what may be called the state system'. For Miliband, the state system is actually composed of five elements that are each identified with a cluster of particular institutions:

1. the governmental apparatus which consists of elected legislative and executive authorities at the national level, which make state policy,
2. the administrative apparatus, consisting of the civil service bureaucracy, public corporations, central banks, regulatory commissions, which regulate economic, social, cultural, and other activities,
3. the coercive apparatus, consisting of the military, paramilitary, police, and intelligence agencies, which together are concerned with the deployment and management of violence,
4. the judicial apparatus, which includes courts, the legal profession, jails and prisons, and other components of the criminal justice system,
5. the sub-central governments, such as States, Provinces, or Departments; counties, municipal governments, and special districts (*Ibid.*, pp. 49–53).

According to Miliband (1969, p. 54): 'These are the institutions – the government [executive], the administration, the military and the police, the judicial branch, sub-central government, and parliamentary assemblies – which make up the "the state", and whose interrelationship shapes the

form of the state system'. Miliband's emphasis on the state system as a set of *interrelationships* between particular institutions warrants special attention, since he has often been accused of reducing the state to a mere tool in the hands of the ruling class. Yet, contrary to these assertions, Miliband offers an important qualification that belies this metaphorical straw man.

Miliband chastises liberal pluralists and left-wing activists alike for the mistaken belief that 'the assumption of governmental power is equivalent to the acquisition of state power'. Although it is a simple distinction, Miliband's conflicts with the British Labour Party made him acutely aware that drawing a conceptual distinction between government and the state can have significant consequences for political strategy and political tactics. Miliband understood that the accession to governmental power at various points in the 20th century by liberal, labour, and social democratic *governments* was accompanied generally by a simultaneous failure to conquer *state power* in its diverse forms and places within the state system. The fact that a socialist government might control the parliamentary and executive branches of government, whether by election or revolution, does not automatically entail its control of the military, the police, the intelligence agencies, the civil service, the legal system, the sub-national governments, the schools and universities, regulatory agencies, public corporations, etc. As Miliband (1969, pp. 49–50) notes: '…the fact that the government does speak in the name of the state and is formally *invested* with state power, does not mean that it effectively *controls* that power'.

## What is state power?

Consequently, it is theoretically important to Miliband to know who actually controls state power at any given time. One of the most direct indicators of ruling-class domination is the degree to which members of the capitalist class *control* the state apparatus through interlocking positions in the governmental, administrative, coercive and other apparatuses. Miliband (1969, p. 54) emphasizes that:

> It is these institutions in which 'state power' lies, and it is through them that this power is wielded in its different manifestations by the people who occupy the leading positions in each of these institutions.

For this reason, Miliband (1969, p. 55) attaches considerable importance to the social composition of the state elite. The class composition

of a state elite creates 'a strong presumption…as to its general outlook, ideological dispositions and political bias' and, thus, one way to measure the degree of *potential* class domination is to quantify the extent to which members of a particular class have disproportionately colonized command posts within the state apparatuses. In the eyes of critics, Miliband's theory of the state is considered synonymous with this concept of institutional colonization. This is a misrepresentation of Miliband's analysis that has wildly exaggerated his empirical claims about the direct domination of the state apparatuses by members of the capitalist class.

Despite the importance of colonization to Miliband's analysis, his (1969, p. 55) empirical claims about the degree to which capitalists colonize the state apparatus were always circumscribed by his recognition that capitalists have not 'assumed the major share of *government*' in most advanced capitalist democracies. For that reason, Miliband (1969, p. 59) argues that capitalists 'are not, properly speaking, a "governing" class, comparable to pre-industrial, aristocratic and landowning classes'.[8] Indeed, a fact completely ignored by Miliband's critics is that he quotes Karl Kautsky to the effect that 'the capitalist class reigns but does not govern' (*Ibid.*, p. 55).[9] The colonization of key command posts in selected state apparatuses is merely one weapon, albeit an important one, in the larger arsenal of ruling class domination. What Miliband (1969, pp. 56, 48) actually claims is that capitalists are 'well represented in the political executive and in other parts of the state system' and that their occupation of these key command posts enables them to exercise *decisive influence over public policy*.[10]

The fact that finance capitalists usually control the executive branch of government and the administrative-regulatory apparatuses is considered particularly important, under normal circumstances, for both historical and theoretical reasons. In historical terms, the political development of the modern state system has been marked mainly by the growth of its regulatory, administrative, and coercive institutions over the course of the last century. As these institutions have grown in size, numbers, and technical complexity, the state's various subsystems have achieved greater autonomy from government in their operations. The growth of independent administrative and regulatory subsystems within the state has occurred as governments, especially legislatures, have found it increasingly difficult to maintain any central direction over the many components of the state system. The historical result is that the preponderance of state power has shifted from the legislative to the executive branch of government and to independent administrative or regulatory agencies.

This development is theoretically important partly because the very basis of state power is concentrated in those institutions (i.e. administration, coercion, knowledge) and because it is those institutions that the capitalist class has colonized most successfully. Thus, the actual extent of power that capitalists achieve by colonizing executive, administrative, and regulatory command posts has been magnified by the asymmetrical power structure within the contemporary state system, (e.g., in the United States by the imperial presidency and the emergence of independent regulatory agencies). This magnification of their state power provides capitalists with strategic locations inside the state system from which to initiate, modify, and veto a broad range of policy proposals.[11] Miliband recognizes that a potential weakness of this more limited claim is the fact that capitalists usually colonize only the top command posts of government and administration. The colonization process is clearly unable to explain the operational unity of the entire state system and, therefore, one must be able to identify the mechanism that leads a number of relatively autonomous and divergent state subsystems to operate *as if* they were a single entity called *the* state.

Indeed, the loose connection of lower-level career administrators to the state elite is indicated by Miliband's description of them as servants *of* the state. In fact, these servants are frequently conceptualized as a separate professional-managerial class composed of lower and middle level career *state managers* (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1977).[12] Miliband (1969, p. 119) observes that:

> The general pattern must be taken to be one in which these men [i.e. state managers] do play an important part in the process of governmental decision-making, and therefore constitute a considerable force in the configuration of political power in their societies.

Likewise, a problem of systemic unity derives from the disparate organization of the contemporary state apparatus. To the extent that the state system is viewed as a web of decentred institutions, one must account for how the state elite and state managers are able to maintain some over-arching inter-institutional cohesion that is capitalist' in its content. Miliband has attempted to explain the coherence of the state system by suggesting that its operational unity is reinforced by ideological and economic constraints. He (1969, p. 72) argues that most state elites, including those who are not members of the capitalist class, 'accept as beyond question the capitalist context in which they

operate'. In Miliband's (1969, p. 75) account, the ideological commitments of state elites and state managers are of 'absolutely fundamental importance in shaping their attitudes, policies and actions in regard to specific issues and problems with which they are confronted'. The result of their underlying ideological unity is that 'the politics of advanced capitalism have been about different conceptions of how to run the *same* economic and social system'.

Miliband (1969, p. 75) certainly recognizes that state elites and state managers in the various apparatuses, whether members of the capitalist class or not 'wish, without a doubt, to pursue many ends, personal as well as public'. However, the underlying ideological unity of state elites and state managers means that 'all other ends are conditioned by, and pass through the prism of, their acceptance of and commitment to the existing economic system' (*Ibid.*, p. 75). Thus, in an observation that clearly anticipates Fred Block's (1977) concept of business confidence, Claus Offe's (1975, 1984, p. 126) dependency principle, and Lindblom's (1982) notion of the privileged position of business, Miliband (1969, p. 75) observes that:

> …it is easy to understand why governments should wish to help business in every possible way…For if the national interest is in fact inextricably bound up with the fortunes of capitalist enterprise, apparent partiality towards it is not really partiality at all. On the contrary, in serving the interests of business and in helping capitalist enterprise to thrive, governments are really fulfilling their exalted role as guardians of the good of all.

Otherwise, as Miliband describes it, the modern state system in capitalist societies is a vast and sprawling network of political institutions loosely coordinated, if at all, through mechanisms providing a tenuous cohesion at best. Importantly, for Miliband, the diffuseness of the state system in capitalist societies also means that the conquest of state power is never an all or nothing proposition, because it is – in the Gramscian phrase – a war of fixed position, waged on many fronts, in many trenches, with shifting lines of battle, where victories and defeats occur side by side on the same day. The conquest of state power is never absolute; it is never uncontested; and it is never complete, because it is an on-going and contingent *political* struggle.[13] Hence, Miliband's concept of the state requires an analysis and understanding of state power that always refers to particular historical circumstances and to institutional configurations that may vary widely from one

capitalist society to another, and where over time class hegemony may shift in one direction or another within the same society.

## What's wrong with instrumentalism?

Ralph Miliband never actually used the term 'instrumentalism' to describe his theory of the state, but rather it was Nicos Poulantzas (1969, p. 74) who first identified Miliband's book with 'a long Marxist tradition' that allegedly considers the state to be 'only a simple tool or instrument manipulated at will by the ruling class'. Although Miliband did anchor his work in a classical Marxist tradition, Poulantzas's epithet was hardly an accurate description of either Miliband's book or the tradition of instrumentalist theory. Nevertheless, it is an oversimplication that quickly took hold in the state debate that unfolded during the 1970s and that persists to the present time. For instance, in their seminal article on 'Recent Developments in Marxist Theories of the Capitalist State', Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, p. 31) followed Poulantzas's lead by defining the instrumentalist theory of the state as 'a theory in which the ties between the ruling class and state are systematically examined, while the structural context within which those ties occur remains largely theoretically unorganized'. Shortly thereafter, Fred Block (1977, p. 8) defined instrumentalism as 'the orthodox Marxist view of the state because it views the state as a simple tool or instrument of ruling-class purposes'.[14] This definition effectively institutionalized Poulantzas's polemical jibe as a permanent part of the state debate even though G. William Domhoff (1976) correctly pointed out at the time that if one accepted this definition of instrumentalism then no one, especially Ralph Miliband, actually subscribed to an instrumentalist theory of the state. Indeed, it should have been highly instructive at the time that Block's (1977, pp. 8–10) subsequent critique of instrumentalism does not cite a single published work or author to exemplify his specific claims about instrumentalism.

Moreover, even at the time, the most strident critics of instrumentalism recognized that very few Marxist works on the state could actually be considered 'pure examples of an instrumentalist, structuralist, or Hegelian-Marxist perspective' (Gold, Lo, and Wright, 1975a, p. 31), because the concepts are analytically constructed ideal-types. Nevertheless, Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, p. 32) proclaimed that 'Ralph Miliband expresses this position clearly'. Bob Jessop's (1982, p. 15) influential work on *The Capitalist State* identified *The State in Capitalist Society* as 'a classic work' of instrumentalist theory, while Clark and Dear (1984,

pp. 26–7) labelled *The State in Capitalist Society* as 'probably the best example of the instrumentalist model'.

Yet, even within the framework of the instrumentalist-structuralist dichtomy being constructed during this time, Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, p. 33) still acknowledged from the outset that 'there are, of course, examples of instrumentalist work done at various levels of sophistication' and they conceded that Ralph Miliband 'most notably' had 'attempted to situate the analysis of personal connections in a more structural context'. Jessop (1982, p. 15) also qualified his critique of Miliband with the observation that 'it would be wrong to suggest that Miliband is committed to a simple instrumentalist position'. Thus, one critic after another acknowledges the sophisticated, nuanced, and multi-level analysis in *The State in Capitalist Society*, but then still proceed to debunk his work on the basis of criticisms that apply only to an artificially constructed ideal type, rather than to his actual published works. It is not Miliband's actual theorizing that was ever at issue, but the so-called 'logic' of a theoretical position artificially applied to him by critics. A long list of broadsides have been directed against Miliband's instrumentalism and most of these criticisms revolve around four major problems: (1) the problem of the subject, (2) the problem of the ideological apparatuses, (3) the problem of state autonomy, and (4) and the problem of economic and social reform.

## The problem of the subject

In his critique of Miliband's instrumentalism, Poulantzas (1969, pp. 70–1) defines the problem of the subject as 'a problematic of *social actors*, of individuals as the origin of *social action*'. If individuals or groups of individuals are considered as social actors, then Poulantzas argues that theoretical research is diverted from 'the study of the objective coordinates that determine the distribution of agents into social classes and the contradictions between these classes…to the search for *finalist* explanations founded on the *motivations of conduct* of the individual actors'. Poulantzas (1969, p. 71) claims that Miliband's empirical and institutional analysis of states in capitalist societies 'constantly gives the impression' that:

> social classes or 'groups' are in some way reducible to *inter-personal relations,* that the State is reducible to inter-personal relations of the members of the diverse 'groups' that constitute the State apparatus, and finally that the relation between social classes and the State is

> itself reducible to inter-personal relations of 'individuals' composing social groups and 'individuals' composing the State apparatus.

Consequently, Poulantzas chastises Miliband for offering explanations of corporate behaviour, the state elite, and state managers that are 'founded on the *motivations of conduct* of the individual actors' (i.e., ideology and interests) and that Miliband fails to comprehend 'social classes and the State as *objective structures,* and their relations as an *objective system of regular connections*, a structure and a system whose agents, "men", are in the words of Marx, "bearers" of it'.

According to Poulantzas, the same problem of the subject resurfaces in Miliband's treatment of the state bureaucracy, the army, regulatory agencies, and other personnel of the state system. The problem appears to reside in the fact that Miliband places so much emphasis on the role of ideology in linking these agents to the capitalist class and the top state elite, because this explanatory mechanism suggests that the criterion for membership in a particular class is the shared motivations and subjective orientations of a group of individuals. Hence, Poulantzas (1969, p. 73) concludes that Miliband 'seems to reduce the role of the State to the conduct and "behaviour" of the members of the State apparatus'. Therefore, Poulantzas (1969, p. 73) claims in a now legendary passage that:

> ...the *direct* participation of members of the capitalist class in the State apparatus and in the government, even where it exists, is not the important side of the matter. The relation between the bourgeois class and the State is an *objective relation*. This means that if the *function* of the state in a determinate social formation and the *interests* of the dominant class in this formation coincide, it is by reason of the system itself: the direct participation of members of the ruling class in the state apparatus is not the *cause* but the *effect*, and moreover a chance and contingent one, of this objective coincidence.[15]

Although Poulantzas insists that the state as a whole, as an objective system of power, is relatively autonomous from the dominant class, the state's *internal unity* requires that we not view its individual apparatuses and personnel as relatively autonomous. Rather, it is the general function of the state that gives cohesion and unity to the apparatuses and personnel and which make it possible to refer both to *a* state and to the *capitalist* state. However, from Poulantzas's perspective, Miliband relies on factors exterior to the state itself and, therefore, he lacks a

theoretical capacity to *conceptualize the necessary unity and cohesion of the state*. In contrast, Poulantzas (1969, p. 77) insists that 'the State in the classic Marxist sense of the term, possesses a very rigorous internal unity which directly governs the relation between the diverse branches of the apparatus'.[16]

Poulantzas's critique was aimed mainly at Miliband's and others' efforts to empirically document the extent to which capitalist elites colonized the top command posts of the state apparatus. While the earlier reconstruction of Miliband's theory of the state demonstrates that this was only one component of his overall analysis, Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, p. 33) nevertheless sanctioned this misrepresentation of Miliband's position by claiming that 'most of his analysis still centers on the patterns and consequences of personal and social ties between individuals occupying positions of power in different institutional spheres'. Indeed, they (1975a, p. 34) insist that even in 'sophisticated variants of instrumentalism', such as Miliband's, the functioning of the state is still 'fundamentally understood in terms of the instrumental exercise of power by people in strategic positions, either directly through manipulation of state policies or indirectly through the exercise of pressure on the state'.

In fact, Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, p. 35) contend that with 'rare exceptions, there is no systematic analysis of how the strategies and actions of ruling-class groups are limited by impersonal, structural causes…the exercise of state power and the formation of state policy seem to be reduced to a kind of voluntarism on the part of powerful people'. Bob Jessop (1977, p. 357) echoes this theme with the claim that Miliband 'reproduces the liberal tendency to discuss politics in isolation from its complex articulation with economic forces. To the extent that he does relate them it is only through interpersonal connection' (Cf. Jessop, 1982, p. 22).[17] Simon Clarke (1991, p. 19) repeats this assertion by claiming that the main weakness in Miliband's theory of the state is its lack of 'any theory of the *structural* relationship between civil society and the state'.

Miliband firmly rejected this indictment of his work by claiming that Poulantzas and others had greatly under-estimated the extent to which he did take account of the objective structural relations that constrain elite decision-making and the role of the state, but he also argued that the nature of the state elite was not irrelevant to understanding the concrete differences between states and state policies in various capitalist societies.[18] In fact, in a chapter on 'The Purpose and Role of Governments' that follows his analysis of the state elite, Miliband

(1969, p. 79) specifically takes account of the structural constraints on state elites:

> The 'bias of the system' may be given a greater or lesser degree of emphasis. But the ideological dispositions of governments have generally been of a kind to make more acceptable to them the structural constraints imposed upon them by the system; and these dispositions have also made it easier for them to submit to the pressures to which they have been subjected by dominant interests.

However, Miliband does not regard the 'bias of the system' or its 'structural constraints' as purely a limitation of state elites' and state managers' ideological outlook or even as the exclusive result of campaign contributions, lobbying, and the other political processes of ruling class domination (cf. Domhoff, 1978). Indeed, in a chapter entitled 'Imperfect Competition', Miliband (1969, p. 146) argues that 'business enjoys a massive superiority *outside* the state system as well, in terms of the immensely stronger pressures which, as compared with labour and any other interest, it is able to exercise in the pursuit of its purposes'. In fact, the analysis of state power in this chapter spins off a passage that clearly articulates the mechanism of structural constraint later identified with the works of Claus Offe, Fred Block, and Charles E. Lindblom. In defining capital's 'massive superiority *outside* the state system', Miliband (1969, p. 147) observes that:

> One such form of pressure, which pluralist 'group theorists' tend to ignore, is more important and effective than any other, and business is uniquely placed to exercise it, without the need of organization, campaigns, and lobbying. This is the pervasive and permanent pressure upon governments and the state generated by the private control of concentrated industrial, commercial, and financial resources. The existence of this major area of independent economic power is a fact which no government, whatever its inclinations, can ignore in the determination of its policies, not only in regard to economic matters, but to most other matters as well.

Thus, as Domhoff (1990, p. 193) has pointed out previously, it should have been clear even at the time that when Miliband (1969, 23) states that 'in the Marxist scheme, the "ruling class" of capitalist society is that class which owns and controls the means of production and which is able, by virtue of the economic power thus conferred upon it, to use

the state as its instrument for the domination of society' that he means exactly 'what more recent theorists mean with their talk about structures and autonomy and privileged position'. If there was any doubt about Miliband's meaning or intent, he (1969, p. 150) further clarified his position a few pages later in a discussion about whether government can use its political power and financial resources 'as an instrument of long-term economic policy' by compelling individual firms or industries to radically change their methods of doing business. Miliband (1969, p. 150) concludes that there is not much evidence that 'governments have been notably effective in the use of this power in their relations with private enterprise'. The underlying structural reason for this failure, according to Miliband (1969, p. 150), is that:

> in the abstract, governments do indeed have vast resources and powers at their command to 'wield the big stick' against business. In practice, governments which are minded to use these powers and resources – and most of them are not – soon find, given the economic and political context in which they operate, that the task is fraught with innumerable difficulties and perils.

So what is this economic and political context? What are the difficulties and perils that state elites confront in their relations with corporations and private businesses? Miliband (1969, p. 150) states that:

> These difficulties and perils are perhaps best epitomized in the dreaded phrase 'loss of confidence.' It is an implicit testimony to the power of business that all governments, not least reforming ones, have always been profoundly concerned to gain and retain its 'confidence.' Nor certainly is there any other interests whose 'confidence' is deemed so precious, or whose 'loss of confidence' is so feared.

What is remarkable about such a 'discovery' in Miliband's work is that many of his critics were explicitly aware of this 'structural' component in his theory, but chose for unarticulated reasons to downplay or ignore it. For example, Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, p. 33) concede that Miliband was well aware of the fact that 'the policies of the state would still be severely constrained by the economic structure in which it operates even if "personal ties were weak or absent – as sometimes happens when social democratic parties come to power". Furthermore, he moves away from a voluntaristic version of instrumentalism by stressing the social processes which mould the ideological commitments of the

"state elite"'. Jessop (1982, p. 22) also recognized that in later chapters of *The State in Capitalist Society* 'Miliband emphasizes the veto power of "business confidence" entailed in the institutional separation of the economic and political – a power that is independent of interpersonal connections – and also discusses the role of ideological practices rooted in civil society in shaping the political agenda. In this way Miliband points beyond institutionalism and instrumentalism' at least as it has been understood by most scholars.

In contrast, Stan Luger (2000) is one of the few scholars to have incorporated this observation into his thinking about Miliband's theory of the state with his suggestion that Miliband 'offers a perspective that balances a focus on interest group activity with that of the privileged position of business'. At the same time, Luger observes that 'state dependence on business, while an important pressure, does not automatically mean that government officials know how to respond to each particular policy battle'. The structural dependence of the state on capital confers an asymmetrical advantage to business in the political process, but it does not obviate the need for business to involve itself in the political and public policy-making processes. This is particularly true in capitalist democracies, where 'officials cannot simply ignore citizens' demands if they wish to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate' (Luger, 2000, p. 28).[19]

## The problem of ideological apparatuses

The problem of political legitimacy was cast primarily as a problem of the ideological apparatuses in the course of the Miliband-Poulantzas debate. Given its prominence in Miliband's analysis, Poulantzas was not inclined to dismiss ideology altogether, but instead he proposes to reconceptualize its production and distribution within a Marxist theory of the state. Poulantzas (1969, pp. 76–7) was quite correct to point out that 'the classic Marxist tradition of the theory of the State is principally concerned to show *the repressive role of the State*, in the strong sense of organized physical repression'. On the other hand, ideology had been dismissed as epiphenominal (rather than constitutive) of social and political relations, mainly because ideology had been equated 'with ideas, customs or morals without seeing that ideology can be embodied, in the strong sense, in *institutions*: institutions which then, by the very process of institutionalization, belong to the system of the State'. Poulantzas proposes that the realm of ideology be brought inside the state by reconceptualizing the state as a dual matrix of appa-

ratuses that either perform repressive functions or ideological functions.[20] Poulantzas defines the state ideological apparatuses to include churches, political parties, trade unions, schools and universities, the press, television, radio, and even the family.

Poulantzas's observations were again echoed by Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, 35), who argue that instrumentalism cannot account for ideology because there are 'important realms of state-related activity which are clearly not manipulated by specific capitalists or coalitions, such as culture, ideology, and legitimacy' (Gold, Lo, and Wright, 1975a, p. 35). This cavalier assertion was anything but self-evident even in the context of the mid-1970s, when many highly respected works on the manipulation of culture, ideology, and legitimacy were readily available, including books by scholars such as Murray Edelman (1964), Joel Spring (1972), David N. Smith (1974), and Stewart Ewen (1976). On the other hand, Block (1977, p. 8) asserts that instrumentalism simply 'neglects the ideological role of the state'.

These are woefully misdirected criticisms, since Miliband (1969, p. 178) concludes Chapter 6 of *The State in Capitalist Society* with the observation that:

> The subordinate classes in these regimes [i.e., capitalist democracies], and 'intermediary' classes as well, have to be persuaded to accept the existing social order and to confine their demands and aspirations within its limits. For dominant classes there can be no enterprise of greater importance, and there is none which requires greater exertion on a continuous basis, since the battle, in the nature of a system of domination, is never finally won.

Miliband then proceeds to devote two entire chapters to analysing 'the process of legitimation' and thus adopts exactly the method of analysis proposed by Poulantzas. However, Miliband does reject the structuralist view that ideological institutions should be conceptualized as part of the state apparatus (Althusser, 1971; Poulantzas, 1973a, pp. 28–34; Therborn, 1980). Precisely because ideological institutions are increasingly linked to and buttressed by the state, Miliband insists that it is important not to blur the fact that in bourgeois democracies they are not part of the state, but part of a wider political or ideological system. Miliband (1970b, p. 59) agrees that ideological institutions *are* increasingly subject to a process of 'statization' and he concedes that their statization 'is likely to be enhanced by the fact that the state must, in the conditions of permanent crisis of advanced capitalism, assume ever

greater responsibility for political indoctrination and mystification'. Nevertheless, Miliband (1970b, p. 59) draws the *empirical* conclusion that such a process has not gone far enough to permit the conceptualization of such institutions as part of the state, since most of them continue to 'perform their ideological functions outside it'.

Miliband also insists that it is necessary to recognize that while state power may be the main and ultimate means of maintaining ruling class domination, it is not the only form of class power as Poulantzas' formulation implies. Miliband's point is that state power is not the only form, nor the only site, of ruling class domination. This is another reason why Miliband again rejects the structuralists' suggestion that institutions such as churches, the educational system, political parties, the press, radio, television, publishing, the family, etc. all be brought within the realm of state theory as components of a state ideological apparatus. Indeed, Miliband (1973a, p. 88, fn.16) scoffs at the suggestion as carrying 'to caricatural forms the confusion between different forms of class domination and, to repeat, makes impossible a serious analysis of the relation of the state to society, and of state power to class power'.

## The problem of state autonomy

Another derivative aspect of the so-called problem of the subject is the assertion that Miliband, and instrumentalists generally, fail 'to recognize that to act in the general interest of capital, the state must be able to take actions against the particular interests of capitalists' (Block, 1977, p. 9). Block argues that 'in order to serve the general interests of capital, the state must have some autonomy from direct ruling-class control'. Similarly, Jessop (1990, pp. 27–8) goes on to insist that the instrumentalist approach also encounters difficulties 'where the state acquires a considerable measure of independence from the dominant class owing to a more or less temporary equilibrium in the class struggle'.

However, even in his chapter on 'The State System and the State Elite', which is the basis of so many of the criticisms directed at Miliband, he (1969, p. 55) observes:

> it is obviously true that the capitalist class, as a class, does not actually 'govern.' One must go back to isolated instances of the early history of capitalism, such as the commercial patriciates of cities like Venice and Lubeck, to discover direct and sovereign rule by businessmen.

> Apart from these cases, the capitalist class has generally confronted the state as a separate entity – even, in the days of its rise to power, as an alien and often hostile element, often under the control and influence of an established and land-owning class….Nor has it come to be the case, even in the epoch of advanced capitalism, that businessmen have themselves assumed the major share of government. On the other hand, they have generally been well represented in the political executive and in other parts of the state system as well; and this has been particularly true in the recent history of advanced capitalism.

On this point, Miliband (1973a, p. 85) agrees that it is 'is absolutely right' to reaffirm 'that the political realm is not, in classical Marxism, the mere reflection of the economic realm, and that in relation to the state, the notion of the latter's "relative autonomy" is central'. Indeed, in a significant and lengthy footnote in one of his rejoinders to Poulantzas, Miliband (1973a, p. 85, fn. 4) argues that the concept of relative autonomy is fully contained in:

> …the most familiar of all the Marxist formulations on the state, that which is to be found in the *Communist Manifesto*, where Marx and Engels assert that 'the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'…what they are saying is that 'the modern state is but a committee for managing the *common* affairs of the *whole* bourgeoisie': the notion of common affairs assumes the existence of particular ones; and the notion of the whole bourgeoisie implies the existence of separate elements which make up that whole. This being the case, there is an obvious need for an institution of the kind they refer to, namely the state; and the state *cannot* meet this need without enjoying a certain degree of autonomy. In other words, the notion of autonomy is embedded in the definition itself, is an intrinsic part of it.

## The problem of economic and social reform

The false assertion that instrumentalism does not accord any relative autonomy to the state has led to two further, but mutually contradictory criticisms of Miliband's theory of the state. On the one hand, Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, p. 35) assert that instrumentalists 'treat all reforms as the result of an instrumentalist use of the state by capitalists', which is to theoretically 'deny the possibility of struggle over reform'. On the other hand, Jessop (1990, p. 27) argues that a

fundamental problem of instrumentalism is its 'tendency to assume that the state as an instrument is neutral and can be used with equal facility and equal effectiveness by any class or social force'. Thus, rather than negating the possibility of reform, Jessop (1982, p. 14) suggests that a instrumentalist theory of the state 'underlies the reformism of social democratic movements', which 'tend to see the state apparatus in liberal parliamentary regimes as an independent neutral instrument which can be used with equal facility and equal effectiveness by all political forces and they have therefore concentrated on the pursuit of electoral victory as the necessary (and sometimes even sufficient) condition of a peaceful, gradual, and majoritarian transition to socialism'.

In fact, neither violent revolution nor parliamentary reform was ever advanced by Miliband, who instead emphasized the importance of mass politics and social movements as the basis for realigning the relationship between state and civil society. From his early *Parliamentary Socialism* (1961) to *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (1994b), Miliband was always a critic of parliamentary socialism and never viewed electoral politics alone as sufficient for a transition to socialism, precisely because the state power is more than governmental power and class power is more than state power. In *The State in Capitalist Society,* Miliband (1969, p. 265) explicitly rejects the view that the state 'can be and indeed mostly is the agent of a "democratic" social order, with no inherent bias towards any class or group'. Miliband (1969, pp. 265–6) rejects the idea of state neutrality as 'a fundamental misconception', because the state in capitalist societies 'is primarily and inevitably the guardian and protector of the economic interests which are dominant in them'.

At the same time, Miliband (1969, p. 266) acknowledges that class rule in the advanced capitalist societies 'has remained compatible with a wide range of civil and political liberties' that provide the political basis for mass social and political movements. Miliband (1969, p. 266) contends that the historical exercise of these liberties 'has undoubtedly helped to mitigate the form and content of class domination in many areas of civil society' and the state has been 'the main agent of that mitigation'. Miliband (1969, p. 77) is quite explicit in pointing out that state elites 'have in fact been compelled over the years to act against *some* property rights, to erode *some* managerial prerogatives, to help redress *somewhat* the balance between capital and labour, between property and those who are subject to it'. However, Miliband (1969, pp. 266, 271) also concludes that 'this mitigating function does not abolish class rule', because economic and social reforms have 'to be confined within the structural limits created by the economic system

in which it occurs'. Thus, in Miliband's (1969, p. 271) theory of the state, reform is possible in exceptional circumstances, but only 'when popular pressure is unusually strong' (cf. Piven and Cloward, 1977). Thus, Simon Clarke (1991, p. 19) correctly observes that an important implication of 'Miliband's analysis was that socialism could not be achieved by purely electoral means, but only by a mass political movement which could mobilize and articulate popular aspirations in order to conduct the democratic struggle on all fronts'.

## Conclusion

It is beyond doubt that critics of Miliband's theory of the state have not only distorted 'instrumentalism' by representing it through a distorted ideal-type, but they openly gloss over significant aspects of Miliband's thought – indeed entire chapters of *The State in Capitalist Society* – that contravene this ideal-type. For this reason, Barrow (1993, p. 168) has previously suggested that many of Miliband's critics appear to 'have never read more than the first half of Miliband's *State in Capitalist Society*'. Thus, a mere *reading* of Miliband should be sufficient to document that his work has not only been 'defamed and distorted' by critics, as (Domhoff, 1990, p. 190) argues, but that starting with Poulantzas many have even misrepresented the book as 'claiming the opposite of what it actually said'.

For example, during the 1970s, Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, p. 33) were well aware of the fact that Miliband 'attempted to situate the analysis of personal connections in a more structural context'. They (1975a, p. 33) note that 'Miliband stresses that even if these personal ties were weak or absent – as sometimes happens when social democratic parties come to power – the policies of the state would still be severely constrained by the economic structure in which it operates'. These same authors (1975a, p. 33) even concede that Miliband 'argues that the state must have a certain degree of autonomy from manipulation by the ruling class', which allows him to move away 'from a voluntaristic version of instrumentalism'. Similarly, Bob Jessop (1982, p. 22) explicitly recognized that in the later chapters of *The State in Capitalist Society* Miliband introduced the concept of business confidence as a structural constraint on decision-making in a way that 'pointed beyond institutionalism and instrumentalism' as it was described by most scholars at the time. Yet, even after this long list of concessions, Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, p. 33) still concluded that 'in spite of these elements in Miliband's work, the systematic aspect of

his theory of the state remains firmly instrumentalist' as they defined that concept.

Thus, what are we to do with the concept of instrumentalism? In light of the foregoing analysis, one possibility is to jettison instrumentalism as nothing more than an artificially constructed straw man that does not accurately describe any actually existing work on the capitalist state. Scholars who employ a power structure methodology could simply follow G. William Domhoff's (1976) lead and declare that 'I am not an instrumentalist' if it is the critics' version of instrumentalism that is to pass for instrumentalism among other scholars. An alternative strategy is to retain the concept of instrumentalism, since it is so well established in the state debate literature, while emphasizing that instrumentalism is both well-grounded in classical Marxism and a more sophisticated theory in practice than critics have acknowledged in the past.

However, this second strategy creates a new theoretical puzzle. It has been documented that Miliband's theory of the state incorporates structural factors (e.g., business confidence and the dependency principle) that have been largely identified with competing theories of the state such as structuralism and systems analysis (see Barrow, 1993, Chaps. 2, 4). Miliband's theory also incorporates a detailed historical and empirical analysis of political institutions of the sort associated with the new institutionalism and state autonomy theory (see Barrow, 1993, Chap. 5; Skocpol, 1980). Following Engels, Miliband's theory of the state even acknowledges the possibility of exceptional periods of state autonomy during periods of intense class struggle or stalemate. Once these facts are acknowledged, subsequent theorizing about the state does more to supplement, clarify, or deepen Miliband's original analysis, rather than supplant it.

## Notes

1 This idea first appears in Miliband (1965b, p. 278), where he argues that Marx's 'whole trend of thought on the subject of the state finds its most explicit expression in the famous formulation of the Communist Manifesto: "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie".'

2 Notably, Engels (1972, p. 231) also observes that there are 'exceptional periods…when the warring classes are so nearly equal in forces that the state power, as apparent mediator, acquires for the moment a certain independence in relation to both. This applies to the absolute monarchy of the 11$^{th}$ and 18$^{th}$ centuries…and to the Bonapartism of the First and particularly of the Second Empire'. See Barrow (1993, p. 130) for a criticism of how the idea of exceptional periods has been mistakenly generalized into an competing theory of state autonomy.

3 Elsewhere, Miliband (1977b, p. 2) observes that 'none of the greatest figures of classical Marxism, with the partial exception of Gramsci, ever attempted or for that matter felt the need to attempt the writing of a "political treatise"'. See also, Miliband (1970a, p. 309) where he reiterates that 'The State and Revolution is rightly regarded as one of Lenin's most important works…In short, here, for intrinsic and circumstantial reasons, is indeed one of the "sacred texts" of Marxist thought'.

4 Jessop (1982, p. 12) claims that 'it was Engels who first combined this instrumentalist view with the claim that it was a specific class which controlled the state apparatus and used this control to maintain its economic and political domination', but this assertion is not correct, because the same idea appears in *The Communist Manifesto* and *The German Ideology*.

5 For example, Bottomore and Brym (1989) is a Milibandian analysis of the capitalist classes, at a fixed point in time, of Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada, and the United States. From a historical perspective, Van der Pijl (1984) utilized the same methodology to conclude that by the mid-1980s multinational corporations had established the economic basis of an Atlantic ruling class. More recently, Robinson and Harris (2000) suggest that the emergence of transnational corporations is creating the economic basis for a global ruling class. Also, Sklair (2001).

6 Miliband is responding most notably to Dahl (1958, p. 463) who dismisses the ruling elite model as 'a type of quasi-metaphysical theory….The least we can demand of any ruling elite theory that purports to be more than a metaphysical or polemical doctrine is, first, that the burden of proof be on the proponents of the theory and not on its critics; and, second, that there be clear criteria according to which the theory could be disproved'.

7 In contrast, Dahl (1958, p. 465) argues that 'neither logically nor empirically does it follow that a group with a high degree of influence over one scope will necessarily have a high degree of influence over another scope within the same system'.

8 In the same passage, Miliband (1969, p. 59) notes that capitalists 'have never constituted, and do not constitute now, more than a relatively small minority of the state elite as a whole'.

9 The passage cited is Kautsky (1910, p. 29). Miliband cites this passage nearly a decade prior to the widely acclaimed article by Block (1977).

10 For supporting evidence, see, Riddlesperger Jr. and King (1989); Zweigenhaft (1975); Freitag (1975). For historical data see, Mintz (1975).

11 Importantly, however, Miliband (1969, p. 47) notes: 'This does not mean that they [capitalists] have always known how best to safeguard their interests – classes, like individuals, make mistakes – though their record from this point of view, at least in advanced capitalist countries, is not, demonstrably, particularly bad'.

12 Miliband (1983d, p. 12) elsewhere points to this distinction by noting that the concept of the state 'refers to certain people who are in charge of the executive power of the state – presidents, prime ministers, their cabinets, and their top civilian and military advisers'.

13 Miliband (1969, p. 78) observes that state elites 'have often been forced, mainly as a result of popular pressure, to take action against certain property rights and capitalist prerogatives'. See, Clarke (1991, p. 19).

14 Block (1977, p. 6, 28, fn.1) cites Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975a, 1975b) in the first sentence of his article and also thanks Clarence Lo for his 'help on this article'.
15 King (1986, p. 77) observes that in Poulantzas' formulation 'state bureaucrats are constrained to act on behalf of capital because of the logic of the capitalist system, irrespective of their personal beliefs or affiliations'.
16 Likewise, Poulantzas (1969, p. 75) insists that: '…the State apparatus forms an objective system of special "branches" whose relation presents a specific internal unity and obeys, to a large extent, its own logic'.
17 See also, Jessop (1982, p. 22), where he states for Miliband 'it is the activities of the people who occupy the leading positions in these institutions and thus constitute the "state elite" that are said to determine the class nature of state power'.
18 This line of argument is taken directly from Domhoff (1990, pp. 190–4).
19 Luger does not undertake an extensive conceptual analysis of Miliband's work, but his book calls attention to the fact that some scholars are starting to recognize that Miliband was a far more sophisticated thinker than he was given credit for in the 1970s and 1980s.
20 Poulantzas (1973b, p. 47) elsewhere claims that 'the state is composed of several apparatuses: broadly, the repressive apparatus and the ideological apparatus, the principal role of the former being repression, that of the latter being the elaboration and incubation of ideology. The ideological apparatuses include the churches, the educational system, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois political parties, the press, radio, television, publishing, etc. These apparatuses belong to the state system because of their objective function of elaborating and inculcating ideology'.

# 6

# Can Capitalists Use the State to Serve Their General Interests?[1]

*Paul Wetherly*

The short answer to the question in the title is yes. But the question needs to be unpacked in order to give a more considered answer. The longer answer in this paper, drawing on Miliband and engaging with Jessop, will also be (a more qualified) yes.

The first section, following Miliband, sets out the key claims of instrumentalism, noting the possible variants of this approach, including the relationship between Marxist and non-Marxist versions. The central sections restate and defend essential aspects of the Marxist instrumental view: the state as an 'instrument', concepts of class structure and class interests, and the notion of a relatively unified capitalist class capable of formulating general class interests. The final part argues in support of a general theory of the capitalist state.

## The instrumentalist thesis

At the start of his study of *The State in Capitalist Society* Miliband refers to 'the vast inflation of the state's power and activity in the advanced capitalist societies' in consequence of which 'men' rely increasingly on the state's 'sanction and support' in order to realize their purposes or interests. This means that

> they must ... seek to influence and shape the state's power and purpose, or try and appropriate it altogether. It is for the state's attention, or for its control, that men compete; and it is against the state that beat the waves of social conflict (Miliband, 1969, p. 1).

This statement may be taken as providing a rough definition of an instrumentalist view of the state.[2] The central claim is that the state,

and state power, may be controlled or influenced by external agents or social forces and used to realize their interests or purposes, as against rival or conflicting interests.[3] However this rough claim raises many questions, such as these: What types of agents or social forces? How are their interests or purposes understood? What is the balance of power among them? How is control or influence exercised? And, how far can the state be seen as merely the instrument of such external forces?

Miliband's formulation appears in one way strikingly odd. The reference to 'men' who compete for the state's attention and control might be criticized on grounds of latent sexism (women engage in political struggle too!), but it is also striking for its seeming un-Marxist character. No pluralist writer would take exception to Miliband's definition. Miliband's book was, famously, criticized by Poulantzas for attempting a critique of pluralist theory on *its own ground*, focusing on the behaviour of subjects rather than putting forward a distinctive Marxist approach emphasizing objective determinations rooted in social structure (Poulantzas, 1969; see also Poulantzas, 1976 and Miliband, 1970b, 1973a). Poulantzas's critique was mistaken in seeing the instrumental approach as a problematic of the subject and intrinsically un-Marxist just on this account. In fact an instrumental view of the state can be developed within a Marxist or pluralist theoretical framework – there is a range of instrumentalisms. These approaches are distinguished by the answers given to the above questions, especially the identification of social forces, their interests and their relative power. Miliband's was thus a critique of pluralist theory laid out on *shared ground*: the purpose of the book was to recover and defend a Marxist instrumentalism against a dominant pluralist version. The essence of the difference is the emphasis on class conflict rather than group competition, and the related ruling class view of the distribution of power as opposed to an egalitarian or fragmented one. Poulantzas was also mistaken in so far as he counter-posed structural and agent-centred approaches. Miliband's work attempts to encompass both of these explanatory approaches in a unified theory, although it is true that the structural dimension is rather neglected in *The State in Capitalist Society* and arguable that later work does not provide a convincing synthesis of structural and agent-centred explanations.[4]

Although an instrumentalist view of the state can be elaborated in a variety of ways, some more modest in their claims and some more ambitious, some form of instrumentalism is indispensable. In other words, debate is best understood not so much as for or against instrumentalism but in terms of the claims of specific instrumentalist views and how far they take us in adequately theorizing the state. At least this is so within

any form of state theory that allows some space for agency.[5] For, as Jessop has acknowledged, in mounting a critique of instrumentalism he is 'not denying that the state can be used to some effect: this is the whole point behind political struggle' (1990, pp. 149–50). Thus only those who deny that political struggles are fundamentally attempts by agents to use state power to realize some intended effect(s) reject instrumentalism altogether.

All versions of instrumentalism are committed to certain common claims:

- The state (or a specific part of the state) is capable of being used as an instrument 'to some effect'
- Social forces (variously characterized) seek ('men compete') to influence or control state power to realize specific purposes or policy outcomes[6]
- These purposes are considered to require the state's 'sanction and support' if they are to be realized more effectively or even at all
- Social forces do succeed, to some degree, in influencing or controlling the state and thereby in influencing its form, functions and development

Instrumentalism might, but need not, make the following claims:[7]

- The state as a whole can be controlled as a single unified instrument. (However, the complexity of the state system suggests that social forces may seek to control specific institutional bases of power within the state commensurate with their purposes)
- The state could be an instrument in the hands of just one social force to the exclusion of all others. (However, the complexity of the social formation and of social forces contending for political influence/power suggests that one social force or interest holding 'exclusive political sway' is unlikely)
- The state is a neutral instrument or passive tool capable of being controlled by any social force and for any purpose. (But the institutional design of state institutions or apparatuses is likely to limit their functionality in relation to particular interests and strategies)
- Instrumentalism can alone furnish an adequate theory of the state. (However, this claim would rely on the adequacy of an agent-centred approach and the neglect of any form of structural explanation)

An instrumentalist view of the state is essentially society-centred in that its emphasis is on social forces, ie forces rooted in civil society external to the state. A Marxist instrumental view of the state can be

distinguished from other variants as a form of economic determination.[8] More specifically, the fundamental social forces and their interests are rooted in the character of the capitalist economic structure or system, that is, as class forces and interests. As against pluralist instrumentalism, primacy is assigned to class as an explanatory variable. However economic determination is not reducible to instrumentalism, and there are variants of Marxist instrumentalism. The instrumental view of the state is better conceived as one mechanism of economic determination which may be seen as operating in conjunction (or as interplaying) with others within a Marxist explanatory framework, particularly the mechanism of structural constraint.[9]

Miliband, for example, identifies 'three modes of explanation of the nature of the state' which, taken together, 'constitute the Marxist answer to the question why the state should be considered as the "instrument" of the "ruling class"' (2004, p. 77). The 'three distinct answers' (2004, p. 71) are that:

1) 'the bias of the state is determined by the social class of its leading personnel' (2004, p. 74), that is 'the correlation … in class terms between the state elite and the economically dominant class' (2004, p. 73);
2) 'capitalist enterprise is … the strongest "pressure group" in capitalist society … able to command the attention of the state' (2004, p. 75); and,
3) 'there are "structural constraints" … A capitalist economy has its own "rationality" to which any government and state must … submit' (2004, p. 76).

Miliband's discussion of these three answers shows that he cannot be characterized fairly as proposing just an instrumentalist view of the state. However he poses the question in a way that stretches the concept of the state as an instrument of the ruling class. The question, in more general form (also used by Miliband), is why, in Marxist terms, the state should be thought to be a 'class state' or how, in these terms, the 'class bias of the state' in favour of the ruling class is explained.[10] The first two answers are instrumentalist as previously defined, focusing on the successful efforts by members of the capitalist class outside the state and those in the state elite affiliated to them by class background to control or influence state power to realize class interests. The third answer is non-instrumentalist, focusing on structural constraints whose effects can be understood without invoking the actions of capitalists and allied members of the state elite. Thus the three answers fall

into two types: instrumentalist and structuralist. Miliband's point is that these explanations need to be 'taken together'. Each one, by itself, has deficiencies but taken together, Miliband implies, they provide an adequate basis for theorizing the state.

The characterization of Miliband as an instrumentalist theorist is also qualified by the emphasis he places on the 'relative autonomy' of the state. This relative autonomy renders the notion of the state as an instrument of the ruling class 'misleading' (2004, p. 77). For 'while the state does act … *on behalf* of the "ruling class" it does not for the most part act *at its behest*', which may be taken to mean that it does not act under its instruction (2004, p. 77). In other words, there is 'no … automatic translation' of class power into state power (2004, p. 70). Miliband identifies some obstacles to such translation. For one, the ruling class is not monolithic and so 'cannot act as a principal to an agent' (2004, p. 71).[11] In addition, the institutional separation of the state from civil society 'implies a certain distance between the two, a *relation* which implies a disjunction' (2004, p. 88). Thus the 'high degree of autonomy and independence' of the state can be seen, in part, as the result of barriers between class power and state power. On the face of it these barriers limit the capacity of the capitalist class to influence or control state power. Yet for Miliband the relative autonomy of the state enhances rather than diminishes its capacity to act on behalf of the ruling class. For 'relative autonomy … consists in the degree of freedom which the state … has in determining how best to serve what those who hold power conceive to be the "national interest", and which in fact involves the service of the interests of the ruling class' (2004, p. 87). The state must have this freedom, the argument runs, so that it is able to mediate and reconcile different and conflicting interests within the non-monolithic ruling class. The state is a class state and it is so because of, and not despite, its relative autonomy.

The definition of relative autonomy proposed by Miliband seems to introduce a tension into his analysis of the state as a class state which he does not resolve. The tension is this: one reason for thinking that the state is a class state is the strength and influence of the capitalist class as a pressure group able to command the attention of the state by virtue of its economic power, yet the state is able to act as a class state precisely because of its high degree of independence from this class. Although this should not be thought of in either-or terms, Miliband needs to reconcile 'influence' and 'independence from influence'. One 'solution', canvassed in this chapter, is the conception of a relatively unified capitalist class capable of formulating general class interests.

The hallmark of a Marxist instrumental approach is the emphasis on class forces and interests, and this involves seeing class concepts (class forces, class interests) as explanatory or independent variables and aspects of the state (state form, functions of the state) as dependent variables. But class analysis can be elaborated in different ways within a broadly Marxist framework, giving rise to variants of Marxist instrumentalism. The essential Marxist explanatory claim, as summarized by Miliband, is that 'the state is an essential means of class domination' (2004, p. 70), and the point of class analysis is to make good this claim. However possible variants of Marxist instrumentalism can be seen by the answers that could be given to the following questions:

1. Does class domination entail that the capitalist class enjoys, in the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, 'exclusive political sway', or is it compatible with the working class using political power to some effect to achieve reform ('pressure from below')?
2. How far does class struggle involve the articulation of general class interests (the interests of 'capital in general') as distinct from particularistic interests (eg the interests of particular firms, industries or sectors)?
3. To what extent is the society-centred emphasis on class struggles compatible with a state-centred view of state institutions having a 'selective' effect on class forces, and/or state managers playing an active role in the formulation of class interests?
4. How far is the emphasis on class compatible with the influence of non-class social forces, or civil society organizations?

The instrumental view can be used as a framework for analysing the influence of 'pressure from below' as well as 'above', so that the state as a focus of class struggle can develop along reformist lines. Marxist analyses of the development of state welfare are often on these lines (eg, Gough, 1979). Pressures from above and below may take a particularistic form, such as demands from specific companies or industries for favourable policies. Luger for example analyses how the 'corporate power' of the automobile industry has been deployed to achieve favourable political outcomes, but this should be distinguished from the notion of class-wide or general interests (Luger, 2000). Such analyses of business dominance display a good deal of affinity with some non-Marxist approaches, including some variants of pluralist theory (eg see Lindblom, 1980; Poggi, 1990; Gonzalez, this volume). Jessop embraces a more pluralist approach in his argument that Marxist analysis of the state 'will

be … adequate to the extent that … it allows [*inter alia*] not only for the influence of class forces rooted in/or relevant to non-capitalist production relations but also for that of non-class forces' (1984, p. 221), and in his emphasis on the changing 'balance among all forces in a given situation' (1984, p. 225).

The distinctive Marxist claim, as argued in Miliband's work *The State in Capitalist Society*, is that the state is an instrument used by the capitalist class to ensure the maintenance of capitalist relations of production and, thereby, its own position of power and privilege. It is not really in question whether 'pressure from above' is exerted. For it is not doubted that capitalist business interests seek, from time to time, to influence policy-makers and are, from time to time, successful in securing favourable policy outcomes. This is certainly compatible, within limits, with successful 'pressure from below' and political struggles of non-class social forces. The question is more whether this pressure from above involves class-wide or general interests (as opposed to particularistic ones), and whether a general theory of the capitalist state maintaining capitalist production relations (as opposed to particular accounts of interventions in favour of capital) is possible. This paper restates some aspects of the Marxist instrumental view: the concept of the state as an 'instrument', the notion of a relatively unified capitalist class capable of formulating general class interests, and the possibility of a general theory. In doing so it confronts and, in some cases, utilizes arguments put forward by Bob Jessop.

## The state as instrument

The conception of the state as an 'instrument' expresses the potential for those who control or influence it to use state power to realize their own purposes. According to Jessop 'the instrumentalist account assumes that the state itself is a neutral tool which is equally accessible in principle to all political forces and can also be used for any feasible governmental purpose' (1990, p. 145). Seen in this way state actions seem to reflect merely the interests of those agents or forces, such as those in civil society, which are successful in influencing or controlling the state at a specific time. Jessop objects that

> this approach ignores all the effects of state forms on the process of representation and the ways in which the interests of capital can be affected and redefined through changes in the state system and/or through shifts in the balance of political forces within which capitalists must manoeuvre (1990, p. 146).

It is not clear whether Jessop means that interests do not exist independently of the state or, more plausibly, that interests are negotiated and compromised in political struggles so that class (or other) interests are not translated directly into policy outcomes. Taken together with the plausible argument that the specific form of state may affect the differential capacities of political forces to exert influence or control and to realize particular purposes, it follows that the state should not be conceived merely as a neutral instrument. Jessop advocates a 'strategic-relational' approach, and the related notion of 'strategic selectivity', in which state power is neither reducible to the political forces and interests that control it or an effect merely of state form. Rather it 'stands at the intersection' of these approaches, putting the form of the state 'at the heart of … analysis' but also directing attention to 'the various forces engaged in struggle' and 'the structural and conjunctural factors' that determine the balance between these forces (1990, p. 149). 'In this sense the 'relational' approach … endorses the notion of 'structural selectivity' but does not suggest that its effects always favour one class or set of interests' (1990, p. 149). And the form of the state itself 'depends on the contingent and provisional outcome of struggles to realize more or less specific "state projects"' (Jessop, 1990, p. 9).

However these arguments are not incompatible with an instrumentalist approach, and this is because Jessop is incorrect to claim that a neutral conception of the state is an intrinsic element of this approach. The important emphasis on state form and its 'intersection' with social forces does not touch the essential instrumentalist claim that social forces seek to influence state power to their own advantage. In fact Jessop's arguments amount to a more sophisticated version of instrumental theory, rather than an alternative to it. There is no incompatibility between instrumentalist theory and recognition: that the state is not a neutral instrument; that the bias of the state depends on the relation between state form and strategies for influencing or appropriating state power; or, that state form is itself a product of political struggle. Indeed in its conventional meaning an instrument is normally better suited to particular users (rather than being equally accessible to all), and adapted to particular purposes (rather than being all-purpose). The state is rather like other instruments in these respects. Further, instrumentalist logic suggests that the struggle for state power is one, first (and perhaps foremost), to change or reform the state to advantage particular interests and, second, to use state power to realize these interests. For this reason it may be plausible to argue, against Jessop, that the 'structural selectivity' of the state will tend to favour the inter-

ests of a dominant class, on the grounds that this class will have been the dominant influence in shaping the form of the state.

In the identification of instrumentalist theory with a conception of the state as a neutral instrument, or the neglect of state form, Jessop constructs something of a 'straw man'. Poggi's essentially instrumental theory of the state, for example, focuses on the interplay between 'the demand for state action and the supply of state action' (1990, p. 113) or, in other words, 'the pull of interests emanating from the outlying society ... [and] ... the push of interests lodged inside the state itself' (1990, p. 120). Although the emphasis here is on state actions as expressions of interests (ie the state is conceived as an instrument) Poggi also draws attention to the effect of the specific form of state. Two features of the state are highlighted: it 'constitutes a functionally differentiated system of society' and is itself 'composed ... of functionally differentiated arrangements, attending to different aspects of the management and exercise of political power' (1990, p. 121). In virtue of this differentiation, at both levels, the state and its various agencies 'tend to become locked into ... [their] ... own specific concerns ... , to become self-referential' (1990, p. 121). Thus the specific form of state reinforces the invasive state tendency and, in consequence, limits or problematizes its accessibility to external forces.

Miliband's essentially instrumentalist account of 'the state in capitalist society' emphasizes the same two particular features of this form of state as in Poggi's theory – the existence of the state as a functionally differentiated, *separate entity*, and as a collection of institutions that comprise the *state system* (Miliband, 1969, pp. 49–67). According to Miliband state power lies in a set of institutions 'which make up "the state", and whose interrelationship shapes the form of the state system' (1969, p. 54). Further, state power is 'wielded in its different manifestations by the people who occupy the leading positions in each of these institutions ... These are the people who constitute what may be described as the state elite' (1969, p. 54). The significance of these features of the specific form of the state is that the capitalist class, in seeking to 'influence and shape the state's power and purpose' in its own interests, confronts the state – and the state elite – 'as a distinct and separate entity' (1969, p. 54).[12] In other words, economic power and political power are institutionally differentiated, and the central problem for instrumental theory is to show how and to what extent the former is translated into the latter. Thus, far from treating the state as a neutral instrument that the capitalist class is able simply to lay hold of, instrumentalism cannot avoid the difficulty posed for such

control by the specific form of the state. A key aspect of this is that state power is formally in the hands of the government and, in liberal democracy, government is formally accountable to the people as a whole through an electoral system based on political equality. As Luger suggests, this coupling of an economic system based on inequality of resources with a political system based on formal equality makes 'grappling with the issue of power … particularly complex' (2000, p. 16). For

> while economic resources clearly present a tremendous political advantage to their holders, those with limited economic resources have also succeeded in shaping public policy because power held in one sphere is not automatically or completely translated into the other. Thus it is not axiomatic who will be triumphant in any particular political battle (Luger, 2000, p. 16).

It might be that the 'tremendous advantage' conferred by ownership of economic resources is generally sufficient to allow the capitalist class to translate its economic power into political power. However, the institutional separation of the state and the political equality that are hallmarks of liberal democracy as a specific form of state mean that this translation is never automatic. In this vein Miliband advises that the first step in analysing the accessibility of state power to the capitalist class

> is to note the obvious but fundamental fact that this class is involved in a *relationship* with the state, which cannot be *assumed*, in the political conditions which are typical of advanced capitalism, to be that of principal to agent (1969, p. 54).[13]

The second feature of the liberal democratic form of state – that it is a set of institutions comprising a state system – points up the distinction between government and the state, that the government is only one among this set of institutions. Although the government is formally in charge of the state and thereby provides the basis of its unity, the very separation of government from other functionally differentiated institutions within the state system means that a key question of liberal democracy is how far governments do actually control state power and, relatedly, how and to what extent the unity of the state is secured. This feature of the state has effects on the accessibility of state power to different class and other forces. It suggests that control of Parliament and government does not translate automatically into control of the

state, and that, because of this and the institutional complexity of the state, its unity is not pre-given. The form of state seems, again, to make it more difficult for it to be controlled and used as an instrument to realize the interests of an external force, such as the capitalist class. However it does not mean that the state cannot be conceptualized as an instrument, and its complexity and potential fragmentation suggests that instrumental theory must identify the principal channels or mechanisms of influence, and these may, of course, bypass Parliament. The unity of the state is not pre-given, but this does not mean that such unity cannot be politically constituted. In any case Marxist instrumentalist theory does not require or presuppose such unity, only that the dominant class is able to influence or control institutional bases of power within the state system appropriate to its interests, and thereby secure a sufficient degree of unity.

Thus there is no intrinsic or necessary connection between instrumental theory of the state and a conception of the state as a *neutral* and/or unified instrument. On the contrary instrumentalism provides a coherent explanatory framework for questions such as why particular state forms, and not others, against which beat 'the waves of social conflict', develop. The answer, in general terms, is that they are themselves formed by these waves.[14]

## Class structure and class interests

Showing that the state can be conceived as an 'instrument' that can be used by social forces 'to some effect' is the first step in an instrumentalist approach. The next steps are to identify the social forces, characterize the nature of their interests, and depict the balance of power among them.

It is clear that a Marxist instrumental theory of the state relies on an underlying theory of class structure, conceived as a structure of both *power* and *interests*. It is the emphasis on *class interests* that demarcates Marxism from other variants of an instrumental theory of the state, such as pluralism. Classes are defined, of course, by the positions of their members in the economic structure, which is constituted by 'the sum total of relations of production'.[15] And 'production relations are relations of effective power over persons and productive forces' (Cohen, 1978, p. 63). Class interests express the purpose of the power which production relations embody: fundamentally, the purpose of capitalists to ensure, and of workers to resist, the production of surplus value through exploitation. Thus capitalism is understood as essentially a

class society, and the relationship between classes is a relationship of power involving conflicting interests.

In this conception class interests have an objective basis, rooted in the nature of the economic structure. It is on this basis that instrumentalism can resist a slide to voluntarism and subjectivism. The connection with voluntarism is that instrumentalism relies on 'conscious historical agency to explain state policies' (Barrow, 1993, p. 45). At the extreme 'theories of agency view individual action in terms of unconstrained choice. Individuals have the ability to act, or not to act, as they wish, dependent largely on their own volition' (Luger, 2000, p. 26). In this form they may be 'closely associated with the notions of indeterminacy, contingency, voluntarism, and, above all, methodological individualism' (Hay, 1995, p. 195).

However objective interests have to be recognized and acted upon before they can do any explaining. The relevant theoretical claim is that 'social being … determines … consciousness', a plausible reading of which, according to Cohen, is that 'the social consciousness of a person is determined by the social being of that person' (1988, p. 43). This means that a person's social consciousness (or beliefs about society) is explained mainly by his economic role, which is his position in the economic structure. These ideas about society are expressions of antagonistic class interests resulting in 'a permanent disposition towards class struggles' which is the proximate cause of social change. Change comes about 'through the agency of human beings, whose actions are inspired by their ideas, but whose ideas are more or less determined by their economic roles' (Cohen, 1988, p. 46).[16]

Miliband puts forward a general empirical claim that 'men of wealth and property have always been fundamentally united, not at all surprisingly, in the defence of the social order which afforded them their privileges' (1969, p. 47). This is a claim about the general interest of the capitalist class as a whole. More specifically, this unity within the dominant class has been based on an

> underlying agreement on the need to preserve and strengthen the private ownership and control of the largest part of society's resources, and … on the need to enhance to the highest possible point the profits which accrue from that ownership and control (p. 47).

In this way, Miliband claims, 'the rich have always been far more "class conscious" than the poor' and, by inference, the capitalist class more than the working class (1969, p. 47). That this degree of class con-

sciousness, claimed as an empirical generalization, is 'not at all surprising' may be argued on the lines that, although competition divides, there is a deep congruence of interest on which the fundamental unity of the capitalist class is based.

However the interrelationship of power and interests might be conceived as *internal* to the economic structure, as between essentially economic powers and economic interests, and eventuating in a merely economic struggle. The problem for an instrumental theory of the state is to show how economic interests become operative and effective in the differentiated institutional realm of politics and are translated into adequate state form and functionality. Yet it is a small step to argue that fundamental economic interests are carried into the political realm, particularly where these interests cannot be realized through economic action alone. Thus Cohen sees being/consciousness and base/superstructure as distinct but connected pairs. The connection is that individuals participate in the superstructure, which is a set of non-economic institutions, 'with a consciousness grounded in their being', which is their position in the economic structure (1988, pp. 45–6). This is the logic of the instrumental theory of the state. Poggi expresses this logic very clearly (with classes appearing in the guise of economically weaker and stronger groups) in an empirical explanation of the expansion of state activity in the last century.

> Groups at a disadvantage on the capitalist market – chiefly, employees – found, in the widening suffrage and in the related processes of representation and legislation, a means to temper that disadvantage. … [As] *economic* power belonged to the bourgeoisie … those in a position of economic inferiority used the quantum of *political* power acquired through electoral participation to widen the scope and increase the penetration of state action, in order to restrict and moderate the impact of that economic inferiority on their total life circumstances (Poggi, 1990, p. 113).

At the same time, and increasingly,

> demands for state action came also from socio-economic groups in possession of economic power, who raised such demands in order to further strengthen their market position, or indeed to allow the market to continue functioning. … [I]n the course of the century the dependency of private economic forces on positive state action … became a systemic feature of industrial capitalism (Poggi, 1990, p. 115).

This argument is strengthened by consideration of the fact that these interests, defined in a basic way, are quite transparent and fundamental. Thus, to use Poggi's characterizations again, workers are transparently 'at a disadvantage on the capitalist market' and have an interest in 'temper[ing] that disadvantage', and capitalists who are advantaged have an interest in 'strengthen[ing] their market position'.[17] That capitalists have to accumulate to survive, and workers have to act to ensure their disadvantage is lessened (or, at least, not worsened) to safeguard their livelihood and well-being, brings out the fundamental nature of class interests.

## Class interests and accumulation strategies

The interests of the capitalist class at the most general level consist in the securing of capitalist production relations, the reproduction of the circuit of capital, and (since the circuit is not merely reproduced on the same scale) accumulation. Successful accumulation requires a strategy – an 'accumulation strategy' – and it follows that a successful accumulation strategy represents the interests of capital.[18] But since there is more than one possible accumulation strategy and, correspondingly, no single 'predetermined pattern of accumulation that capital must follow', Jessop argues that there is more than one way of conceiving of the interests of capital (1990, p. 152). The interests of capital are whatever they are defined to be within the prevailing accumulation strategy, but they could have been defined differently. According to Jessop the interests of capital

> are not wholly pre-given and must be articulated in, and through, specific accumulation strategies which establish a *contingent* community of interest among particular capitals. For this reason the interests of particular capitals and capital in general will vary according to the specific accumulation strategy that is being pursued ... (1990, p. 159).[19]

In a similar vein Jessop has argued that

> it is a commonplace nowadays in Marxist theory that class determination (ie, location in the relations of production) entails little for class position (ie, stance adopted in class struggle). ... Instead we must recognize that the specific interpretations of these relations offered in various class schemata and ideologies ... are integral but

> independent elements in the formation of class forces (1984, p. 242).

Accumulation strategies are specific interpretations of class interests. They might vary, for example, in terms of the particular fractions or sectors of capital that they advantage or disadvantage and thus in the communities of interest they create. It is certainly true that this approach establishes a somewhat contingent (or loose) relationship between class determination and the specific interpretation of class interests (class position). This type of argument leads Jessop away from economic determinism or reductionism, for it becomes inadmissible to 'treat the means of representation as essentially neutral transmission belts of objective, pre-given interests which simply relay these interests into a different field of action' (1990, p. 160). Yet Jessop does not deny an objective material basis of class interests, so it becomes crucial to know *to what extent* class interests are pre-given. That they are 'not wholly' so is consistent with their being pre-given either to a 'large' or 'small' extent. Jessop's purpose is

> not to argue that the relations of production have no impact on class formation … For they involve differential patterns of association and interaction and impose definite limits on the success of particular class projects, strategies, and tactics (1984, p. 242).

Thus it is just as implausible to argue that there are no inauthentic strategies (because the production relations impose no limits on them) as that there is only one authentic strategy (because it is reducible to location in the relations of production). The definite limits on the success of particular strategies, including accumulation strategies, derive from the fact that, as Jessop recognizes,

> the reproduction of the value-form [ie the circuit of capital] depends on certain general external conditions of existence which provide the framework within which the law of value operates (1990, p. 153).[20]

These conditions constitute parameters within which successful accumulation strategies must operate. In other words, accumulation strategies, apart from their differences and peculiarities, must be functionally equivalent ways of securing the needs of capital.[21] This justifies us in saying, against Jessop, that what class determination entails for class position is fundamental.[22] This is a not a matter of whether the external

conditions of accumulation explain a great deal of the detail of particular accumulation strategies, for there is likely to be much detail that escapes explanation in this way. It is a matter of those conditions or needs of capital explaining certain fundamental attributes of accumulation strategies.[23]

Accumulation strategies have to be worked out and implemented by agents, so the concept can illuminate how leadership is exercised within the class and relative unity secured.[24] Accumulation strategies may operate at many levels, from individual firms, through industries and sectors, to 'global' strategies that operate at the level of capital in general.[25] Though a successful 'global' accumulation strategy must operate within the parameters of the needs of capital, this leaves scope for competing strategies that will take accumulation on different paths and, in consequence, involve different balances of advantage and disadvantage within the capitalist class. Jessop suggests that 'to succeed, … [an accumulation strategy or growth] model must unify the different moments in the circuit of capital … under the hegemony of one fraction' (1990, pp. 198–9). Thus a successful accumulation strategy will privilege the interests of one particular fraction of capital but must also involve the exercise of hegemony. According to Jessop 'a strategy can be truly 'hegemonic' only where it is accepted by the subordinate economic classes as well as by non-hegemonic fractions and classes in the power-bloc' (1990, p. 201). Hegemony implies some form or degree of consent – ranging from passive acquiescence to willing agreement (see Held, 1984). This in turn implies that a successful accumulation strategy must, while favouring the interests of a particular fraction, also articulate the interests of other fractions and classes. In relation to the capitalist class as a whole a crucial factor here is that the accumulation strategy secures the needs of capital and, in this fundamental sense, represents the interests of capital in general. As Jessop notes,

> in so far as a combination of 'economic-corporate' concessions, marginalization and repression can secure the acquiescence of the subordinate classes, the crucial factor in the success of accumulation strategies remains the integration of the circuit of capital and hence the consolidation of support within the dominant fractions and classes (1990, p. 201).

But the integration of the circuit of capital and the charting of a particular path of accumulation presupposes that the external conditions of accumulation, or needs of capital, are secured. Securing the needs of

capital is a necessary condition for a viable accumulation strategy, and a necessary (though perhaps not sufficient) condition for it to be hegemonic.

A hegemonic fraction requires agents and/or institutions to represent it. There seem to be three obvious categories for this:

1. Capitalists who are members of the dominant/hegemonic (or seeking-to-be dominant/hegemonic) fraction
2. Other agents and/or institutions in civil society who are not members of the dominant fraction but allied with it
3. Agents and/or institutions within the state system allied with the dominant fraction of capital

Representation of the interests of the dominant fraction through articulation of an accumulation strategy might conceivably be achieved by any of these categories, singly or in combination. In addition, the categories themselves, particularly the second and third, contain diverse elements. Jessop casts doubt on the capacity of members of the dominant fraction itself to articulate their own interests through particular capitals or capitalist associations. This is due, for example, to

> the potential non-identity of the interests of particular capitals and capital in general … [and] … the organizational and managerial dilemmas confronting capitalist associations … in promoting anything beyond the interests that particular capitals happen to have in common for the moment … (1990, p. 167).

Thus capitalists themselves cannot rise above a particularistic outlook. This echoes Miliband's point that the capitalist class is not monolithic. Miliband also suggests that though the capitalist class is 'class conscious' (more so than the working class), the state would be 'fatally inhibited' in its performance as a 'class state' if it acted at the behest of the capitalist class and 'needs a measure of freedom in deciding how best to serve the existing social order' (2004, p. 91). For example, in relation to the necessity of reform, a crucial element of a hegemonic accumulation strategy in Jessop's eyes, capitalists are not capable of making subtle political judgements concerning the nature and timing of reforms because their 'eyes [are] fixed on immediate interests and demands', that is, making money (2004, p. 91). On a slightly different basis Block reaches the same conclusion that it would be disastrous for capitalists if they were in charge of state policies, because of their belief

in an irrational free market ideology (Block, 1987, p. 12). On the basis of these arguments it appears

> quite reasonable to expect other agencies to be the key forces in the elaboration of accumulation strategies. The 'organic intellectuals' of capital could well be found among financial journalists, engineers, academics, bureaucrats, party politicians, private 'think-tank' specialists or trade union leaders (Jessop, 1990, p. 167).

In another formulation

> it is typically the role of organic intellectuals (such as financial journalists, politicians, philosophers, engineers and sociologists) to elaborate hegemonic projects rather than members of the economically dominant class or class fraction (1990, p. 214).

Jessop's enumeration of 'organic intellectuals' includes agents and/or institutions both in civil society (eg financial journalists, engineers, private 'think-tank' specialists, trade union leaders) and within the state system (academics, bureaucrats, party politicians)[26] but excludes members of the capitalist class. Thus, the organic intellectuals in the state and civil society act as 'spokesmen' of the capitalists, solving the problem of unity which members of the class cannot solve for themselves by being able to stand back from particularistic demands. However too sharp a separation or 'division of labour' between capitalists and organic intellectuals seems implausible. If capitalists cannot rise above an irrational or particularistic outlook to a consciousness of general class interests, then it seems likely that their economic power would be wielded in order to resist and perhaps wreck the accumulation strategy.[27] Indeed, in reference to reformist measures, Miliband observes that these have 'generally been strongly and even bitterly opposed by one or other fraction of the 'ruling class', *or by most of it*' (2004, p. 92. Emphasis added). But if this is true it substantially qualifies, at the least, the claim that the capitalist class constitutes the most powerful 'pressure group' in virtue of its economic resources. The capitalist class must be myopic but weak or, if strong, sufficiently class-conscious and far-sighted to support an accumulation strategy formulated by its organic intellectuals.[28] These organic intellectuals are allies of the capitalist class but even if, as Jessop suggests, they are not themselves capitalists it seems difficult to explain the class bias needed for them to formulate hegemonic projects if they are not connected to the capitalist class.[29]

In other words, we might explain the class bias of 'financial journalists, engineers, academics, bureaucrats, party politicians, private 'think-tank' specialists or trade union leaders' in terms of social origins, social milieu and networks that create a shared world view with capitalists. That would bring Jessop's approach closer to Miliband's instrumentalism.

## The possibility of a general theory

It seems that the role of organic intellectuals in developing accumulation strategies may provide a plausible account of the formulation of the interests of capital in general and the unity of the capitalist class. However, it may be objected to the Marxist instrumental view that classes are not the only actors on the political stage. Their demands for state action must have to compete not only against each other but also against other political forces. For 'an analysis of the state … will include much more than the issue of economic relations and class forces' (Jessop, 1984, p. 221). Thus the political advantage that economic resources may confer on their holders is not unrivalled, and economic interests will not automatically 'hold sway' in the political struggle but may have to be negotiated, and compromised, with other interests.

Jessop's crucial assertion is not that there is a multiplicity of forces but that there is, or may be, a *changing balance* among them. For Jessop this means that the possibility of a general theory must be ruled out in favour of a notion of 'contingent necessity'. The contingency directly expresses the changing balance among social forces for, considered as causal influences or chains, 'there is no single theory that can predict or determine the manner in which such causal chains converge and/or interact' (1984, p. 212).

It is evident that different instrumental accounts of the state may be premised on different conceptions of both the multiplicity of social/political forces and (the changing or fixed) balance between them. A starting point is provided by Barrow's distinction between 'egalitarian' and 'ruling class' power structures, better conceived as a spectrum or continuum (Barrow, 1993). It is a plausible guideline for an analysis of state power that there is a multiplicity of social and political forces. This merely reflects the diversity and complexity of the whole society or social formation and the corresponding range of interests and purposes. In this limited sense all theories of the state are bound to be pluralistic. Ruling class and egalitarian models are not distinguished by one denying and the other acknowledging this multiplicity of forces, but by different estimates of the disposition of power among them.

Towards the ruling class end of the spectrum, the disposition of power resources is conceived as highly unequal. In this model just a few political forces and interests are in control of key power resources and thereby able to influence or control state power to their own advantage.

In broad terms, three distinctive models can be identified. Contingency theory, including Jessop's 'contingent necessity', argues that no single theory can predict the disposition of power resources and outcome of political struggles, because of the uncertain and changing balance between many social/political forces. Determinate outcomes can only be known through the concrete analysis of specific conjunctures, and it is not possible to generalize from such an analysis because each conjuncture is, in principle, unique. The same disposition might recur but, equally, it might not. In this view no single theory can predict whether the disposition of power will fit the ruling class or egalitarian model, and its location on the spectrum is unstable. More specifically, state power might turn out to be capitalist or non-capitalist in the sense of 'the conditions required for capital accumulation in a given situation' being realized, or not (Jessop, 1984, p. 221).

A general theory of the state, on the contrary, claims that there is a discernible and predictable pattern of power. General theories may be sub-divided into two types. A soft general theory claims that there is an enduring type of power structure – ruling class or egalitarian – but allows for fluidity in the character of the forces and the disposition of power among them within the general type. Thus pluralist theory makes a general claim that the power structure is egalitarian – no single group is dominant across a range of issues – but is consistent with a shifting cast of groups and forces on the political stage. A hard general theory likewise claims that there is an enduring type of power structure, but makes the further claim that there is little variation in the character of forces and the disposition of power among them. The Marxist analysis of the state in capitalist society – which claims that the state is, in general, influenced or controlled by the capitalist class – is a theory of this type.

This is fundamentally a question of *power* or, more specifically, the conversion of economic power into political power. Thus a Marxist instrumental theory of state power must show that the key resource controlled by the capitalist class – i.e. capital – does confer an unmatched capacity to influence or control state power in order to secure the interests of capital in general. This does not require that capitalists are successful in all political struggles or that the entire state system is used as

an instrument by capitalists to the exclusion of all other social forces. A Marxist instrumentalist theory of the state makes the more restricted claim that key institutional bases of power within the state system are used, in the context of a specific accumulation strategy, to secure just those purposes which pertain to the general interests of capital. These are only those 'general external conditions' which must be secured for the law of value and capital accumulation process to continue to operate. Jessop is not, in principle, correct to argue that, just because of the influence of non-class social forces, this cannot be shown. Rather, Miliband's analysis of the mechanism whereby the capitalist class is able to influence and/or control state power in its own interests (to use the state as an instrument) provides, with some revisions as discussed in this chapter, a plausible point for showing just this. Thus capitalists can use the state to serve their general interests.

**Notes**

1 This chapter reworks and extends some arguments set out in Wetherly, 2005. I am grateful to Clyde Barrow and Peter Burnham for helpful comments on this paper in draft.
2 Though this does not imply that Miliband's analysis is reducible to the instrumentalist approach.
3 Two qualifications should be noted here. 'The state' in fact denotes a set of institutions and cannot, therefore, be treated as a single instrument. The instrumental view concerns (more or less successful) attempts by social forces or agents to control specific aspects of the state and/or state power. Second, the instrumental view, and economic determination more generally, does not preclude the relative autonomy of the state.
4 The Miliband-Poulantzas debate is reconsidered by Jessop in this collection.
5 Any form of state theory, that is, that avoids what Miliband refers to as 'a 'hyper-structuralist' trap, which deprives 'agents' of any freedom of choice and manoeuvre and turns them into the 'bearers' of objective forces which they are unable to affect' (2004, p. 76). This is the trap into which, according to Miliband, Poulantzas stumbled.
6 These purposes may be characterized in terms of self-interest or some conception of public interest.
7 These claims are constitutive of a simplistic version of instrumentalism.
8 To be clear, 'economic determination' here involves the limited claim that some aspects of the economic dimension of a society are involved in explanation of some aspects of the non-economic dimension(s). This does not entail the more ambitious claim of economic determinism, which might be understood to mean that the causal effect of certain economic factors on certain non-economic ones is such that nothing else could have happened. Economic determination is consistent with explanation couched in terms of (strong or weak) tendencies.
9 As in Miliband's approach (2004).
10 'Class state' is the term used most often by Miliband (2004).

11 This does not seem to be a very strong argument. Not being monolithic means that the class as a whole cannot act as a principal, but a fraction of the class conceivably could do so (at least, if it could not it would have to be for some other reason than simply that the class is not monolithic).
12 Though Miliband also analyses how this separation is overcome by close links between the 'state elite' and the 'corporate elite'. In other words *institutional* differentiation may mask fusion of *personnel*.
13 The potential translation of economic into political power can be considered at various levels, and in terms of particularistic or general class interests. Luger's analysis is specifically concerned with the political power of the automobile industry, but the larger Marxist claim is that the state serves the general interests of the dominant class.
14 In other words, to extend the metaphor, coastal features may stand out against the prevailing waves, but the waves erode these features and shape the coastline according to their own direction and force.
15 This brings out the structural dimension or foundation of the instrumentalist analysis.
16 Some well known criticisms that need to be confronted should be noted, although there is not space to go into them here. First, if individuals are 'personifications' of class interests there seems little or no role for agency. Second, the focus on class interests is an abstraction that conceals the real complexity of interests which arises from the fact that position in the economic structure is not a complete description of how individuals are socially situated, or of the roles that they occupy. Third, classes or economically weaker and stronger groups are not the only actors on the political stage so their demands for state action have to compete not only against each other but also against other groups. Fourth, it might be argued that interests are never simple reflections of economic (or other) positions but are always discursively defined and contested.
17 Of course the argument that workers have an interest in tempering the disadvantage they face in the labour market is quite a big step away from the claim that they have an interest in the overthrow of capitalist production relations.
18 The concept of accumulation strategy is employed extensively in Bob Jessop's work on state theory (Jessop, 1990, 2002).
19 This formulation is repeated at p. 160 but the important qualification registered by the word 'wholly' is omitted: 'Interests are not pre-given but must be defined within the context of specific accumulation strategies'.
20 Also the 'interconnected elements of the value-form define the parameters in which accumulation can occur … [but] … the value-form itself does not fully determine the course of capital accumulation' (Jessop, 1990, p. 197). Thus accumulation occurs within the parameters of the circuit of capital and this in turn depends on certain external conditions. But the constraint imposed on accumulation by the value-form and the needs of capital is a minor theme in Jessop whose major theme is the contingency of competition between alternative possible accumulation strategies.
21 'Despite all … [the] vagaries [of the course of accumulation] … capital continues to circulate. It seems as if, whatever happens to particular capitals, capital in general somehow or other survives' (Jessop, 1990, p. 152). The

survival of capital in general may be attributed largely to the functional relationship between the needs of capital and accumulation strategies.

22 The point that there are fundamental class interests in terms of the needs of capital and that these constitute parameters within which specific interpretations of class interests in terms of rival accumulation strategies operate can be made in a more general way. Thus Miliband notes that 'there are of course innumerable differences and disputes over specific items of policy and strategy which arise between members of dominant classes. But however sharp these may be, they do not seriously impair an underlying consensus about the essential goodness and viability of the system itself' (1989, p. 34).

23 For discussion of the 'needs of capital' see Wetherly, 2005.

24 A notion of relative unity is implied in the feature of accumulation strategies that they tend to advantage particular fractions of capital.

25 Strategies in relation to capital in general may be conceived as operating at a national or more global scale.

26 Some of the categories cut across the state-civil society (or public-private) distinction eg engineers, sociologists.

27 It is difficult to see how an *accumulation* strategy could be implemented successfully without the support, and certainly not with the opposition, of significant elements of the capitalist class.

28 In this connection, Domhoff asserts that 'it is an empirical mistake to downgrade the amount of expertise located within the upper class' (1967, p. 149, cited in Barrow, 1992). Barrow uses the term 'corporate intellectuals' to denote the high level of consciousness within the 'power elite'. I am grateful to Clyde Barrow for alerting me to Domhoff's argument.

29 Unless an instrumentalist style of argument is rejected in favour of emphasis on structural constraints. For example organic intellectuals could be seen as formulating and implementing a growth model in the national interest which, due to such constraints, has to be in tune with the general interests of capital.

# 7

# Dialogue of the Deaf: Some Reflections on the Poulantzas-Miliband Debate

*Bob Jessop*

The state is such a complex theoretical object and so complicated an empirical one that no single theoretical approach can fully capture and explain its complexities. The resulting aporia was reflected in the debate between Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband on the nature, form, and functions of the state and, *a fortiori*, on the best way to analyse these issues. Indeed their mutual critiques became a key reference point in anglophone discussions on the state during the 1970s and 1980s and were also taken up in many other contexts (for an intellectual history of the debate and its context, see Barrow, 2002). The main state theory agenda later turned to other methodological issues, such as the benefits of a society- rather than state-centred approach to the state, and towards substantive topics, such as the future of the capitalist state in an era of globalization, the nature of the European Union, and 'empire' as a new form of political domination.[1] Interest in state theory was also weakened by fascination with the apparently anti-state-theoretical (or, at least, anti-Marxist) implications of Foucault's work on the micro-physics of power and on governmentality.[2] My contribution revisits the Poulantzas-Miliband debate, clarifies its stakes as far as its main participants were concerned, and offers a new reading of its significance for theoretical and empirical analyses of the state. For the issues in dispute were seriously misunderstood, including by its two key figures, who seem to have engaged in a dialogue of the deaf. Moreover, in clarifying these issues, we can better understand the state's recent restructuring and reorientation.

## Possible objects of state theory

Everyday language sometimes depicts the state as a subject – the state does, or must do, this or that; and sometimes as a thing – this economic

class, social stratum, political party, or official caste uses the state to pursue its own projects or interests. But how could the state act *as if* it were a unified subject and what could constitute its unity as a 'thing'? Coherent answers are hard because the state's referents vary so much. It changes shape and appearance with the activities that it undertakes, the scales on which it operates, the political forces acting towards it, the circumstances in which it and they act, and so on. When pressed, a common response is to list the institutions that comprise the state, usually with a core set of institutions with increasingly vague outer boundaries. Miliband took this line in *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969). This began with an ostensive definition of key governmental institutions as 'the government, the administration, the military and the police, the judicial branch, sub-central government and parliamentary assemblies' (1969, p. 54); and went on to explore the role of anti-socialist parties, the mass media, educational institutions, trade union leaders and other forces in civil society in securing the hegemony of the dominant classes (pp. 180–211, 220–7; cf. 1977b, pp. 47–50). He adopted a similar approach in *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (1982), which illustrates his general arguments about the state in capitalist society from the British case. Because of the vague outer limits of the state and its agents, such lists typically fail to specify what lends these institutions the quality of statehood.[3] Miliband solved this problem by identifying the state's essential function as defence of the dominant class (1969, p. 3; 1977b, pp. 55, 66–7) and specifying four functions that must always be performed, even if the manner of their delivery may vary (1977b, pp. 90–106).

One escape route from functionalism is to define the state in terms of means rather than ends. This approach informed Weber's celebrated definition of the *modern* state in terms of its distinctive *constitutionalized* monopoly of coercion within a given territorial area. This does not mean that modern states exercise power largely through direct and immediate coercion – this would be a sign of crisis or state failure – but rather that coercion is their last resort in enforcing binding decisions. For, where state power is widely deemed legitimate, it can normally secure compliance without force. Yet all states reserve the right – or claim the need – to suspend the constitution or specific legal provisions in exceptional circumstances (Poulantzas, 1978, pp. 76–86) and many states resort to force, fraud, and corruption to pursue their goals (cf. Miliband, 1969, pp. 88–94, 169–71; 1983e, pp. 82–94; Poulantzas, 1978, pp. 29, 80). Moreover, as Gramsci emphasized, not only do states exercise power through intellectual and moral leadership but coercion

can also be exercised on its behalf by forces that lie outside and beyond the state (e.g., paramilitary gangs of *fascisti*) (Gramsci, 1971, *passim*).

Building on Weber and his contemporaries, other theorists regard the essence of the state (pre-modern and modern) as the territorialization of political authority. This involves the intersection of politically organized coercive and symbolic power, a clearly demarcated core territory, and a fixed population on which political decisions are collectively binding. Thus the key feature of the state is the historically variable ensemble of technologies and practices that produce, naturalize, and manage territorial space as a bounded container within which political power is then exercised to achieve various, more or less well-integrated, and changing policy objectives. A system of formally sovereign, mutually recognizing, mutually legitimating national states exercising sovereign control over large and exclusive territorial areas is only a relatively recent institutional expression of state power. Other modes of territorializing political power have existed, some still co-exist with the Westphalian system (allegedly set up by the Treaties of Westphalia in 1648 but realized only stepwise during the 19th and 20th centuries), new expressions are emerging, and yet others can be imagined. The changing forms of the state were important themes in the later work of Miliband (1975, 1983e) and Poulantzas (1978).

An important approach to the complexity of the state is the argument that the state is polymorphous (Mann, 1986) or polycontextual (Willke, 1992). It changes shape and appearance with the political forces acting toward it and the conditions in which they act. Polymorphy means that the state's organization and capacities may be primarily capitalist, military, theocratic, or democratic in nature according to the balance of forces, especially as these affect the state ensemble and its exercise of power. Its dominant crystallization is open to challenge and will vary conjuncturally. Much the same point is made when Taylor distinguishes between the state as a capitalist state ('wealth container'), a military-political apparatus ('power container'), a nation-state ('cultural container'), and a welfare state ('social container') (Taylor, 1994). To this, we could add the state as a patriarchal state ('the patriarch general').

This approach implies that not all states in a capitalist society can be described as capitalist states, i.e., as states that are primarily organized to promote accumulation. Indeed, it suggests potential tensions between alternative crystallizations of state power in modern societies. There is no guarantee that the modern state will always (or ever) be essentially capitalist and, even when accumulation is deeply embedded in their

organizational matrix, modern states typically consider other functional demands and pressures from civil society when promoting institutional integration and social cohesion. Whether it succeeds in this regard is another matter. Adopting this approach entails looking at actually existing state formations as polyvalent, polymorphous crystallizations of different principles of societal organization. State power networks can crystallize in different ways according to the dominant issues in a given period or conjuncture, with general crystallizations dominating long periods and more specific crystallizations emerging in particular situations. It is on this basis that one can distinguish the *capitalist type of state* from the *state in capitalist society*. This distinction is already present in Marx and Engels and is most starkly expressed in the first major state-theoretical texts of Poulantzas and Miliband – with the former focusing on the historical specificity of the capitalist type of state and Miliband on the political sociology of the state in capitalist society.

## Marxist approaches to the state

Marx's and Engels's work on the state comprises diverse philosophical, theoretical, journalistic, partisan, *ad hominem*, or purely *ad hoc* comments (cf. Miliband, 1965b, 1977b, pp. 2–6; Poulantzas, 1973a, pp. 19–23). This is reflected in the weaknesses of later Marxist state theories, both analytically and practically, and has prompted many attempts to produce a more comprehensive and systematic Marxist theory of the state based on more or less selective interpretations of their writings and those of other classical Marxists. Miliband and Poulantzas both made such efforts (Miliband, 1965b, 1977b; Poulantzas, 1973a, pp. 19–28; 1978). Their work was part of the general revival of Marxist interest in the state during the 1960s and 1970s, which arose in response to the state's apparent ability to manage the postwar economy in advanced capitalist societies and to the 'end of ideology' that allegedly resulted from postwar prosperity. Thus Marxists argued that the state retained its class nature as a crucial factor in securing economic, political and ideological class domination and that, despite the postwar boom, contemporary states could not suspend capital's contradictions and crisis-tendencies. Poulantzas (1973a) and Miliband (1969) both contributed to the first line of argument and Poulantzas's later studies also played an important role in the second current (especially 1975, 1978).

Some indications for developing a Marxist theory of the state are found in Marx's *1857 Introduction* (1973) and *Capital* (1967). Both works pursue a dual movement from abstract to concrete and from

simple to complex analyses with the intention of reproducing the 'real-concrete' as a 'concrete-in-thought'. The former movement involves a stepwise concretization of abstract concepts, unfolding their full implications as he moves towards ever more concrete analyses; the latter movement involves the articulation of concepts drawn from different axes of abstraction so that the analysis, whilst remaining integrated, becomes more multi-dimensional. Marx applied this approach in the first instance in his form analysis of capital as a social relation. Such an analysis studies social forms as modes of organizing social life. Marx focused primarily on the commodity form and value form in capitalism but also offered hints about the state form, especially in his earlier critique of Hegel's philosophy of right and his later comments on the Civil War in France (Marx, 1975a, 1975b, 1986b). His work in this regard can be described as form-analytic because it addresses the principles of statehood (*Staatlichkeit*), the generic form of the state (*Staat als Form*), particular state forms associated with different modes of production (*Staatsformen*), and the formal, material, and functional adequacies of specific forms and types of state. Linking this approach with the analysis of forms of life would provide a good account of the *social formation* (an ensemble of social forms) and its accompanying *social order* (considered as an ensemble of forms of life).

Marx often deploys the notion of formal adequacy in his critique of political economy. Formal adequacy refers to the correspondence among different forms of the capital relation such that different forms are mutually compatible and together provide the best framework for realizing the overall dynamic of capital accumulation. A well-known example is Marx's analysis of machinofacture as the adequate form of the capitalist labour process in contrast to simple or complex cooperation within manufacture. For, whereas capital can secure nominal control over labour-power in the manufacturing division of labour, in machinofacture the worker becomes an appendage to the machine and is really subsumed under capitalist control. Thus Marx concludes that machinofacture is the labour process that is formally adequate to the capitalist wage relation. In the same way, he examined money both as the adequate form (or medium) of expression of value in exchange in contrast to *ad hoc* barter relations and, further, as the most adequate form of capital in so far as money capital is available for investment in any activity as opposed to particular assets that must be valorized according to specific temporalities in specific places. For present purposes, we may also note that Marx regarded bourgeois democracy as the adequate form of political organization in consolidated capitalist social formations.

For Marx, the *form* of the modern (capitalist) state is distinguished above all by its institutional separation from the economy. The former is the world of the *citoyen* and national interest, the latter of the *bourgeois* and the primacy of private profit. He adds that the modern representative state based on rational bureaucracy and universal suffrage is formally adequate to capitalist social formations. The capitalist type of state has a distinctive, form-determined strategic selectivity with major implications for the organization and effectiveness of state intervention. This is reflected in Moore's aphorism that brilliantly distills the essence of the Marxist theory of the capitalist type of state: 'when exploitation takes the form of exchange, dictatorship tends to take the form of democracy' (Moore, 1957, p. 85; cf. Lenin's claim that the bourgeois democratic republic is 'the best possible political shell for capitalism', 1970, p. 296). The liberal democratic state form corresponds to the value form of the capitalist mode of production and provides a suitable extra-economic support for it. The freedom of economic agents to engage in exchange (belied by the factory despotism within the labour process) is matched by the freedom of individual citizens (belied by the state's subordination to the logic of capital) (Marx, 1975b, 1978; cf. Artous, 1999; Jessop, 1990). Nonetheless, the absence of direct control by the capitalist class over the state means that the development of state projects and policies that favour capital is subject to complex mediations. This means that the normal (or bourgeois democratic) form of capitalist state serves both to promote the interests of capital and to disguise this, rendering capitalist political domination relatively intransparent. When a normal type of capitalist state is established, political class domination is secured through the dull routines of democratic politics as the state acts on behalf of capital, but not at its direct behest (cf. Miliband 1983e, 64). Open class struggle (or, as Miliband puts it, 'class war') is less evident in such states and democratic political legitimacy is correspondingly stronger (contrast Miliband's accounts of the coup in Chile, 1983e, pp. 82–94, and of fascism, 1977b, pp. 56, 171; cf. Poulantzas, 1978, pp. 80–2).

Nonetheless formal adequacy does not guarantee the material adequacy of the capitalist type of state in the sense that the mere presence of this state form ensures that it secures the economic and extra-economic reproduction demands of the capitalist mode of production. On the contrary, extending the argument that form problematizes function (Offe, 1984; Jessop, 1984), we can say that *formal adequacy problematizes functional adequacy*. Because forms are the strategically selective medium through which the contradictions and dilemmas of

the capital relation develop, there is a permanent tension between form and content. This tension calls for action to ensure that form and content complement each other and are thereby functional for capital accumulation and political class domination. This excludes any quasi-automatic reproduction of the capital relation. This problem may be overcome in the short term through trial-and-error experimentation; and it may be solved in the medium to long term through the mutual selection and retention of complementary forms and contents. Those policies will be selected that correspond best to the dominant forms; and forms will be selected that are most adequate to the overall logic of capital accumulation. In short, content is selected by form, form is selected by content. Gramsci makes a similar point regarding the development of historical blocs, where 'material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely didactic value' (1971, p. 377). In this process, form and content are transformed from arbitrary elements into solid moments of a relatively coherent social formation. The resulting contingency in the nature of the state and its operations requires more concrete, historically specific, institutionally sensitive, and action-oriented studies. A formal analysis is not a superficial analysis: it is an analysis of social forms and their material effects – form really does make a difference! But it makes a difference only in and through its articulation with a social agency that can overflow, undermine, and overthrow forms.

Formal adequacy can be contrasted with functional adequacy. Whereas the former is more relevant to the analysis of the capitalist type of state (defined by its formal adequacy even if its form renders its immediate functionality problematic), the latter is more directly relevant to the analysis of the state in capitalist societies (where form itself is problematic and more emphasis is given to how the political process defines and secures the functional needs of capital) (Table 7.1). In this context, functional adequacy concerns the capacity of a state in capitalist society to secure the economic and extra-economic conditions for accumulation in a given conjuncture. Here the emphasis falls less on form and more on how policies come to acquire a particular content, mission, aims, and objectives that are more or less adequate to the reproduction requirements of the capital relation. This does not mean that the state form is irrelevant but rather that its strategic selectivities do not directly serve to realize the interests of capital in general. Analyses of the state must therefore pay more attention to the open struggle among political forces to shape the political process in ways that privilege accumulation over other modes of societalization.

**Table 7.1 Capitalist Type of State versus State in Capitalist Society**

| | Capitalist Type of State | State in Capitalist Society |
|---|---|---|
| **Historical specificity** | Focus on historical specificity (distinction between capitalist type of state and types of state associated with other modes of production) | Potential historical continuity (focus on how inherited state forms may be used in new historical contexts) |
| **Dominant axis of societalization** | Dominance of logic of capital accumulation | Another axis of crystallization or none dominates |
| **Key approach to its development** | Focus on formal constitution (how state acquires 'formal adequacy') and on how 'form problematizes function' | Focus on historical constitution (how state building is mediated through the changing balance of forces oriented to different state projects) |
| **Measure of adequacy** | Formal adequacy (Correspondence between state form and other forms of capital relation such that state form is a key element in its overall reproduction) | Functional adequacy (Focus on capacity of state in a capitalist society to secure various conditions for capital accumulation and political legitimacy) |
| **Class vs state power** | Class power is structural and obscure. Capitalist type of state is more likely to function for capital as a whole and depends less on overt class struggles to guide its functionality | Class power is instrumental and transparent. There is a stronger likelihood that the state is used to pursue the interests of particular capitals or other specific interests |
| **Periodization** | Phases in formal development, crises in and of the capitalist type of state, alternation of normal and exceptional periods | Phases in historical development, major shifts in institutional design, changes in governments and policies |

An alternative and equally venerable approach to state theory is found in Marx's more concrete-complex analyses of political class struggle. Exemplary texts here are his comments on *Class Struggle in France* (1964 and 1978) and, more importantly, the much-cited but frequently misunderstood *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1979), which analyses class struggles on the terrain of a changing state

in a still emerging capitalist social formation. These studies combine a critical theory of the state, a critique of class power, and a periodization of the state and political domination. In this context they dissect the state as an institutional ensemble and offer conjunctural analyses of the prevailing balance of forces, demonstrating thereby the variability of the state's relative autonomy and its functional adequacy in promoting class domination and securing capitalist reproduction in the face of class struggles. These studies also explore the nature and significance of exceptional regimes and the limits of the state's relative autonomy. Such analyses are far closer to studies of the state in capitalist societies than the capitalist type of state. For, while Marx shows how the changing form of the French state and different political regimes privilege one or another class fraction or social category, he focuses on efforts to refashion its instrumentality and functionality. These may occur on behalf of capital and other dominant classes or be made by a political elite that manages to play different classes off against each other in order to enhance its own autonomy and to promote the state's interests against the wider society (in addition to the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, see especially Marx, 1986a).

A further line of theoretical inquiry in Marx's texts on France is the historical constitution of the state, i.e., the process of state formation or state-building. A formally adequate capitalist state does not emerge automatically or immediately from the development of bourgeois relations of production. On the contrary, the state forms through which the political interests of capital are initially pursued are formally inadequate and must be conformed to its changing economic and political interests through open political struggles aimed at achieving a modern representative state. This is stated especially clearly in the *Communist Manifesto*:

> Each of these stages of the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance. From an oppressed class under the rule of feudal lords, to armed and self-administering associations within the medieval city, here an independent urban republic, there a third estate taxable by the monarchy, then in the era of small-scale manufacture a counterweight to the nobility in the estates-system or in an absolute monarchy, in general the mainstay of the great monarchies, the bourgeoisie – with the establishment of large-scale industry and the world market – has finally gained exclusive political control through the modern representative state. The power of the modern state is merely a device for administering the common

> affairs of the whole bourgeois class (Marx and Engels, 1976a, p. 486).

This suggests that the study of the historical constitution of the state in capitalist societies and its instrumentalization for capitalist purposes is far from identical with the study of its formal constitution as a capitalist type of state with structurally-inscribed strategic selectivities that quasi-automatically privilege the interests of capital. It has taken many economic, political, and ideological struggles, extensive trial-and-error experimentation, and the mobilization of many different social forces to develop the modern representative state. Unsurprisingly, given the contradiction at the heart of the democratic constitution, this is also a fragile political regime. For its stability depends on the continued willingness of the dominated classes to accept only political emancipation rather than press for social emancipation and/or on the willingness of the dominant class(es) to be satisfied with social domination (i.e., with the *de facto* subordination of the exercise of state power to the imperatives of capital accumulation) rather than press for the restoration of their earlier monopoly of political power (cf. Marx, 1978). Rejection of this compromise creates fertile ground for the growth of exceptional forms of state, i.e., states where the electoral principle is suspended and some part of the state apparatus exercises power without the need to take account of the bourgeois democratic process.

## Poulantzas's analysis of the capitalist type of state

Having considered some basic approaches and concepts for a Marxist analysis of the state, we can now sketch the background of the Poulantzas-Miliband debate. In his first major contribution to Marxist state theory, *Political Power and Social Classes* (published in French in 1968, in English in 1973), Poulantzas introduced the notion of the capitalist type of state, which is formally adequate to capitalism and thereby routinizes and disguises economic and political class domination. He implicitly distinguished this normal type of state from states in capitalist societies, which are formally inadequate and therefore depend far more on constant political improvisation and on force-fraud-corruption to secure such domination. Poulantzas also distinguished between historical and formal constitution in his account of the transition to capitalism, where he analyses a number of state forms that function more or less adequately to effect that transition but do not themselves have a capitalist form (e.g., mercantilist and absolutist

states or, later, Bismarckism) (1973a, pp. 157–83). His later work will develop sophisticated analyses of the different institutional and political logics of normal and exceptional states and political regimes (cf. Jessop, 1985).

His first major state-theoretical analysis had four main objectives:

> (1) To systematize the studies of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Gramsci and their implications for revolutionary strategy. This involved an active 'symptomatic reading' in which texts are not read literally and superficially but for their underlying conceptual innovations, ambivalence, lacunae, and so forth and for their theoretical as well as empirical adequacy.
> (2) To criticize other Marxist approaches to the state. Chief among these were: (i) economic reductionism that emphasized the logic of capitalist development or economic class struggles at the expense of the specifically political dimensions of the state and state power; (ii) the 'historicism' (or history-making voluntarism) of those who emphasized the transformative potential of an autonomous political class struggle without regard to the strategically selective institutional legacies of political structures; and (iii) 'state monopoly capitalism' views, which claimed that power in the contemporary state was exercised exclusively by monopoly capital at the expense of other capitalist groups as well as the subaltern classes.
> (3) To ground a new, separate Marxist science of capitalist politics in basic Marxist philosophical and theoretical principles; and
> (4) To develop this new Marxist political science in three steps by moving from more abstract to more concrete analyses and, to a lesser extent, from the simple to the complex.

These aims are all reflected in the division of his book into three parts, which, respectively, present general theoretical considerations about the state and politics, analyse the institutional form of the capitalist state, and examine the dynamics of political class struggle. Each part drew in turn on different theoretical sources in the Marxist literature and in broader studies of the modern state.

First, drawing on Althusser's so-called structural Marxism, he argued that an autonomous theory of the political region was possible for the capitalist mode of production because it was marked by an institutional separation between economics and politics. Second, given this possibility, he drew on basic concepts of juridico-political theory to describe the distinctive institutional matrix of the capitalist type of

state. He described it as a hierarchically organized, centrally-coordinated, sovereign territorial state based on the rule of law and, in its ideal typical normal form, combined with a bourgeois democratic form of government. This state form facilitates capital accumulation and political class domination but obscures this fact by disguising this economic exploitation and the exercise of class power. Third, in the final part of his book, he drew on Gramsci to argue that, in such a state, political class domination could not rest on a legal monopoly of class power but would depend on the dominant class's capacity to promote a hegemonic project that identified the national-popular interest with the long-term interests of the capitalist class and its allies in the power bloc. Such hegemonic projects were premised on the individuation of the political subjects (citizens) of a state based on the rule of law and would aim to link individual interests with national-popular interest.

In developing this analysis, Poulantzas moved from abstract-simple to concrete-complex concepts. Thus, beginning with general concepts of dialectical materialism as presented in structural Marxism, he successively deployed the basic concepts of historical materialism, concepts concerned with historically specific aspects of the capitalist mode of production (CMP), concepts for describing key features of a social formation that was dominated by the CMP, concepts appropriate to the political region within capitalism, concepts to identify the distinctive features of the capitalist type of state and the manner in which its distinctive form problematized its functionality for capitalist reproduction, and, finally, concepts to explore how this problematic functionality could be overcome through the successful adoption of specific forms of political action. For only when the state's narrow economic, political-administrative, and ideological functions are subordinated to its global political function (i.e., securing social cohesion in a class-divided society) can they contribute effectively to creating and maintaining capital's long-term domination. This global political function depends in turn on the successful pursuit of specific political practices concerned with organizing the power bloc and disorganizing subordinate classes, with the struggle for national-popular hegemony in democratic conditions having a vital role in this regard. Only by moving to this more concrete-complex level could Poulantzas turn from discussion of the formal adequacy of the capitalist type of state to a critical assessment of its functional adequacy and the latter's mediation through political practices undertaken by specific social forces.

Implicit in Poulantzas's analysis are two crucial state-theoretical concepts: 'formal adequacy' and 'strategic selectivity'. The first concept is

premised on form analysis (see above) and, for Poulantzas, involves the adequacy of a given state form for securing political class domination in specific circumstances. A preliminary form-analytical account of the capitalist type of state is presented in Table 7.2, which is based on the work of Poulantzas and other form-analytical studies (see also Jessop, 2002). Nonetheless form analysis cannot exhaust analysis of structures – there are emergent structural properties that cannot be reduced to the properties of any one form or combination of forms and there is a constant tendency for action to overflow any given form and its associated constraints. This is reflected in Poulantzas's subsequent claim that the state is a social relation. This elliptical phrase implies that the exercise of state power (or, better, state powers in the plural) involves a form-determined condensation of the changing balance of forces in struggle. The same claim is implicit in his first major work with its stress on the institutional separation and relative autonomy of the political region, the specificity of the sovereign territorial democratic state as an institutional matrix for the organization and mediation of politics, and the need for a distinctive form of political class struggle in normal capitalist states that would be oriented to securing political hegemony. This implies that the state *qua* institutional ensemble has a specific, differential impact on the ability of various political forces to pursue particular interests and strategies in specific spatio-temporal contexts through their access to and/or control over given state capacities – capacities that always depend for their effectiveness on links to forces and powers that exist and operate beyond the state's formal boundaries. Whether these links would be effective enough to secure hegemony would affect the stability of the capitalist type of state and, where the latter experienced a crisis (or crises), an exceptional regime was likely to emerge. Moreover, as Poulantzas later argued, if an overall strategic line is discernible in the exercise of these powers, it is due to strategic coordination enabled through the selectivity of the state system and the role of parallel power networks that cross-cut and unify its formal structures. Such unity is improbable, however, because the state is shot through with contradictions and class struggles and its political agents must always take account of (potential) mobilization by a wide range of forces beyond the state, engaged in struggles to transform it, determine its policies, or simply resist it from afar (1973a, 1978).

Although *Political Power and Social Classes* did not examine exceptional regimes, i.e., those that suspend the principle of electoral representation as the basis for legitimacy, he did go on later to discuss their forms, the variation in their formal adequacy (fascism was more ade-

**Table 7.2 Some Key Features of the Capitalist Type of State**

| Articulation of economy and state in capitalism | Implications for the economy and class relations | Implications for the state and politics |
|---|---|---|
| Institutional separation of market economy, sovereign state, and a public sphere (civil society) that is located beyond market and state. | Economy is organized under dominance of capitalist law of value as mediated through competition between capitals and economic class struggle | *Raison d'état* (a specialized political rationality) distinct from profit-and-loss market logic and from religious, moral, or ethical principles. |
| Legitimate or constitutionalized claim to a monopoly of organized coercion within territory controlled by state. | Coercion is excluded from immediate organization of labour process. Value form and market forces, not force, shape capital accumulation. | Specialized military-police organs are subject to constitutional control. Force has ideological as well as repressive functions. |
| Role of legality in legitimation of the state and its activities. | | Subject to law, state may intervene to compensate for market failure in national interest. |
| 'Tax State': state revenues derive largely from taxes on economic actors and their activities and from loans raised from market actors. | Taxes are deductions from private revenues but may be used to produce public goods deemed essential to market economy and/or for social cohesion. | Subjects of the state in its territory have general duty to pay taxes, regardless of whether they approve of specific state activities. |
| State lacks own property to produce goods and services for its own use and/or to sell to generate profits to support state apparatus and activities. Tax capacity depends on legal authority and coercive power. | Bourgeois tax form: general contribution to government revenue levied on continuing basis that can be appliedfreely by state to legitimate tasks – not specific, *ad hoc* taxes levied for specific tasks. | National money is also means of payment for state taxes.<br><br>Taxation capacity acts as security for sovereign debt.<br><br>Tax as one of earliest foci of class struggles. |
| Specialized administrative staff with own channels of recruitment, training, and *ésprit de corps*. This staff is subject to the authority of the political | State occupies specific place in general division between manual and mental labour. Officials and political class specialize in intellectual | Official discourse has key role in exercise of state power. Public and private intellectuals formulate state and hegemonic projects that |

**Table 7.2 Some Key Features of the Capitalist Type of State** – *continued*

| Articulation of economy and state in capitalism | Implications for the economy and class relations | Implications for the state and politics |
|---|---|---|
| executive. It forms a social category divided by market and status position. | labour with close relationship between their specialized knowledge and their power. Knowledge becomes major basis of state's capacities. | define the national and/or 'national-popular' interest. State derives its legitimacy by reflecting national and/or 'national-popular' interest. |
| State based on rule of law: division between private law, administrative law, and public law. International law governs relations between states. No formal monopoly of political power in hands of dominant economic class(es) but 'equality before the law'. | Economic subjects are formally free and equal owners of commodities, including labour-power.<br><br>Private law developed on basis of property rights and contract law.<br><br>State has a key role in securing external conditions for economic exchange. | Formal subjects of state are individuals with citizenship rights, not feudal estates or collective economic classes. Struggles to extend these rights play a key role in the expansion of state activities.<br><br>Public law organized around the individual-state, public-private, and the national-international distinctions. |
| Formally sovereign state with distinct and exclusive territorial domain in which it is free to act without interference from other states. | Conflict between economy as abstract 'space of flows' in world market and as sum of localized activities, with an inevitably politically-overdetermined character. | Ideally, the state is recognized as sovereign in this territory by other states but may need to defend its territorial integrity by force. |
| Substantively, states are constrained in exercise of sovereignty by balance of international forces. | Particular capitals may seek support in world competition from their respective states | Political and military rivalry is conditioned by strength of national economy. |

This table presents key formal features of capitalist type of state, starting from the basic institutional separation of the economy as a profit-oriented, market-mediated, socially disembedded sphere of activities and the political system as a collective goal attainment-oriented, juridico-politically mediated, and socially disembedded sphere of political activities. This separation is both *real* and *illusory*. There are distinct economic and political systems, with own operational logics that can prove contradictory, etc.; but the two systems are interdependent, structurally coupled, and co-evolving. The main point behind the table is, then, to note differences, tensions, and points of convergence.
*Source*: Jessop (2002) pp. 38–9.

quate than military dictatorships, for example) and their functional limitations. Nonetheless his failure to extend his analysis in this way in his first major state-theoretical text was one of the key criticisms subsequently levelled against him by Miliband (see below). Equally neglected were dependent capitalist states – a topic he later discussed in relation to Southern Europe's military dictatorships (1976a). Finally, for all his interest in the *formal adequacy* of the capitalist type of state, there is a residual functionalist aspect to Poulantzas's work at this stage. For his analysis of the capitalist type of state was primarily concerned to show how it was possible for an institutionally separate, relatively autonomous state to secure the long-term political interests of capital rather than to show the problems that this separation must inevitably reproduce. This residual functionalism is reasserted in Poulantzas's response to Miliband's review of *Political Power and Social Classes* (Miliband, 1973a; Poulantzas, 1976).

## Miliband's analysis of the *state in capitalist society*

Miliband's contribution to Marxist state theory draws more on the second approach to the state developed by Marx and Engels, that is, a concern with the historical constitution of the state in capitalist societies and the changing modalities of class struggles concerned to capture the existing state and use it to promote particular class interests. His most famous state-theoretical work (1969) shares the concern of his earlier work on the limits of parliamentary socialism (1961, cf. 1982, pp. 20–53) with theoretically-informed empirical analysis rather than pursuing the sort of theoretical reflection and conceptual elaboration typical of Poulantzas's early work (for Miliband's motives in starting his work on the state and his subsequent reliance on 'a mixture of history and political experience and analysis', see Newman, 2002, pp. 186–8). Thus the four main goals of *The State in Capitalist Society* were:

> (1) To develop a new Marxist approach to the state in capitalist society without much explicit or detailed reference to earlier Marxist work, its strengths, or limits.
> (2) To criticize bourgeois political science, especially its recent claims about the separation of ownership and control produced by the managerial revolution and its continuing claims about the open, pluralistic, and democratic nature of government in the modern democratic state.

(3) To develop his own account of the state through a critique of bourgeois common sense and/or bourgeois social science based on detailed examination of empirical data and a more general presentation of a theoretically-informed (but markedly 'theory-light') alternative account of how different government institutions and actors are deeply embedded in a capitalist market economy and a civil society dominated by institutions and forces imbued with capitalist values and more or less committed to capitalist interests.
(4) To present this critique of bourgeois political science and common sense in a revelatory manner that starts from surface appearances and moves progressively to more basic underlying factors and forces.

This approach is reflected in the overall organization of Miliband's cathartic text. His critique moves from empirical analysis of managerial and political elite recruitment through an account of the actual functions of specific parts of the state apparatus to more basic material and ideological constraints on the state's autonomy regardless of elite backgrounds and the aims and objectives of the elected politicians and state managers nominally in charge of the state. In this sense, while Poulantzas tends to move from the most abstract determinations of the capitalist state to its more concrete form and dynamics, Miliband tends to move from more 'visible' aspects of capitalist societies to some of their more hidden ('behind the scenes' or 'behind the backs') aspects and/or to some fundamental structural constraints on the exercise of state power in a capitalist society, whatever the state's specific institutional form.

The basic political assumption informing Miliband's analysis is that there cannot be a parliamentary road to socialism because the bourgeois democratic state (and, by extension, other types of political regime in capitalist social formations) will remain inherently unreformable as long as radical movements continue to work only in and through established political institutions. His aim is to reveal the flaws in such a reformist approach and to develop theoretical ideas useful for a more radical democratic socialist movement. Nonetheless, in developing this analysis, he tends to reproduce some of the instrumentalist fallacies of parliamentary socialism even as he seeks to show the limits of a simple instrumentalist analysis of the state apparatus. Thus he is quite clear that the state is a 'special institution, whose main purpose is to defend the predominance … of a particular class' (1969, p. 3) that extends well beyond the executive and legislative branches of elected government (1969, pp. 49–50, 54). And he proposes to 'examine the state in light of concrete socio-economic *and* political *and* cultural reality of capitalist

societies' (1969, p. 6) in order to reveal the basic limits to reformist attempts to use legislative powers alone to transform the basic structures of capitalist exploitation and domination.

On this basis he first describes the linkages between economic elites and the dominant class, showing that managers are not so much salaried employees as key members of the dominant economic class. He then explores the composition of the state elite (state managers in contemporary jargon) and state servants, paying special attention to their class background and current class interests and class consciousness. His next step is to show that, while democracy certainly involves elections and opposition, the political system in contemporary capitalism is marred by imperfect party and class competition. He then studies the bases of legitimation in the political system and the pressures on state managers to seek re-election and continued legitimacy on the basis of criteria that are biased towards capitalist interests. And his analysis of the state in capitalist societies ends with a broader analysis of the bases of political authority in a civil society dominated by capitalist values in the family, school, mass media, and many other institutions. In all these analyses, Miliband focuses on how the embedding of a formally democratic state in a substantively capitalist society limits the apparent autonomy of elected governments and thereby promotes the functional adequacy of the exercise of state power for and on behalf of capital. This is far from a simple instrumentalist account of the state because it emphasizes a wide range of constraints on any voluntarist exercise of power but it is nonetheless one that starts from the existence of historically constituted political regimes in actually existing capitalist societies. This involves a different theoretical object and different lines of argument from those in the work of his protagonist in the ensuing Poulantzas-Miliband controversy.

## The Poulantzas-Miliband non-debate

The relative autonomy of the state was much disputed in the 1970s and 1980s. Essentially this topic concerned the relative freedom of the state (or better, state managers) to pursue policies that conflict with the immediate interests of the dominant economic class(es) without becoming so autonomous that they could also undermine the long-term economic and political interests of the latter. This was one of the key themes in the Poulantzas-Miliband debate, which took place between a purported structural determinist and an alleged instrumentalist respectively. Neither characterization is accurate but it remains to explain

why the two protagonists were unable to grasp and depict their opponent's stance within the controversy. I suggest that this was because they conceived the capitalist state in such radically different and fundamentally incommensurable terms that they were actually discussing two different types of theoretical object. This misunderstanding was reinforced because the two men also adopted different strategies for presenting their respective objects. Poulantzas was essentially concerned with the formal adequacy of the capitalist type of state and Miliband with the functional adequacy of the state in a capitalist society (for an alternative reading of the debate, see Barrow, 2002). Paradoxically, without recognizing these differences or admitting the impact of this non-debate on their subsequent state-theoretical analyses, both figures later redefined their respective theoretical objects and developed new accounts that not only broke with their earlier views but even produced a limited bilateral convergence.

Poulantzas initiated the debate with an extended critique of Miliband's book in *New Left Review* (1969). His five main criticisms were that: (1) Miliband was mistaken in his belief that a Marxist approach could be based on a critique of non-Marxist approaches that focused on revealing their factual errors – this placed Miliband on their terrain and trapped him in a debate on their terms; (2) Miliband had adopted a 'problematic of the subject', i.e., a concern with individual agents and their motives rather than with classes and their interests; (3) these epistemological and theoretical errors are evident in Miliband's critique of the managerial revolution thesis and the alleged neutrality of the state bureaucracy; (4) Miliband neglected the distinctive class unity of the state apparatus and therefore also failed to inquire into the sources of this unity; and (5) Miliband had neglected the key role of the ideological state apparatuses' (ISAs) in securing social cohesion in a class-divided society. The main problems with this critique was that it criticized Miliband for failing to accomplish something that he did not aim to achieve and that it ignored the polemical value of what he did intend to write. This misunderstanding is rooted in part in the different theoretical and political contexts of their work, with Poulantzas writing in a context marked by relatively abstract theoretical debates and Marxist polemics on state monopoly capitalism and Miliband writing in a context dominated by Anglo-American empiricism and debates on pluralism.

Miliband replied to this critique twice. The first response was immediate and written hastily over a weekend. It made four main points: (1) Poulantzas was preoccupied with his own problematic to the exclusion of other approaches and ignored the importance of empirical

material in developing a critique of the state; (2) he was guilty of 'structural superdeterminism' in his exaggerated concern with the structural constraints on state autonomy; (3) given his claim that the capitalist type of state tends to be 'Bonapartist', i.e., to acquire a certain independence from the social forces in the wider society, Poulantzas could not distinguish between fascism and democracy and therefore could not appreciate the virtues of a democratic regime for democratic struggle; (4) he was mistaken in treating ISAs as part of the state in its narrow sense as opposed to the political system more generally (Miliband 1970a). This reply shows signs of haste in being more concerned to rebut Poulantzas's specific charges than ask about the appropriate object of a Marxist state theory. Thus, in focusing on the structural Marxist language in which Poulantzas phrased his criticisms, Miliband ignored the more fundamental difference of theoretical and empirical object in their respective approaches. This initial exchange set the tone for the broader reception of the debate and its misrepresentation (including by its main protagonists) as a conflict between structuralist and instrumentalist accounts of the same analytical object. Yet, as argued above, Poulantzas was concerned with the capitalist type of state, Miliband with the state in capitalist societies.

Miliband's second reply critically reviewed the English translation of Poulantzas's book in the context of their earlier exchange. Thus he still failed to identify the specific theoretical object of Poulantzas's text and its implications for the latter's distinctive method of presentation and resulting tripartite theoretical structure. Instead Miliband comments on the importance of the anti-economist intention of Poulantzas's book, accuses him of a 'structuralist abstractionism' that has little contact with reality and produces little more than a 'formalized ballet of evanescent shadows', and claims that economism re-enters Poulantzas's analysis through the backdoor in the guise of the inevitable class character of state power. Miliband also returns to the theme of normal and exceptional states by noting that Poulantzas exaggerates the unity of the state and cannot deal with the role of political parties or the variability of regimes – especially as this is seen in the distinction between democracy and fascism. This critique still bears the imprint of the first exchange between Miliband and Poulantzas, focusing on only one aspect of Poulantzas's theoretical matrix (the use of Althusser's structural Marxist terminology to justify an autonomous theory of political institutions and practices) to the neglect of its substantively more important utilization of juridico-political concepts and Gramsci's analysis of hegemony. This reinforces the unfortunate polarization in the debate

around structuralism *versus* instrumentalism and reproduces the failure to distinguish between an abstract theoretical concern with the capitalist type of state and an empirical analysis of the state in capitalist society as a real-concrete phenomenon. Poulantzas had criticized Miliband for not taking the capitalist type of state as his theoretical object and for situating his critique of the state in capitalist society on the theoretical terrain of pluralism. Miliband now criticized Poulantzas in turn for not examining actually existing states in capitalist societies and for his 'hyper-theoretical' concerns with the essence of the capitalist state, neglecting its variant forms and the ways in which class struggles shape state power.

The different presentational strategies adopted in the two books also contributed to the excess of heat over light in this polemic. As we have seen, Miliband began with the social origins and current interests of economic and political elites and then turned to more fundamental features of actually existing states in a capitalist society and the constraints on their autonomy. Conversely, Poulantzas began with the overall institutional framework of capitalist societies, defined the ideal-typical capitalist type of state (a constitutional democratic state based on the rule of law), then explored the typical forms of political class struggle in bourgeois democracies (concerned with winning active consent for a national-popular project), and concluded with an analysis of the relative autonomy of state managers. In short, whereas Miliband moved from elites as social categories to broader social forces and only then to structural factors, Poulantzas moved from structural factors to the struggle among social forces and then to specific social categories. Such presentational strategies encouraged a polarized view of the debate that did little justice to the two texts because it drew attention to their starting points rather than to the full set of arguments and their implicit as well as explicit theoretical logic.

The next round was initiated by Ernesto Laclau, an Argentinian social theorist familiar with Althusserian structuralism who was also aware of the complexities of political struggles. He attacked both writers on the grounds that they had made complementary methodological errors. While Miliband had erred in not constructing his own theory and testing it against other theories, Poulantzas had constructed his own theory but neglected to demonstrate its superiority on empirical grounds. This is correct as far as it goes but Laclau himself did not identify the very different theoretical objects that would have been constructed and tested if Miliband and Poulantzas had followed his own protocols of theory construction and empirical evaluation. Laclau

made some additional points about the autonomy of the political and its relation to the economic that need not concern us here (Laclau, 1975).

This prompted the final round in the debate as Poulantzas replied to both Laclau and Miliband. He agrees in part with Laclau's critique and then focuses on Miliband. Poulantzas denies the charge of abstractionism, as well he might, given his concern to move from abstract to concrete, but does plead guilty to using difficult language, to formalism (in this context, not a concern with forms but the use of terms that lack immediate empirical referents), and to 'theoreticism'. This last deviation involves an emphasis on the conditions of theoretical production to the neglect of how the 'real' world is reflected in theory. He also concedes that this leads him to use empirical analysis for illustration rather than for systematic testing of arguments. After these concessions, Poulantzas went on the attack. He claims to analyse the relative autonomy of state in terms of the institutional separation of economics and politics and the state's key role in organizing a 'power bloc' and disorganizing the popular masses; and he rejects the charge of structuralism on the grounds that he also examines class struggle. Both points are valid and derive from the form-analytic, strategic-relational approach implicit in *Political Power and Social Classes*. Indeed, he then introduces his innovative view of the state as a social relation to emphasize even more the role of class struggle in the constitution of state power. In this context, he also notes the basic internal contradictions and tensions within the state apparatus that render its unity deeply problematic and how these are shaped by struggles within the state, over the state, and at a distance from the state. He also concedes the need to investigate the state's economic functions. Nowhere does Poulantzas recognize, however, as he had implicitly done earlier, that the state in capitalist societies may not be a capitalist type of state; and, for the latter, he insists, against his concession that systematic empirical testing is needed, that the logic and interests of capital will always prevail in the long run (Poulantzas, 1976).

## A possible reconciliation?

In a provocative comparison of the popular impact of Marx and Darwin, Marsden notes that both men published their key scientific work in 1867 and that Darwin's work was an instant success whilst Marx attracted little attention. He suggests that this is due to Darwin's mode of presentation in his *Origin of the Species*, which was written as

the history of a tentative discovery, expressed the author's own doubts, and implicitly invited the reader to help solve unresolved questions. In contrast, Marx's *Capital* failed because it was written as a definitive scientific treatise without adequately explaining how Marx had arrived at the truth. This discouraged readers from engaging with *Capital* quite so enthusiastically as they read *Origins* (Marsden, 1999, pp. 113–14).[4]

A similar comparison can be made with Poulantzas and Miliband. Each published his first major state-theoretical work just over a century later, with similar results. Miliband achieved far greater popular success because of the revelatory, cathartic impact of his state-theoretical detective story, unmasking the capitalist nature of the apparently democratic, class-neutral state in capitalist societies. In contrast, Poulantzas's analysis of the capitalist type of state appears more like 'a triumph of German *Wissenschaft*' insofar as it is modelled on Marx's movement from the most abstract determinations towards the concrete-in-thought and aims to be a definitive scientific treatise. In this sense, while Miliband's text was immediately accessible (and remains so, even if it is now dated), Poulantzas's text required considerable intellectual capital on the part of its readers and has become less accessible as the language of structural Marxism appears more alien. But this language is not an essential feature of his approach, as shown by its absence from Poulantzas's last, and most definitive, text on the state as a social relation (1976).

Following the first round in their debate, Poulantzas, having initially focused on the pure form of the capitalist type of state at a high level of abstraction, took more account of forms of state, varieties in political regime, changes in class composition and forms of struggle, the crucial distinction between normal and exceptional forms of state, and the value of democratic institutions in the struggle for democratic socialism. This brought him closer to Miliband. The latter in turn went on to provide interesting comments on the formal adequacy of liberal democracy for securing bourgeois hegemony and for enabling reorganization of bourgeois class domination on behalf (but not necessarily at the behest) of capital in a relatively flexible manner (1977b, pp. 87–8). There is also an interesting parallel between Poulantzas's relational turn and Miliband's later interest in a 'wider theory of domination, based on infra- and superstructural elements' with a primacy of class over state power (Miliband, 1977b, pp. 43–4). Moreover, reflecting major conjunctural shifts in the capitalist and soviet blocs, Poulantzas and Miliband did converge on a positive evaluation of democratic socialism, pluripartisme, the valuable role of new social movements, the importance of human rights, and the critique of authoritarian statism.

Given this, the Poulantzas-Miliband debate can be seen as an unnecessary diversion in their own theoretical trajectories as well as an unproductive debate for a generation of state theorists more generally. This is indicated in Miliband's later remarks that, 'taken as a whole', Poulantzas's work 'is without question the most creative and stimulating contribution to a Marxist political sociology[5] to have been made in the sixties and seventies' (1983e, p. 27); and, further, that Poulantzas provided 'the most thorough exploration of the concept of the autonomy of the state … [and] coined the formulation which has remained the basis for most subsequent discussion of the subject, namely the "relative autonomy of the state"' (1983e, p. 64). Such remarks might have provided a fruitful basis for discussion if made earlier, especially if Poulantzas's first critique had been less anxious to assert his structural Marxist credentials at Miliband's expense and more interested in the underlying theoretical logic and presentation of *The State in Capitalist Society*.

This does not mean that Poulantzas and Miliband converged fully in their analyses of the state. On the contrary, fundamental differences remained in their approaches to the philosophy of social science and the methodology of theory construction, with Poulantzas more concerned with abstract questions and theoretical coherence and Miliband more concerned with political relevance and empirical evidence. Important differences also remained in their approach to the object of state theory, with the Greek developing a form-analytic, strategic-relational perspective and the Belgian sticking to institutional analysis focused on the changing balance of forces. These differences are also reflected in their respective approaches to class analysis, to the political influence of state managers, and to other politically-relevant social forces (see especially Miliband 1983e, pp. 63–78); in their relative sensitivity to potential disjunctions between economics, politics, and the 'ideological' and their impact on the relative unity of capitalist social formations (see especially Poulantzas, 1974).

## Conclusions: an emerging agenda?

This contribution starts from the distinction between the capitalist type of state and the state in capitalist society. This is radically different from the distinction that has conventionally framed this debate – including its perception and presentation by its chief protagonists as well as in subsequent interventions and comments. This is a common observation and has been explained in various ways (cf. Barrow, 2002). Whatever the reasons, this misperception produced a dialogue of the

deaf that not only proved sterile in its own terms but has also misled later generations about the best way to study the state. My own view, which has emerged from my reflections on Poulantzas and other advocates of a form-analytic, strategic-relational analysis, is that two analytical strategies must be adopted and combined. On the one hand, there is a definite place for *theoretical reflections* on the type of state that corresponds best to the capitalist mode of production; and, on the other, the most appropriate starting point for *empirical analysis* are various states in capitalist societies. Whereas the first approach is concerned with the formal adequacy of the capitalist type of state, the latter examines the functional adequacy of the state in capitalist society. Given that states are polymorphous and can operate with very different logics of societalization, there is no guarantee that a given state in capitalist society will have a capitalist character. This must be established theoretically and empirically on the basis of its specific forms, institutional architecture, and political practices – an exercise that requires both types of analysis. Such research must examine the outcome of practical struggles over the historical and formal constitution of the state, its institutional design, and the nature and purposes of government. Two complementary analytical strategies can be adopted in this regard: (a) how does the exercise of state power by the agents of the state in capitalist society overcome the problems of lobbyism, particularism, short-termism, fragmentation, etc., so that it can develop, if at all, policies that are consistent with the expanded reproduction of capital; and (b) how does the exercise of power in and through the capitalist type of state overcome the problems posed by the institutional separation of the economic and political through specific accumulation strategies, state projects, and hegemonic visions. The former strategy requires concern with formal adequacy (cf. Miliband, 1977b, pp. 74–83); the latter requires concern with functional adequacy (cf. Poulantzas, 1978, pp. 25, 53, 124–6, 132, 140–3, 190–4). Combining these approaches would avoid the state-theoretical pitfalls of both structuralism and instrumentalism by focusing on the *contingently necessary* nature of state power in the modern state. Its importance lies in its ability to bridge the distinction between the capitalist state and the state in capitalist society and to provide a basis for critical work on actually existing states in actually existing social formations.

## Notes

1 On the consequences of this for the impoverishment of state theory, see Aronowitz and Bratsis (2002) and Panitch (2002).

2 For an argument that Foucault's work on governmentality was strongly state-theoretical, see Jessop, 2004; see also Foucault, 2004.

3 This is made even harder because, as Max Weber (1948) noted, there is no activity that states always perform and none they have never performed.
4 Of course, the fact that Darwin wrote in English and Marx in German may also have shaped these outcomes!
5 While Miliband might well be described as a political sociologist, Poulantzas would have rejected this identity for himself.

# 8

# Miliband and the Withering Away of the State

*John Hoffman*

Miliband saw himself as a classical Marxist, and I want to argue that paradoxically this led him to play down, and express little interest in the withering away of the state. Miliband certainly acknowledged that the withering away thesis was an integral part of Marx's theory but he has little to say about it. Miliband was certainly conscious of the withering away thesis. In 'Marx and the State', for example, written in 1965, Miliband acknowledges Marx's early reference to the annihilation of the political state. He also cites Marx's comments in his notes to the *Civil War in France* that the Commune was a revolution against the state itself (1983e, pp. 7, 19). He was fond of quoting Marx's letter to Weydemeyer where Marx speaks of the dictatorship of the proletariat as 'the transition' to the abolition of all classes and to a classless (and to a stateless) society (1983e, p. 17). He is even more fond of Marx's comment in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* that the state needs to be converted from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinated to it (1973b, p. 247; 1983e, p. 21). It is clear however that this does not mean that there is to be a 'subordinate' state in a classless society but rather that the overcoming of a divide between society and the state, promotes the disappearance of the latter. As Miliband makes it clear in *Marxism and Politics,* the disjunction between the state and civil society 'can only come to an end with the disappearance of the state itself' (1977b, p. 84).

But although Miliband saw that the withering away thesis was an integral part of classical Marxism, he showed little interest in it. Of course, it is true that he was particularly concerned with the way the state operated in capitalist society, but he did write about the state under socialism, and moreover turned his hand to more general treatises on Marxist politics. I think that the reason for his lack of interest

in the question was conceptual and not merely circumstantial, and moreover stems from the general problem (which he aggravated rather than ameliorated) of the Marxist classics. For Marxist theory in general contains some arguments that in my view work against a coherent and plausible theory of a stateless society.

It will be suggested here that an elaboration of the question requires the development of what I want to call a 'post-Marxist' view of the state which rejects in particular Marx's theory of revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and what I see as a narrow view of class. To chart a coherent path to a stateless and classless society, it is necessary to develop the distinctions between state and government, and between force and coercion, which are implicit in Marx, but not developed. Miliband's enthusiasm for the work of Max Weber and Antonio Gramsci did not help his argument and because he retains the pre-liberal elements of Marx's theory, he is unable to sustain the post-liberal logic that points to the state as a 'necessarily disappearing necessity'. By pre-liberal I mean here elements that are authoritarian and despotic: they hark back to the world before liberalism developed. By post-liberal, I mean a theoretical position that endorses liberal values but seeks to go beyond them, not only by extending them to sections of the population (women, workers, colonial peoples etc.), but by deepening and reformulating classical liberal concepts of freedom and equality, for example. The idea that an emancipated society is a society without a state is, in my view, a post-liberal one since it argues that the tension between force and freedom can only be resolved if we address conflicts of interest through negotiation and persuasion.

## The state and force in Max Weber and Antonio Gramsci

In *The State in Capitalist Society,* Miliband appears to identify with Max Weber's 'famous phrase' that the state successfully claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within a given society (1973b, p. 47). Miliband is concerned here with the state/government distinction to which we will return later, but he misses the point that although the state claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of force this does not mean that it actually exercises it.

For the state claims a monopoly that it does not, indeed cannot, possess. Without the existence of criminals and terrorists, subversives and dissidents (as terrorists are sometimes called in authoritarian societies), the state would have no *raison d'être*. The same is true of the monopoly of legitimacy that the state claims. Unless terrorists

explicitly, and criminals implicitly, challenged this monopoly, it would not be asserted. The state that actually succeeded in asserting a monopoly of legitimate force would make itself redundant in the process, since its very existence is premised on the fact that 'others' will challenge the monopoly that it asserts. The fact is that the state asserts an ideal of community that it necessarily contradicts. A dualism between theory and practice is built into its very constitution. So is the dualism between the abstract and the concrete, freedom and necessity, subject and object, the ideal and the real, etc. The state seeks to achieve what is impossible – harmony through division, freedom through force.

Marx highly appraised Hobbes as a theorist who saw 'might' rather than will as the basis of right or the state, and Marx regarded the idea that the basis of the state is will, as quintessentially idealist in character. In other words, the centrality of force in Marx's view of the state stems from his materialist view of the state and the description in *On the Jewish Question* of the state as a 'theological concept' arises from his view that the state aspires to an otherworldly 'community' in a material world which is deeply divided. In short, the state rests upon a whole series of paradoxical assumptions. It is clear that if a communist society is to be one in which the free development of each is a condition for the free development of all, then differences must be resolved (and be capable of being resolved) without the use of force itself.

Weber himself conceded that his definition owed a good deal to Marxism. He rightly emphasizes that force is essential to the state. At the same time, the state is not to be 'reduced' to force since it has to utilize a force which evokes some measure of social recognition, is territorially focused and which claims legitimacy. But peculiar to the state nevertheless is the fact that it seeks to resolve conflicts of interest through acts of force – however proceduralized and (apparently) legitimized this force might be.

However toward the end of 'Marx and the State' Miliband sees it as 'of some significance' that Marx generally chose 'to emphasize the liberating rather than the repressive aspects of post-capitalist political power' (1965b). In *The Civil War in France,* Miliband argues that Marx failed to make any reference to the state as an agent of repression (1983e, pp. 21–2). But the notion of the state as liberating is alien to the logic of Marxism, and it accounts for Miliband's rather uncritical view of Gramsci. In *The State in Capitalist Society*, he clearly regards Marx's analysis of the state as a 'coercive instrument' as rather one-sided and, he argues that only Gramsci has taken account of cultural reality (1973b, p. 8). In *Marxism and Politics,* he speaks of Gramsci as

the only 'classical' figure who sought to write a political treatise (1977b, p. 2). It is true that he resists Althusser's (and Poulantzas's) notion of 'ideological state apparatuses' on the grounds that these confuse state and class power, and fail to see what is distinctive about the liberal state; namely, the separation of the two (1977b, pp. 54–5).

Although he is clearly right here, he accepts uncritically Gramsci's celebrated argument that the state consists of *both* coercion and consent. Gramsci fails to see that the process of consenting also involves coercion, albeit a coercion of circumstances that compel people to do that which they would not otherwise do, and this failure stemmed, in Gramsci's case, from a lack of interest in political economy and in the fact that the idealism of Croce still made a residual impact on his writings (Hoffman, 1984, p. 122). It is true that Gramsci was interested in the withering of the state, and argues in *The Prison Notebooks* that in the 'regulated society' (i.e. communism) the state disappears (1971, pp. 258, 382). But because the state is a combination of force and will, the ethical state or civil society remains, so that only the state as political society disappears (Hoffman, 1996, p. 72). But this notion of an 'ethical state' is abstract and idealized. It sees communism as a condition in which, as Gramsci puts it, freedom vanquishes necessity, theory and practice become one, and law ceases to be external to human consciousness (1971, pp. 263, 333, 366–7). It is hard to see how any society could function and progress under these conditions!

Miliband does quote Marx's comment that economic relations provide a 'dull compulsion' that completes the subjection of the labourer to the capitalist (1973b, p. 234; 1983e, p. 45), but he does not see that the implications of this comment challenge the conventional liberal dualism of coercion and consent (which, in my view, Gramsci still embraced), Miliband also cites with approval Lynd's comment that industrial capitalism is an 'intensely coercive form of organization' (1973b, p. 68), but again he does not see the relevance of this argument to developing a broad, social theory of coercion. For if people can freely consent to circumstances which are 'intensely coercive', surely this means that a new appraisal of coercion is necessary. Miliband's conventional (liberal) view of coercion extends, as we will now see, into the area of government.

## The distinction between state and government

On the one hand, as noted above, Miliband accepts Weber's 'celebrated' definition of the state. However, he does not see that this definition

makes it possible to draw a distinction which Weber does not make but which *is* implicit within Marxism itself, namely the distinction between the state and government.

It is true that Miliband does differentiate the two but he does so in a purely conventional manner. He argues that the government is part of the state – it is the political executive that speaks in the name of the state. The government, as Miliband defines it, belongs to a wider state system that includes the administration, the judiciary, the army and police, local and regional government and the parliamentary assemblies. Yet, it seems to me that this is a distinction that fails to harness the critical potential of Weber's definition.

It might be objected that Miliband's state system corresponds precisely to Weber's view of the state as an institution claiming a monopoly of legitimate force. The six components of Miliband's state system (it could be said) correspond to the four attributes of the Weberian definition – monopoly, legitimacy, force, and territory. Each national institution claims a monopoly for its activity; this monopoly is defined in terms of a specific territory; legal and judicial procedures secure legitimacy for the law, while the police and the army ensure that these procedures are effectively carried out.

Government is an integral part of an interrelated whole, working not against but on behalf of the state. The government, Miliband argues, supports the general interests of organized capital, while the other elements of the system – the civil service, judges, police and army officers, local and regional elites and parliamentarians – reflect this conflict of class interests. It would be difficult to see how legislatures could continue to function or judges operate, or administrators implement the law without the existence of functionaries of force, given the fact that the state acts in the interests of a capitalist minority.

But there is a problem there. Miliband himself refers to the 'coercive' function (I prefer the term 'force') as the state's unique prerogative (1973b, p. 123), while Weber makes it clear that the administrative and ideological elements working to provide legitimacy and a territorial focus for the state are the formal, contingent and non-essential aspects of the state. Of course they are important, and given the radical disparities of power that exist in the capitalist system, it is impossible to see legislating, adjudicating and administering taking place without armies and police forces to underpin them. Logically, if not empirically, state and government are however distinct (Hoffman, 1995, pp. 43–4). Whereas it is impossible to imagine any society without some kind of judicial, administrative and law-making function (even if these

laws are norms, customs and rules), we can certainly imagine a society without an institution utilizing force to tackle conflicts of interest.

Miliband notes Engels's reference to the 'common' services and functions that may be performed by the state but which would have to be carried out in any society (1983e, p. 92). We should, it seems to me, distinguish between services and issues like health, housing, the environment, welfare common to all societies in some shape or form, and the 'unique prerogatives' of the state – the use of force to tackle conflicts of interest. Nor are we making a distinction that is only logical in all societies. Engels's account of the Iroquois in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* graphically indicates that order is possible without the state, and on the basis of anthropological data (which seem to me to have largely confirmed Engels's insights), it is not difficult to show that a wide range of sanctions exist which serve to establish and consolidate cohesion and community in stateless societies.

The assumption that because societies need governments, they must have states, is a prejudiced and ethnocentric one. It derives in its modern form from Hobbes's argument that without the state, order is impossible. Yet the fact is that humankind has survived for most of its existence without the state, and we are certainly entitled to assume that throughout these hundreds of thousands of years people had order. Stateless societies were certainly *governed* and Mair entitled Part One of her *Primitive Government, '*Governments without the State' (1962).

This is why it is important to draw out (in a way which Miliband failed to do) the distinction between force and coercion. Stateless societies use coercion (but not force) to maintain order. Ostracism and the withholding of economic cooperation certainly harm individuals and groups but, as Mill pointed out in his critique of the despotism of public opinion in *On Liberty* (1982), they are different from force. I agree with Easton's comment that to identify moral and psychological coercion (as unpleasant as they might be) with force is to divest force of its basic meaning (1959, pp. 136–7). It is true that force exists in some stateless societies but as Mair points out in the case of the Nuer in Sudan, the use of force here is not a means of dominating others, and for the !Kung San in southern Africa, for example, the outbreak of interpersonal violence would lead to a fatal disruption of essential food-gathering tasks (Hoffman, 1995, p. 41).

In early tribal societies, in other words, the distinction between state and government is not merely logical: it is empirical as well. Moreover even in state-centred societies, anthropological evidence has prompted, as Roberts comments, acceptance of the idea that 'a large burden of

social control' is borne by non-statist measures (1979, p. 12). If one challenges the idea that voluntary societies of all kinds in contemporary society – from universities to cricket clubs – use rules with moral and social but not state sanctions, what are we to make of international society? Bull, an international political theorist, rightly speaks of the existence of an 'anarchical' order by which he means that states are governed by international law, moral considerations, self-interest and economic pressures, but the crucial point is that there is no world state to secure this order. It is true that Bull yields to what he eloquently calls the 'tyranny of existing concepts' (1977, p. 267) in defining states as sovereign bodies capable of exercising overwhelming force over 'their' domestic populations, but the notion that order can be secured without the existence of the state applies both to domestic as well as international spheres.

To talk of the withering away of the state is not to invite a mysterious leap from reality into utopia. For what replaces the state is *government*. States already act 'governmentally' (in my terminology) when they seek to negotiate conflicts of interest and search for compromises that both parties to a dispute can (albeit reluctantly) accept. The notion that force is essential to order can be turned on its head, for when force is used, consensus is impossible. One party to the dispute is crushed and the other emerges victorious, and in this situation, it is understandable that the vanquished party seeks revenge, and the victorious party is beset with insecurity. Hardly conditions for order!

When Miliband speaks of the state having 'an ideological-cultural or persuasive function' (1977b, p. 96), he confuses (in my terminology) state and government. Of course, the state might run broadcasting, the health service or the post office, but these remain governmental functions. It is true that functionaries of the state are in control, but strictly speaking, this is not a statist activity but a governmental one since the role of the health service or the post office, for example, (actual or potential) is to cement common interests and facilitate health and communication. Of course, it is complicated by the fact that these public institutions are funded by taxation that is compulsory, so that in a statist society, the distinction between state and government is logical rather than empirical.

A negotiating strategy (that is to say, the development of government as opposed to the state) is only possible when the parties to a dispute have enough in common to identify with one another. Where these common interests have yet to be created, force is inevitable.

It is not part of my argument to suggest that arbitration will always work. Where common interests are weak or absent, then the state will

invariably exist. Nor should we imagine domestic tribal societies constitute some kind of model to which one can return. What these societies reveal is that order and cohesion are possible without the state, and international society indicates that laws can exist and be upheld even though there is no world state to enforce them. But the point remains: if force is used, legitimacy is absent. It is true that in liberal societies attempts are made to limit the use of force but in my view, force always tends to extremes so that we should not be surprised when liberal states adopt authoritarian practices and measures.

Moreover, the use of such force can only suppress conflict. It is an illusion that force can resolve conflict, since when force is used, one party is suppressed and the other victorious. Inevitably, conflict continues. The use of force represents a defeat for government and indeed for the political process.

Miliband defines politics as the ways and means whereby social conflict and notably class conflict is manifested (1983e, p. 6), but this definition contains a crucial ambiguity. Conflict can embrace mere differences that can be resolved through social and moral means, or it might involve divisions (as I would call them) that will both generate, and provoke force to tackle them. The former conflict is inherent in all societies: the latter peculiar to class-divided and state-centred societies. If by politics, one means government, then it could well be argued that the state far from embodying politics, actually works against it, since the use of force cannot resolve conflict, it can only suppress it. Miliband's concept of politics appears to be basically statist in character so that he fails to embrace Gramsci's own social use of the term (Hoffman, 1984, pp. 208–9).

Miliband's lack of interest in the withering away of the state derives from a conventional liberal view of coercion and government that points to the permanence of the state. His statist position becomes increasingly evident when we consider his views on revolution.

## Revolution as 'the most authoritarian thing there is'

Engels's rejoinder to the anarchists (cited above) is one of the quotations that Miliband does not cite. Although he makes the point that Marx never denied the possibility that revolution might be peaceful, he argues that where power has been seized, revolutionaries have to create a strong state in place of the old if their revolution is to survive (1977b, p. 181). A state proper is an absolutely imperative necessity in organizing the process of transition from a capitalist society into a socialist one (1977b, p. 189).

This actually goes beyond Marx whose argument after all was that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a transitional form of the state, a state ceasing to be a state. Miliband accentuates the problem that exists in classical Marxism – the problem of how we can move from a process which polarizes and intensifies division to one in which common interests make it possible to tackle conflict without the state.

In his final chapter of *The State in Capitalist Society,* Miliband makes it clear that the freedoms of the liberal state constitute 'important and valuable elements of life in advanced capitalist societies' (1973b, p. 238), and he accepts that 'in non-revolutionary circumstances' it makes good sense for parties with Marxist credentials to work within the framework of 'bourgeois legality' (1977b, p. 163). He defends what he calls 'insurrectionary politics' (an alternative which, in his view, 'may be properly called Leninism', 1977b: 166) as opposed to the 'reformist' strategy of the Communist Parties that adopted constitutionalist and electoralist strategies particularly after the Second World War. The point here is not to debate the Marxist credentials of his 'insurrectionary politics', but to argue that such a position would inevitably aggravate rather than diminish the pre- or anti-liberal elements that are contained within classical Marxism. Miliband argues that the Leninist perspective requires that existing political institutions would have to be totally transformed, i.e., the state 'smashed' as 'an integral and essential part of the socialist revolution' (1977b, p. 178).

However, he argues that the tension between democracy from below and direction from above remains, and given the hostility of the regime's internal and external enemies, a strong state will have to be created in the place of the old (1977b, p. 181). The fiercest enmity would be aroused from conservative forces, and a battle would also be waged within the state. A process of acute polarization would have already occurred and, as noted above, a state proper would be needed to oversee the transition from a capitalist to a socialist society (1977b, p. 189). All this makes the development of a stateless society more rather than less difficult since the illiberal consequences of a strong state and acute polarization result in the fact that it would even be more troublesome to cement the common interests essential for negotiation and arbitration.

Miliband's strategy can only intensify the authoritarian proclivities of the revolutionary process so that it becomes more rather than less likely that the socialist state – which is, after all, a state proper, as Miliband sees it – will wither away.

In his last work, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (1994b), Miliband suggests that Marx had perhaps an exaggerated abhorrence of the state

(1994b, p. 48) and later he argues that the withering away thesis in Marxism is unrealistic 'for the relevant future' (1994b, p. 77). He reiterates his earlier point that a strong state is essential for the construction of a socialist society, and he is clearly sceptical about what he calls (wrongly in my view) the 'anarchist' side of Marxist thought. Although he does not formally repudiate the withering away thesis, he makes it even more difficult (than classical Marxism does) to take it seriously.

## Abstraction, class and production

Miliband takes it for granted that politics is about class struggle and class war, and classes are rooted in the relations individuals and groups occupy in the process of production.

He does not engage with the feminist argument that the historical materialist notion of human activity as production is generally interpreted in ways that have divisive implications. The classical Marxist notion tends to 'privilege' the activity of workers outside the home. The 'production' thesis needs to take on board maternal *reproduction* or child-rearing as activities which have significant consequences, and which need to be integrated into a theory of emancipation.

In my view, the treatment of class in classical Marxism, which Miliband uncritically adopts, is too narrow and abstract. In a well-known comment, Marx argues that in class-divided societies, social relations are not 'relations between individual and individual, but between worker and capitalist, between farmer and landlord, etc. Wipe out these relations and you annihilate all society' (Mark and Engels, 1975, p. 77). The problem with this comment is that it is not concrete enough. For workers also have a gender and national identity etc., and this materially affects how they relate to others. In *Marxism and Politics*, Miliband argues that ethnic, religious and national conflict should be distinguished from class conflict even though they are directly or indirectly related to it (1977b, pp. 18–19). But this does not capture the way in which class always expresses itself through these other identities, for these identities are also a crucial part of the organizing and concentrating process which exists within social relationships. In other words, we never see workers, capitalists, intermediate strata etc. *per se:* what we see are Christian and male and white and northern capitalists and workers, etc. Just as the notion of the individual is abstract, so is the concept of class. In fact class can only be 'seen' though its gender, regional, religious and other forms.

Thus, we should not assume, for example, that all capitalists are the same. Some capitalists are concerned with their reputation as 'ethical'

employers and the attempt to make the private sector more socially responsible. Others obviously do not. Nor should we 'privilege' particular actors, although we would expect those with fewer resources to be more involved with the struggle for emancipation. But agents of emancipation are multiple and pluralistic, and it is important that we respect the particular grievances of each. It is counter-productive to compress a multitude of perspectives and oppressions affecting blacks, women, gays, people from despised regions, people with despised cultures and religions, etc within a single conceptual rubric which inevitably means 'privileging' ascribed proletarian interests at the expense of the 'others'. There is a problem in classical Marxism with the problem of form. The general presentations of Marxism (as Engels himself was later to acknowledge) tend to emphasize content at the expense of form. Yet this is precisely the problem with class as argued above. Class is important, but the form of class is in tension with its underlying reality, and this point is, in my view, vital if the question of gender, nationality, etc. is to be satisfactorily presented.

The withering away thesis can only be strengthened by a concrete view of class so that the particular identities of actors is related to the question of underlying exploitation. The classical Marxist view (that Miliband expounds here) is not only problematic in terms of the battle of democracy (as Marx calls it), but it weakens the struggle for a stateless and classless world.

An abstract view of class creates grave difficulties for the development of a democratic political culture and movement. It also detracts from a concept that is central to the case for looking beyond the state – the notion of common interests. Where common interests can be located, differences can be resolved without the use of force. This point holds not only within states, but also *between* them. As force becomes more damaging and suicidal as a method of resolving conflict, so it is increasingly urgent to find interests which people have in *common* in resolving disputes in what I call a governmental rather than a statist manner.

The need to defend public sector and governmental processes in non-statist terms is vital in order to challenge the right-wing libertarian argument that regulation in and of itself undermines freedom. J.S. Mill once asserted that we cannot have too much government that helps individuals to help themselves. But this kind of argument rests upon a dynamic and expanding concept of common interests that is blocked and immobilized if we continue to hold onto archaic and static concepts of 'class war'.

Common interests can only be strengthened if all individuals are empowered through the provision of resources. This is therefore a radical argument that challenges capitalism in terms of the very liberal values that supposedly vindicate it. It is a theory of emancipation all the more effective (it seems to me) because it is a theory that unites rather than divides. The 'common interests' argument only has this unifying character because it emphasizes the plural character of identities.

Miliband's failure to elaborate the withering away thesis, meant that he failed to develop a post-statist form of Marxism, or if you prefer, a post-Marxism that argues the case for realizing a stateless and classless society. Such a position must defend revolutions (in the sense of violent or polarizing upheavals) *only* in situations (as say in apartheid South Africa) where liberal freedoms have yet to be established. Miliband's argument is a curious mixture of the pre-liberal, liberal and the post-liberal. He looks beyond capitalism (post-liberal), but employs pre-liberal notions of class war and revolution. His notion of the state proper takes him even further away from a stateless society than the traditional Marxist notion of a dictatorship of the proletariat, and his notion of government and coercion are essentially liberal in character. His critique of the 'reformist' strategy in *Marxism and Politics* is precisely wrong, since it is only through reforms that revolution can be avoided, and a post-liberal society – an emancipated society – a socialist or communist society come to pass.

The point emerges vigorously with Levine's critique of Rousseau (Levine, 1987). For the trouble with Rousseau's legitimate state is that it assumes that some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time will need to be 'forced to be free' (1987, pp. 33–6). If Marxism is to postulate an end to the state, it has to grapple with the problem of organized force as a method of tackling conflicts of interest. Miliband never does this.

# 9

# Theorizing the Unexceptional US Welfare State[1]

*John F. Manley*

Ralph Miliband's *The State in Capitalist Society* appeared when the dominant theory of American politics, pluralism, was dying and a new theory was struggling to be born. Part of pluralism's appeal was as a realistic theory of American politics. Pluralists admitted the United States was an imperfect democracy. Political and economic power were unequally distributed. Elites had more influence than ordinary Americans (the 'apolitical stratum'). Yet, pluralist empirical studies showed a political system reasonably open to multiple interests if people felt strongly about issues. The untidy pulling and hauling of groups allegedly sustained a 'polyarchal' system without a discernible ruling class or demonstrable power elite. In 1967, Robert A. Dahl, America's leading pluralist, published a textbook identifying multiple centers of power and *limited* popular sovereignty as the basic axioms of pluralist democracy (Dahl, 1967, p. 24).

Pluralism's account of an open, responsive government complemented liberals backing government interventions on pressing social problems. Liberals generally were pleased with John F. Kennedy's election, shaken by his death, and relieved in 1964 when Lyndon B. Johnson trounced Barry Goldwater. Kennedy, facing a strong Conservative Coalition in Congress, legislatively inched forward in his foxhole. Johnson, with huge majorities, hurled a programme at Congress that surpassed Franklin Roosevelt's and Harry S. Truman's. Amid great social upheaval, the Great Society promised nothing less than to end poverty and remake America (within a capitalist framework).

With few exceptions, Johnson's proposals passed, but his triumph was marred by a harbinger of things to come, the bloody 1965 Watts uprising in California. Then, Johnson sacrificed his Presidency fighting communism in Viet Nam. 'I knew from the start', he told a biographer,

'that I was bound to be crucified either way I moved. If I left the woman I really loved – the Great Society – in order to get involved with that bitch of a war on the other side of the world, then I would lose everything at home' (Kearns, 1976, p. 25). The lofty hopes of 1960s liberalism were followed by over 40 years of generally conservative governments.

The 1960s witnessed the evisceration not only of liberalism but the theory of pluralist democracy as well. Bitterly disappointed, Dahl and his fellow pluralist Charles E. Lindblom decried the 'incapacities' and even the 'perversities' of pluralist democracy because, even after years of opportunity, it failed to fulfill their expectations of advancing economic and social equality. The political-economic system 'remains both sluggish and feckless in advancing on problems on which it has the advantage of decades of experience in policy-making: poverty and maldistribution of income and wealth, racial inequality, health care, public education, inflation, and unemployment' (Dahl and Lindblom, 1976, p. xxi; for a critical exchange, Manley, 1983). In their upset, they even questioned the connection between pluralist democracy and capitalism, finding some kind words for socialism (Dahl and Lindblom, 1976, p. xxvii; Dahl, 1982, p. 110 ff; Lindblom, 1982a, pp. 9–21). To date, pluralism remains a shattered theory, which means there is no widely accepted mainstream theory of American politics.

Miliband found the theory of pluralist democracy, in all essentials, wrong (Miliband, 1969, p. 4), and offered an alternative. As he read Marx, capitalist societies presuppose a class that relies on the state for protecting its hegemony. The state not only guards capitalism against Socialism, it fosters capital's extraction from labour of the surplus value essential to the system's operation. Workers, organized labour, voters, and non-business interest groups are not powerless; they just function in a political-economic system where the fundamentals of capitalism are off limits. The state, political parties, the educational system, the media, and other social institutions further reinforce capitalism by teaching its merits to successive generations of Americans. Miliband held out the possibility of a Socialist future, but his analysis yielded little reason for optimism (Miliband, 1969, pp. 5–22).

Recognized as a classic, his book soon attracted a vigorous critique from the structural Marxist, Nicos Poulantzas, discussed elsewhere in this volume. The Miliband-Poulantzas debate energized the search for a Marxist theory of the state, while simultaneously dramatizing the absence of such a theory to fill the vacuum left by pluralism. Marx and Engels made many insightful observations about the state yet did not, Jessop notes, bequeath a coherent, systematic political theory to

complement their economic analyses (Jessop, 1978, p. 40). Indeed, given the importance in Marxist theory of changing historical conditions to social institutions, and the diversity of modes of production, there is reason to doubt whether such a general theory is in principle possible. Jessop quoted Marx's comment in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* that while it may be possible to generalize about present *societies* across national boundaries because capitalism can be found in many countries, varying only in degree of development, forms of state change from country to country, complicating a general theory. Yet, Marx added that present-day capitalist states, despite their motley forms, all have certain essential characteristics: all are based on modern bourgeois society (McLellan, 2000, p. 611; Jessop, 1978, p. 59). A Marxist theory of *capitalist* states struck Marx as possible and worth exploring, though he never finished his own.

Miliband was sensitive to the variety of states, but, following Marx, argued certain countries had enough commonalities for comparative analysis and generalization. He stressed two: advanced industrialization, and a dominantly capitalist economy. With these, differences across state boundaries were sufficiently attenuated, if not flattened, to proceed (Miliband, 1969, pp. 7–8). Miliband argued that while the capitalist state ensured class domination, class power is not automatically translated into state power. In order to perform its conflict mediation role, the state needs a certain degree of autonomy from the 'ruling class'. As this class is never perfectly monolithic, it cannot simply use the state as its instrument: while the state may act on *behalf* of the ruling class, it does not necessarily act at its *behest*. The class bias of the state, and here Miliband moved considerably closer to Poulantzas, is not determined by shared social origins of state elites and the capitalist class, for this leaves out the structural dimension: the state rooted in a capitalist mode of production. No capitalist state is free to ignore the essential constraints imposed by capitalism. Miliband, walking a fine line, insisted that the structuralist view, if carried too far, could eliminate the freedom of state officials, while simultaneously warning against exaggerating their independence (Miliband, 1977b, pp. 66–74). As he wrote of the welfare state:

> What is wanted from [the state] is that it should provide and manage – as it alone can – a vast range of collective and public services whose level largely defines the conditions of life for the overwhelming majority of the population of advanced capitalist countries, who depend upon these services. But against the expectations and

> demands emanating 'from below' must be set the requirements of capitalist enterprise; and whatever the state does by way of provision and management of services and economic intervention has to run the gauntlet of the economic imperatives dictated by the requirements of the system (Miliband, 1977b, p. 97).[2]

Since the Miliband-Poulantzas debate, the literature on states has grown immensely. Jessop in *State Theory* reviews various approaches to the state in the classic Marxist texts (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and Gramsci), and seven contemporary approaches (Jessop, 1990, pp. 24–47). Ollman, stressing the complexity of state-society relations, identifies five major Marxist state theories: instrumentalism, structuralism, arena of class conflict (late Poulantzas), illusory community amid alienated social relations (early Ollman), and Gramsci on hegemony and dominant ideology (Ollman, 1993, pp. 89–93). Add to these the large body of work on welfare states (classical Marxist, social democratic, national value theories, crypto-Marxist theories, institutional theories, regime theories, pluralist theories, game theories, welfare-capitalism theories, power-resource theories, logic of industrialism theories, neo-Marxist theories) and the field is clogged with riches.

Instead of eyeing the long theoretical menu, and choosing which dish or combination seems most appetizing, a simpler strategy is employed here. Starting with Miliband's (and Marx's) position that all capitalist states are embedded in capitalist relations of production, attention is focused on the objective or structural conflict between those who extract surplus value from another class which, neither owning nor controlling the means of production, must sell its labour power to capital, and on how this inherent conflict is managed. Special attention is paid to the welfare state because this has been a central and ubiquitous way industrial capitalist societies have managed class conflict. This is no less true of the United States than of western European countries, but before the argument can proceed we must confront a major theory that stands in the way of a comparative analysis: American exceptionalism.[3] Exceptionalism holds that because Socialism and class conflict have been so weak in the US, comparisons across capitalist countries are highly problematic. Seymour Martin Lipset, for example, says class in America 'has been a theoretical construct', which implies it is so unimportant compared to other factors that it need not be taken very seriously (Lipset, 1996, p. 23). Alan Ryan, warden of New College, cites the absence of a Labour party, non-revolutionary trade unions, and workers 'who want more of capitalism's golden eggs but not at the

expense of the goose that laid them' to explain the relative absence of class conflict in American history (Ryan, 1997, p. 27). If such claims are correct, there should be little more than a chemical trace of class conflict in American history.

An exploration of three American social movements in late 19th and early 20th centuries shows that class conflict and the Socialist threat to capitalism were as integral to establishing the American welfare state as they were in western Europe. The argument is informed by Miliband's work, especially his *Divided Societies* (1989). Expanding on his 1982 Marshall Lectures at Cambridge University, Miliband acknowledged that anyone who affirms the importance of class struggle for understanding societies runs the 'risk of instant dismissal as an unreconstructed fundamentalist, obstinately blind to the vast changes which have occurred in these societies and which have … rendered the "old" notions of class struggle irrelevant and obsolete' (Miliband, 1989, p. v). This is especially true, given the exceptionalism myth, of anyone writing about American history, but, as we will see, the evidence for a class analysis of the US is incontrovertible. After the historical review of the labour movement, progressivism, and populism we return to a Marxist theory of welfare states. The essay concludes with a summary of some promising theoretical perspectives, and some suggestions for future research.

Our general theme is that welfare states originate in fear, class fear. Their primary object is to prevent or contain Socialism, thereby perpetuating the economic system whose mixed performance generated the welfare state. Against claims of American exceptionalism, welfare states in all capitalist societies are vital to controlling capitalism's contradictions, which raises interesting questions about their retrenchment. Not all supporters of welfare states and regulatory reforms meant to save capitalism. Socialists and social democrats often hoped reforms and the extension of political democracy would be followed by passage from capitalism to Socialism. But in this, to date, they have been disappointed.

## The unexceptional US welfare state

Ever since Bismarck first tried to repress Socialism and, having failed, turned to welfare reforms, welfare states have reflected fear, class fear. Arguments about no Socialism in America and American 'exceptionalism' notwithstanding, the origins of the US welfare state were no less products of class struggle than those of western Europe. The denial of

class conflict and Socialism in America, despite abundant contrary evidence, compliments Marx, as if the Marxian genie once let out the damage might not be contained.

Inspired by Werner Sombart's 1906 (Sombart, 1976) *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?*, historians and social scientists have compiled a massive literature expounding the differences between the United States and western Europe and, not incidentally, impeaching Marx. Not only is the US welfare state commonly called 'belated', 'underdeveloped', and 'laggard' (Orloff, 1988, p. 37), the absence of a viable Socialist party supposedly clinches America's distinctiveness. Sombart was puzzled that in the world's most advanced capitalist society one hears there is 'absolutely no Socialism among the American working class and that those who in America pass as Socialists are a few broken-down Germans without any following' (Sombart, 1976, p. 15). He believed, with Marx, that Socialism would take root in America, but contemporary 'exceptionalists' list Socialism's continued weakness as a major embarrassment to Marxists (Lipset, 1977, pp. 32–3; Lipset and Marks, 2000).

In all the debates over exceptionalism, one question yet to be satisfactorily answered is: Why, if class, class conflict, and Socialism are of such limited significance in America, have generations of American political and economic elites, like their European counterparts, carried on so about the dangers of class conflict, and the need to enact reforms to deal with it, lest capitalism itself succumb to Socialist attacks? Miliband argued that the existence of class struggle did not require that the protagonists be aware of it in class terms (Miliband, 1989, pp. 5–6), but the striking thing about US and western European history is the degree to which political and other elites openly acknowledged class conflict and its attendant dangers as primary factors behind their decisions, producing a mother lode of primary evidence for a class analysis of their actions.

Perhaps Socialism meant something different in Europe and America. James Kloppenberg's classic analysis of the convergence of social democratic and progressive thought impeaches this explanation. Two meanings existed on both continents: socialism as an anticapitalist movement, and socialism as a reform movement. While fully cognizant of the differences between Europe and America, Kloppenberg shows how European social democrats moving socialist theory away from revolution converged with American progressives moving classic liberalism away from individualism and the self-guiding market (Kloppenberg, 1986, pp. 6–7). A comparison of the central ideas of Eduard Bernstein, Sidney

and Beatrice Webb, Léon Bourgeois, and Jean Jaurès with those of Herbert Croly, Richard Ely, Walter Rauschenbusch and Walter Lippmann confirms the similarities. Although progressives 'traveled uneasily along the border of socialism', Ely, Rauschenbusch, Lippmann, and Croly, the leading progressive theorists, all generally fit within the social democratic reform camp (Kloppenberg, 1986, pp. 298, 356–7). Kloppenberg understates the importance of class conflict in shaping progressive thought, and too readily accepts Socialism's absence as 'a distinctive fact of American history…'. (Kloppenberg, 1986, p. 7), but his work is an important corrective to exaggerated claims of American exceptionalism. In Europe, the preferred term was 'socialism' or 'social democracy', in the United States, 'progressivism' or 'liberalism'. The distinction was mostly nominal and, hence, the alleged exceptionalism of the United States was mostly fictional (for an important contribution to this debate see Resnick and Wolff, 2003, pp. 209–26).

Capitalism has been the dominant mode of production in the United States for so long, and the American dream the dominant ideology, that it is easily forgotten that it was not always so, and, perhaps, may not always be so. Three modes of production, with three corresponding ideologies, competed for dominance in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries: independent production, whose dominant ideal was the democratic dream; slavery, rooted in racism and elitism; and capitalism, whose American dream is a compromise of the democratic and elitist dreams, strongly tilted toward the latter.

The democratic dream envisioned an America of equal, independent, free, and prosperous people. America was to be the best poor person's country on earth because here people with the necessary means of production could work for themselves free from old world oppressive masters. Blacks were sold in Virginia in 1619, the year before the Pilgrims arrived, and the Puritan divines who ruled the New England colonies had no use for a democratic republic. But many ordinary people did, and so did some of the most luminous leaders of the American republic. A capitalist labour market in which most Americans were pitted against each other in a contest for a limited number of attractive jobs was for many people something new here. Franklin, Jefferson, and Madison all wrote scathing denunciations of the poverty that attended industrial capitalism in Europe, contrasting it sharply with the generally egalitarian society of independent producers they preferred for America's future (Manley, 1990, pp. 89–102).

The Jeffersonian ideal masked the poverty and dependency endured by many Americans, and was brutally contradicted by slavery, but the

transition from independent production to capitalism was nonetheless a wrenching change for millions of (mostly white) Americans, and a fundamental challenge to the previously dominant view of what the US offered immigrants and those considering emigration. The creation of new and conflicting classes, perceived by participants and observers on all sides, characterized and defined the transition, just as Marx reported for Europe. Being dependent for employment in a system which pushed those needing labour to pay as little as possible was far from the democratic dream. If labour were scarce, and the economy expanding, sellers might command a good price. But when supply grew and demand dropped, labour and the democratic promise of America were at risk. The state, facing conflict between capital and labour, vacillated between repression of labour and reform. Repression prevailed often and for long periods. But as uncontrolled class conflict grew dangerous, important segments of the state and society responded to social critics as well as to social Darwinists, out of which came proposals for reform and, ultimately, the welfare-regulatory state.

## The labour movement

Abraham Lincoln, who believed labour was prior to and independent of capital, and deserved much the higher consideration, denied that 'there is any such thing as a free man being fixed for life in the condition of a hired laborer' (Lapsley, 1906, v. 5, pp. 406–7). Lincoln spoke eloquently, but for a passing order. By 1870, the Census Bureau reported, two-thirds of American workers were employees (Montgomery, 1967, p. 449). In the mid-1870s, amid a depression which began in 1873, the United States experienced violent class conflict on a national scale. Three million Americans were unemployed; wages were cut to subsistence levels, then cut more; thousands of 'tramps' roamed the country. European visitors in the early years of the American republic were often struck by the absence of beggars and homeless on America's streets. No more. In 1877, a nationwide railway strike and the headlines it produced caught the change: 'Chicago in Possession of Communists', *New York Times*, 25 July 1887; 'Pittsburgh Sacked: The City Completely in Power of Devilish Spirit of Communism', *New York World*, 22 July 1877; 'Communists in Chicago … Thirteen Killed', *New York Tribune*, 28 July 1877 (Boyer and Morais, 1988, p. 38).[4]

In 1882, after years of turmoil, the US Senate established the Senate Committee on Labor and Capital, itself a notable creation in a supposedly classless society. The committee held hearings all over the

country, producing four thick volumes that laid out for all to see the state of class relations in America. One of the leading witnesses was a rising young labour leader, Samuel Gompers, who would soon head the American Federation of Labor. Gompers quoted the remarkably Marxist-sounding preamble to the constitution of the AFL's predecessor, saying it set forth in few words the feeling that prevailed among the working classes: 'A struggle is going on in the nations of the world between the oppressors and oppressed of all countries, a struggle between capital and labor which must grow in intensity from year to year and work disastrous results to the toiling millions of all nations if not combined for mutual protection and benefit' (US Senate Committee on Labor and Capital, 1885, v. 1, p. 376). P.J. McGuire of the Carpenters and Joiners granted that class feeling is less is small towns, but in cities one found the 'crystallization of society more and more into distinct classes, classes just as distinct as any that exist in Europe …' (*Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 358). For evidence, he cited strikes which were, in his opinion, proof 'of class war between the capitalists and the laborer … a revolt against the class rule of the capitalists…' (*Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 322).

Gompers and McGuire were labour leaders, and so might be suspected of exaggerating class conflict. It is impressive, therefore, that many other witnesses concurred. A minister told the committee, 'The shadow of the old world *proletariat* is … stealing upon our shores' (*Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 536, italics his). He offered a particularly striking phrase to explain the change. A worker now offers not 'his work, but his working' (*Ibid.*, v.2, p. 564), a sentiment echoed by a shoe cutter who called himself a 'portion of a shoemaker' (*Ibid.*, v. 3, p. 542). Gompers characterized the problem labour faced by quoting a Massachusetts manufacturer: 'I regard my employees as I do a machine, to be used to my advantage, and when they are old and of no use further use, I cast them in the street' (*Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 288).

The causes of unrest were well understood: the US had experienced a revolution in the mode of production, one that increased inequality, and exposed conflicts between labour and capital. 'We have changed from being a purely agricultural people', one witness said, 'to an industrial one, and the change has thrown our social machinery out of gear' (*Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 256). Senator George of Mississippi asked if there were no hope for a return to independent workmen working in small shops. To do this, he was told, one would have to smash machinery and turn back the wheels of industrial development (*Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 356). The committee was the beneficiary of lectures on Marxism and European Socialism, complete with dark warnings that if capital persisted in

opposing trade unions and reforms, Socialism would be the inevitable result. P.H. McLogan, representing 34 Chicago unions, drew the lesson clearly:

> … capital wants to get labor just as cheap as it can, and labor, on the contrary, wants to get as much wages as it can. Now, how you can get those interests identical I cannot conceive. They would be identical if capital would listen to the just demands of labor and concede what is reasonable, but … every reasonable advance that we have obtained as workingmen we have obtained only after fighting for it just as hard as we could (*Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 576).

Except for die-hard devotees of *laissez-faire*, witnesses agreed the system desperately needed reform. George Storm, head of one of the largest cigar-making companies in the country, spoke as the quintessential enlightened capitalist. In his view, the labour-capital question involved the 'price of safety'. If you drive fifteen or twenty million people to one side without any consideration, he argued, just because you have the power to do so, you will 'ultimately unite those people, and imagine the legislation which, if united, those people might indulge in as a matter of revenge!' (*Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 758).

Contemporary writers and academics were well aware of the dangers presented by the new mode of production. Historian Francis Parkman: 'Two enemies, unknown before have risen like spirits of darkness on our social and political horizon, an ignorant proletariat and a half-taught plutocracy' (Trachtenberg, 1982, p. 153). Charles L. Brace's 1872 *The Dangerous Classes of New York* warned that without reforms the war between capital and labour would leave New York City in ruins. Two years later, when police clubbed and trampled demonstrators in the bloody Tompkins Square riot, Brace's prediction seemed to come true. Economists offered advice. Richard T. Ely, a founder of the American Economic Association, concluded that by any definition 'we must acknowledge that we have classes in the United States' (Ghent, 1964, p. 51). Ely, a social democrat, was a leading critic of the new capitalist order. (Ely's colleague, Simon Patten, was one of the first to propose the cornucopia solution to class conflict: make the goods enjoyed by the upper class cheap enough for all. Trachtenberg, 1982, p. 151.)

Neither labour nor capital, of course, was fully united in responding to the new, industrial, urban, class-divided, frontier-shrinking America that arose after the Civil War. The first prominent post-war labour unions, the National Labor Union of William Sylvis, and T.V. Powderly's

Knights of Labor, like Marx, were more interested in abolishing the wage system than in higher wages or the eight-hour day. Both organizations, unlike the AFL, were admirably open to a variety of members, skilled and unskilled, women and blacks, but both succumbed to militant capitalist opposition, and pressing needs for immediate improvements in workers' conditions. A series of successful strikes, opposed by Powderly because they did not challenge capitalism itself, boosted the Knights membership to over 700,000 in 1886, followed by an unsuccessful strike against Jay Gould's southwest railroad, and rapid decline. The future of the American labour movement belonged to individual trade unions and, until the 1930s, to Gompers's American Federation of Labor.

Although the Knights rejected the existing industrial system, while Gompers was willing to settle for 'more', leading capitalists opened an offensive that provoked great strikes, armed and bloody conflict, and state intervention, usually, but not always, to capital's advantage. Some capitalists, whether out of duress or good sense, bargained with their workers, but most saw such demands as the eight-hour day as serious challenges to capital's prerogatives. And, indeed, they were. To labour, the eight-hour day with no reduction in pay was a way to increase its share of the wealth, end unemployment, free workers from sunrise to sunset hours, and restore the dignity (white) labour once had in republican America. When the predecessor to the AFL in 1884 called for mass strikes unless by 1 May 1886 capitalists accepted the eight-hour day, the battle was on.

As 1 May approached, sensational stories warned of the Paris Commune, communists, anarchists, and labour violence reminiscent of 1877. Strikes and demonstrations for the eight-hour day – the eight-hour madness according to the newspapers – occurred all over the country. For a class supposedly so divided as to be incapable of united action, participation by hundreds of thousands of workers was impressive. Many won the eight-hour day but as 1 May approached, thousands more struck.

Contrary to headline predictions, the demonstrations were mostly peaceful. Then, violence erupted in Chicago. Battles at the McCormick Harvester Co. involving stone-throwing strikers and strikebreakers resulted in death when police opened fire. A protest meeting was called for 4 May at Haymarket Square. This meeting, attended by the Mayor, was peaceful too, until toward the end when the police captain (John 'Clubber' Bonstein) ordered his men to disperse the dwindling crowd. Someone threw a bomb, police opened fire; eight policemen and at

least one demonstrator died. (The next day in Milwaukee, amid hysterical reports of the Haymarket affair, state militia fired into a crowd of Polish workers, killing nine.)

The state of Illinois tried eight men for murder. Only two had been present at Haymarket Square, and there was no evidence either one had thrown the bomb. Albert Parsons, an eloquent and well-known anarchist, initially escaped arrest, only to return voluntarily to stand trial and court death. Incendiary words and writings were offered as proof that the instigators were as guilty of murder as the person who threw the bomb. Four of the eight, including Parsons, were hanged (one committed suicide in prison). Capital and the state had their culprits; labour its martyrs (Roediger and Rosemont, 1986; Altgeld, 1986).

The Haymarket 'riot' presaged decades of open conflict between labour and capital. Labour protests and adamant capitalist resistance produced a series of famous and bloody confrontations: the war at Andrew Carnegie's Homestead plant in 1892, the Pullman strike of 1894, a series of bloody miners' strikes, the blowing up of the Los Angeles Times building in 1910, the 1909–10 garment workers' strike in New York City, the 1912 Lawrence, Massachusetts 'bread and roses' strike, the 1913 strike of silkworkers in Paterson, New Jersey, the 1914 Ludlow massacre (11 children and two women suffocated under burning tents), and others too numerous to mention convinced reformers something needed to be done. In 1912, President Taft proposed in his State of the Union address the establishment of a commission to investigate industrial relations. President Wilson appointed such a commission in 1913. On the basis of its studies, one writer dubbed 1910–15 the 'Age of Industrial Violence' (Adams, 1966).

While many capitalists fought unions using every means at their disposal, others counseled moderation. After sending in federal troops and breaking the 1894 Pullman strike, led by Eugene Debs, President Cleveland appointed a study commission. To George M. Pullman, the strike and proposals for arbitration violated the 'principle that a man should have the right to manage his own property' (United States Strike Commission, *Report*, 1895, p. 556). To Grover Cleveland and his Attorney General, Richard B. Olney, a former railroad lawyer and corporate board member, the strike threatened national social order (Cleveland, 1913, pp. 2–3). The *New York Times* agreed, calling the strike the 'greatest battle between labor and capital that has ever been inaugurated in the United States' (Brecher, 1972, p. 82). Other capitalists, like Ohio industrialist and Republican leader Mark Hanna, appalled by and fearful of continued violence, declared, 'A man who won't meet

his men half-way is a God-damn fool' (Williams, 1964, p. 345). To the commission, strikes, boycotts, and lockouts constituted class war. The commission, however, cleared Debs and the union of condoning violence. The report in fact, blamed the disorders on government for not controlling monopolies and corporations, and for failing to reasonably protect the 'rights of labor and redress its wrongs' (US Strike Commission, *Report*, 1895, p. xlvi). The concentration of power and wealth, the commission said, had destroyed the theory that competition for labour among many firms would protect labour's interests. Laws were needed granting unions the same rights and restrictions enjoyed by corporations (US Strike Commission, *Report*, 1895, p. xlviii).

Mark Hanna, as we will see, was instrumental in turning back another perceived threat to capital, the 1896 campaign of William Jennings Bryan, but now, after years of disruption, labour and capital for a short time pulled back from the bloody confrontations of the 1880s and 1890s. Hanna and Gompers, a class traitor to Socialists, joined together in the National Civic Federation. The 1890s depression lifted. 'Welfare capitalism', a willingness to bargain, recognize unions, and improve benefits to workers, helped cool conflict. In 1900, the Republican party again campaigned successfully as the party of prosperity and the 'full dinner pail'. Union membership soared from 868,000 in 1900 to over 2,000,000 in 1904.

When stronger unions presented demands, and the labour movement's growth stirred fears, certain elements of capital declared war. Yellow-dog contracts (employment conditional on a pledge not to join a union), labour spies, blacklists, lockouts, use of Pinkertons, court injunctions, and, especially, relief under the Sherman Antitrust Act, were back in vogue. The National Association of Manufacturers, established in 1895, led a national campaign for the open shop, a blatant effort to crush unions.

The bread-and-butter emphasis of the AFL is often cited as evidence of the temperate nature of the labour movement, but many AFL unions were in fact remarkably radical. Socialists and radicals were a constant problem for Gompers, even deposing him for a year as head of the AFL. In 1901, the United Textile Workers of America declared that society 'at present is composed of classes whose interests are highly antagonistic to each other', calling on the labouring class to set the 'power of the organized masses against the power of capitalism…'. (US Industrial Commission, *Final Report*, 1902, v. 17, p. 78). In 1900, the Brotherhood of Boiler Makers and Iron Ship Builders adopted by referendum a statement that the class struggle between the privileged

few and the disinherited masses required the 'abolition of classes, the restoration of the land and all the means of production, transportation, and distribution to the people as a collective body, and the substitution of the cooperative commonwealth for the present state…'. (US Industrial Commission, *Final Report*, 1902, v. 17, p. 228). Many other labour organizations sounded similar themes. The Industrial Workers of the World ('Wobblies') were the most radical and repressed union of the day, but they were not alone in throwing a scare into capitalists (Kimeldorf, 1999, pp. 152–8).

The courts, in particular the Supreme Court, reliably sided with capital. Gompers and the AFL continued to prefer 'volunteerism', the settlement of labour disputes privately without intervention by the (capitalist) state, an understandable strategy given historic state favouritism toward capital. But in 1906 labour was so beaten down the AFL submitted a Bill of Grievances to Congress and the President. The petition included a number of traditional demands, including exemption of unions from the Sherman Act, and injunction relief. When Congress did not respond, the AFL got involved in the 1906 congressional elections. Two years later, the Democratic party included an anti-injunction plank in its platform, while the Republicans nominated William Howard Taft, a judge well-known for issuing injunctions. The AFL endorsed the Democratic candidate, Bryan. Unlike many European unions, the AFL remained chary of overt political involvement, but in time the ties between American unions and the Democratic party grew, making the Democratic party – or at least its northern, liberal wing – an outlet for organized labour's demands.

## The progressive movement

Frequent conflict between labour and capital, just as in Europe, created a political problem. Washington could and did repress labour. But in a society that purported to be democratic, ignoring democratic pressures endangered the system's legitimacy. Fractions of capital and the state remained adamantly opposed to unions, insisting on the sanctity of property rights, but other fractions broke off and began supporting reforms. The most prominent movement in those years was progressivism, one of whose leading political figures, Theodore Roosevelt, would in 1912 split the Republican party by offering a programme remarkably like that of European social democrats.

European Socialists generally hoped to eliminate capitalism, while American progressives and liberals intended to save it. The ultimate

goal for Marx and his followers was elimination of the wage system, not higher wages and better working conditions, but labour's immediate demands were nevertheless supported by Socialists. Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels, 1976a) and elsewhere endorsed a variety of reforms pending capitalism's demise. While holding out the promise of revolution, the *Parti Socialiste Francais* in 1902 endorsed 54 specific reforms. Like Marx and Engels, many on the left did not see immediate reform as necessarily antithetical to eventual revolution. In any case, reforms were politically popular, and thus hard for left political activists to resist.

Among the many books examining American progressivism, Herbert Croly's classic *The Promise of American Life* stands out. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in his introduction to the 1965 edition of Croly's book, notes a striking parallel between it and Winston S. Churchill's *Liberalism and the Social Problem* which predicted that if nothing were done about the gap between rich and poor the result would be 'savage strife between class and class…' (Croly, 1965, p. xxiii). Croly drew the contrast between the America of Jefferson, with its democratic dream, and capitalist America. A generation ago, he wrote, a man's poverty could reasonably be considered his own fault. Now, with huge corporations, mergers, and trusts the 'discontented poor are beginning to charge their poverty to an unjust political and economic organization, and reforming agitators do not hesitate to support them in this contention' (Croly, 1965, p. 20). Croly simplistically blamed the individualist legacy of Thomas Jefferson for the undue concentration of wealth and income. He did not believe the concentration of economic power was wholly undesirable. Nor, he argued, did the men holding such power deserve exceptional moral condemnation. But the abuses of concentrated wealth had to be addressed by government, lest the promise of American life, and the system itself, be destroyed.

Croly's judgment was shared by the labour leaders, capitalists, and politicians who formed the National Civic Federation (NCF). Some capitalists, like Henry Clay Frick, would smash every union in the country if they could, but others saw folly in such an approach. To NCF head Ralph Easley, the enemy included Socialists among workers and 'anarchists among capitalists' (Weinstein, 1968, pp. xi, 11). He and the NCF also encouraged 'welfare capitalism', the provision of social benefits (controlled by capitalists) to workers as another way to defuse class conflict. The NCF drew support from Gompers, Mark Hanna, August Belmont, Elihu Root, President Taft, and others. J.P. Morgan kept in touch. These men, Weinstein observes, were 'fully class conscious'

(Weinstein, 1968, p. 105). Others, like the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), thought the way to deal with the class problem was to wage war on the NCF as well as on the un-American labour movement. To NAM President David Parry, 'The labor question is a conflict between two antagonistic and opposing systems of political economics' (Green, 1956, p. 105). To such men, crushing organized labour, not appeasing it, was the answer.

Croly's book was written with Theodore Roosevelt (TR) in mind. Croly regarded TR as a modern-day Alexander Hamilton who could adapt capitalism to a new era without repeating Hamilton's mistake of arraying capitalism against democracy (Croly, 1914, pp. 23, 28). Roosevelt had not always been so enlightened. During the 1890s, TR opined that the 'sentiment now animating a large proportion of our people can only be suppressed, as the Commune in Paris was suppressed, by taking ten or a dozen of their leaders out, standing … them against a wall and shooting them dead' (Woodward, 1963, p. 305). When Illinois Governor John Peter Altgeld sacrificed his political career by pardoning the three Haymarket 'rioters' who had escaped the gallows, TR warned him not to substitute for the government of Washington and Lincoln a red government of lawlessness as vicious as the Paris Commune (Josephson, 1938, p. 700). By the time he became President, however, TR believed the gravest danger confronting the United States was class conflict. He never tired of warning that it must be addressed, not just repressed, and he offered a reform programme to meet the emergency.

TR in effect appointed himself the Paul Revere of class conflict in the United States. In 1902, his opening message warned Congress 'to remember that any kind of class animosity in the political world is, if possible, even more wicked, even more destructive to national welfare than sectional, race, or religious animosity'. 'The greatest and most dangerous rock in the republic', he said in 1905, 'is the rock of class hatred'. In an address entitled 'The Spirit of Class Antagonism' in Little Rock he said, 'Distrust more than any other man in this Republic the man who would try to teach America to substitute loyalty to any class for loyalty to the whole American people.' During his 1912 Progressive campaign for the Presidency, having taken an assassin's bullet and shown the crowd where it hit, he warned of the day when the creed of the have-nots is arraigned against the creed of the haves, for then such incidents will be commonplace. Reform, he said time after time, is the antidote to revolution and the preventive of Socialism. Reactionaries and ultra conservative apologists for the misuse of wealth, he said, claim reforms were a step toward Socialism. But it is 'they who are

themselves most potent in increasing socialistic feeling'. (See respectively Griffith, 1971, pp. 190, 271, 316, 461, 752–3.)

Writing a script his distant cousin, Franklin Roosevelt, would later follow, TR presented the state as the honest broker between labour and capital. The 1912 Progressive party platform, in fact, reads like a précis of the social democratic platforms of Europe. Prohibition of child labour, the eight-hour day for women and the young, safety and health protection for workers, social insurance for sickness, old age, and unemployment, and a graduated inheritance tax were all included (Johnson and Porter, 1973, pp. 175–8). Nationalization of the means of production was missing, but with this major exception there was little separating Roosevelt-style American progressivism and European social democracy.

Croly, Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and many others around the turn of the century lived through momentous changes in the modes of production and associated political crises. Not only had it taken a bloody civil war to destroy slavery, a new and threatening mode of production, capitalism, with a host of large, powerful corporations and factories, and a massive working class, had revolutionized American life. Roosevelt was fond of pointing out that when the Constitution was written in 1787 there were no giant corporations of the sort that dominated the economy in 1900. He believed capitalism needed to be saved from unscrupulous rich men and reactionary adherents of *laissez-faire*. Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic beneficiary of the 1912 split in the Republican party, agreed on the danger, but offered a somewhat different solution.

Two years into his presidency, Wilson wrote a remarkable letter to William Gibbs McAdoo, his Secretary of the Treasury. Just a few years earlier, Wilson noted, those with power were 'almost universally looked upon with suspicion', and in turn 'seemed to distrust the people and to wish to limit their control'. There was, he continued, an 'ominous antagonism between classes. Capital and labor were in sharp conflict without prospect of accommodation between them' (Cronon, 1965, p. 245).

The cause? Wilson's answer sounded a lot like Marx. 'Nothing is done in the country as it was done twenty years ago. We are in the presence of a new organization of society.... We have changed our economic conditions, absolutely, from top to bottom; and, with it our economic society, the organization of our life' (Tipple, 1970, p. 11). A month before he took the oath as President, Wilson wrote in the *Fortnightly Review*: 'The masters of the government of the United States are the combined capitalists and manufacturers of the United States' (Baker and Dodd, 1925–27, v. 1, p. 78). As the end of his life neared,

Wilson expressed doubt about whether reforms were sufficient. In an article entitled 'The Road Away from Revolution', he named capitalism as the target of the Russian revolution and the system against which 'the discontented classes everywhere draw their indictment'. Why? Because capitalists had too often regarded men as mere instruments of profit, provoking the present turbulence (Wilson, 1923, pp. 145–6). To which Marx might have said, capitalists can do no other for they command a system that turns on the never-ending expansion of surplus value produced by workers.

To progressives like Wilson and TR, social reform was the antidote to Socialism. They lived at a time when Harvard historian Albert Bushnell Hart could reasonably predict in a letter to the *New York Times* that without reform there would someday be a Socialist President of the United States. The way to avoid that, he advised, was to 'take over the reasonable part of the Socialist programme' (Weinstein, 1968, p. 170).

Wilson and TR differed over how much reform was reasonable. TR delighted in picturing both Wilson and Taft in 1912 as candidates of the 'Wall Street interests' representing the 'allied reactionaries of the country…' (Griffith, 1971, p. 761). Such plain talk earned him the epithet 'class traitor', but in truth he hated Socialism, which he associated with the denial of individualism, free love, the community of women, and 'softness'. Wilson presented his programme in 1912 to the Economic Club in New York City as a milder, constructive alternative to Socialism (Sklar, 1970, p. 92). In 1916, with social unrest still strong, Wilson ran for re-election (falsely) claiming to have enacted the Progressive party platform.

From the left, of course, intramural differences among progressive reformers are less important than the underlying purpose of reform: preventing more radical change. As Martin J. Sklar writes, reform movements were often led by representatives of large corporate interests and political and intellectual leaders intent on accommodating the country to the 'new corporate business structure and its requirements, domestic and foreign' (Sklar, 1970, p. 86). The effort succeeded not because of the absence of Socialism or class conflict in America, but because enough of the Socialist programme, as in Europe, was adopted to save capitalism, despite, ironically, fierce opposition from many capitalists.

## Populism

Before progressivism, there was populism. It too was rooted in class conflict; many populists seriously challenged capitalism; and the

radical elements of the movement sorely tested the ability of the state to mediate social conflict.

Jefferson's yeoman republic came crashing down in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s as independent producers were supplanted by factories and yeoman farmers were dragged or lured into the capitalist market economy. When farm production rose, and prices fell, millions of farmers saw their way of life face extinction, and they fought back.

Populist Senator William A. Peffer clearly understood the basic problem. Going back half a century, he said, people generally owned their own shops and dwellings. 'The wagon-maker, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the shoemaker, the tailor, the bricklayer, the stonemason [were] all scattered about among the farmers.' Now a regimented work force marches to work at the ringing of a bell, and is practically as much a machine as the machines they attend. A 'merciless power', he wrote, makes labour a commodity. 'We are steadily becoming a nation of hired men'; the same fate awaited debt-ridden American farmers (Pollock, 1967, pp. 82–7).

Populism's class content was downplayed by an earlier generation of historians, including John D. Hicks and Richard Hofstadter, but later studies powerfully challenged the Hicks-Hofstadter interpretation (Hicks, 1961, p. 124; Hofstadter, 1960, pp. 10, 121–3; Goodwyn, 1978, p. 334; Hahn, 1983). As early as 1877, Texas farmers who formed an organization that would become the Farmers Alliance warned the day 'is rapidly approaching when all the balance of labor's products become concentrated into the hands of the few, there to constitute a power that would enslave posterity' (Goodwyn, 1978, p. 33). Southern Populist Tom Watson asked: 'What is capital and what is labor? Originally, they were the same. There was a time when there was no capital. There never was a time when there was no labor.' The men who work for wages, the *Alliance-Independent* wrote in 1894, 'must earn their wages and more, that is, a profit for their employers; and if a capitalist stands behind the employer the wage earners must earn another profit for him'. A Nebraska farmer agreed: 'The farmers know well that if they had got the benefit of everything they have produced since they have been farming, there would be no need for them to be in debt now. The laborer knows that if he had been paid the value of his services he could now have a home of his own' (Pollock, 1967, pp. 15, 39, 424). A North Carolina editor asked: 'Did the stockholders throw up the embankments? Did they make the ties, lay the rails, or string the wires?' (Palmer, 1984, p. 16).

As these quotations show, populists had a home-grown labour theory of value, and, although primarily an agrarian movement, they reached

out to urban workers in an effort to forge a counter to their common enemy: corporate capitalism, the 'money power', Wall Street. Their ultimate solution was radical: a shift from capitalism to a labour-based 'cooperative commonwealth'. Populism was a national movement, but the northern and southern wings were not identical. By and large, southern populists were more radical, more inclined to think in structural terms, and less inclined toward such panaceas as monetary reform. When they came together to forge a political programme, however, they spoke the same language: class.

The populists drafted their platform in 1892 in St. Louis. Ignatius Donnelly's preamble left no doubt that this was to be a working-class movement. 'The urban workmen', he wrote, 'are denied the right of organization for self-protection; imported pauperized labor beats down their wages; a hireling standing army [Pinkertons], unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down, and they are rapidly degenerating to European conditions'. Populism's basic principles, he continued, are, 'First, We declare the union of the labor forces of the United States this day accomplished permanent and perpetual.... Second, Wealth belongs to him who creates it. Every dollar taken from industry without an equivalent is robbery.... The interests of rural and urban labor are the same, their enemies are identical' (Hicks, 1961, pp. 435–7).

Unfortunately, organized labour was preoccupied with the hard resistance of Henry Clay Frick, Andrew Carnegie and others. Gompers was focused on organizing skilled workers, not the less skilled, and had no interest in an alliance with those he saw as *employing* farmers (Pollock, 1967, p. 64). Weakened by the 1893 depression, and divided along native, racial, immigrant and many other lines, workers were poor candidates for cooperation with populists. Yet, before populism subsided, it mounted a strong attack on *laissez-faire* capitalism, an attack that peaked in the presidential election of 1896, sowing seeds of welfare state reforms that later came to fruition.

Conservatives were understandably alarmed when James B. Weaver, the People's Party candidate for President, received a million votes in 1892. Populist governors were elected in Kansas, North Dakota, and Colorado. Hundreds of populists were elected to state and local offices. Populist sentiment for a graduated income tax to reduce the power of the plutocracy backed the 1894 income tax law. This was a modest affair, imposing a 2% tax on incomes over $4,000, but it triggered near panic in certain quarters. Senator Sherman denounced this attempt to array the poor against the rich as 'socialism, communism, devilism'.

Justice Field, who led the Supreme Court in rejecting the law, warned that the 'present assault upon capital is just the beginning. It will be but the stepping stone to other larger and more sweeping till our political condition will become a war of the poor against the rich'. The New York *Sun* praised the Court for stopping what it called the 'wave of socialist revolution…' (Beard, 1914, pp. 141, 154–5, 157).

In this setting, Mark Hanna cut short his vacation when he heard the Democrats in 1896 had nominated William Jennings Bryan for President. Hanna felt that with 'this communistic spirit abroad the cry of "free silver" will be catching' (Coletta, 1964, v. 1, p. 162). The issue of gold vs. silver hardly exhausted the populist programme, but when the Democratic platform condemned the 1873 demonetization of silver for increasing the value of gold, decreasing farm prices, and enriching the 'money-lending class', class emerged squarely in the centre of a presidential election.

No one understood this better than Hanna and the Republican candidate, William McKinley. McKinley warned of class conflict throughout the campaign: 'It is a cause for painful regret and solicitude that an effort is being made by those high in the counsels of the allied parties [Democratic and People's] to divide the people of this country into classes and create distinctions among us …. Every effort made to array class against class, "the classes against the masses", sections against sections, labor against capital, "the poor against the rich", or interest against interest in the United States is in the highest degree reprehensible' (Beard, 1914, p. 168).

Republicans were not the only ones worried. Democratic Senator Vilas of Wisconsin thought the free coinage of silver tantamount to 'the confiscation of one half of the credits of the nation for the benefit of debtors', and he warned darkly of the French Revolution, Marat, Danton, and Robespierre (Beard, 1914, p. 179). Sound Money parades in the heart of gold country, New York City, employer threats that if Bryan were elected workers need not report for work, and charges of record-setting vote fraud make 1896 a milestone in the history of class politics in America.

McKinley and Hanna turned back the threat by just 500,000 votes out of 13 million. Theodore Roosevelt attributed Bryan's defeat to fear, class fear. In his autobiography, TR wrote that the Democratic platform promised such disaster that businessmen, wage-earners, and the professional classes turned eagerly to the Republican party (Roosevelt, 1913, p. 297). Direct assaults on the money supply constituted a grave enough challenge to finance capital and others that extraordinary

efforts were mounted to defeat it. It is not a little ironic, however, that in just a few years TR would be challenging the system on behalf of broader populist-progressive social reforms, with both major parties competing for progressive votes.

## The welfare state and political parties

Populism and progressivism undermined late 19th century *laissez-faire* capitalism and the dominant ideology of social Darwinism that supported it. Herbert Spencer in England, and his epigone in the United States, William Graham Sumner, idealized upward mobility for people of ability who worked hard, coupled with the idea that the public good was best served by maximum individual competition and minimum government intervention in the market (Hofstadter, 1955). The novels of Horatio Alger popularized themes that still resonate today. The political problem was the disconnect between the dominant ideology and the lives of millions of people who toiled in factories and on farms. Fabulous wealth was accumulated by some poor boys who made good; others turned for help to collective action, unions, Socialism, and the state.

This interpretation conflicts with commonly heard arguments, even from the left, that Socialism has been so weak in the US as to be virtually nonexistent. James Weinstein, for example, writes that everybody 'recognizes the United States as the only industrialized nation in the world with no significant movement for socialism'. Even in the 1930s, he continues, 'socialism remained the property of small and isolated groups' (Weinstein, 1984, p. xi). Weinstein grants the Socialist Party of America some importance in the early 20th century, but most observers, impressed by the absence of an electorally powerful Socialist party, miss the impact of Socialism on American public policy. C.T. Husbands, for example, in his introduction to Sombart, says: 'Even when the question posed by Sombart is reduced to seeking reasons for the lack of Social Democracy in the United States, it nevertheless still requires answering. No amount of apologies or quibbling about deviant cases can really contradict the hard fact that social-democratic attitudes, let alone a successful political party representing these attitudes, did not take permanent root in the United States' (Husbands, 1976, p. xix).

Trace elements of the liberal-social democratic welfare state, such as Civil War pensions, can be found early in US history, but the late 19th century, in the US and Europe, was a particularly rich time for attacks on capitalism, and efforts to reform it. In 1892, the People's

Party proposed government ownership of the railroads, telegraph, and telephone industries, and the transfer to actual settlers of all land held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs. Four years later, the Party denounced 'corporate monopolies' and, in appealing to labour, proposed that in times of depression, idle labour should be employed by government on public works (Johnson and Porter, 1973, pp. 90–1, 106). The Democratic Party platform of 1892 was a mild affair compared to the populists', but it did attack trusts and combinations as designed 'to enable capital to secure more than its just share of the joint product of Capital and Labor…' (Johnson and Porter, 1973, p. 87).

The Democratic party responded slowly to the demands of labour in the 1890s. By 1900 the Republican party, the usually reliable ally of business, was moved to condemn monopolies. By 1904 class conflict was so intense the nation's second major capitalist party, the Democrats, sermonized that capital and labour ought not to be enemies. 'Each is necessary to the other', they said, but the 'rights of labor are certainly no less "needed", no less "sacred", and no less "inalienable" than the rights of capital' (Johnson and Porter, 1973, p. 132). Republicans replied that combinations of capital and labour are the results of the 'economic movement of this age', and, when lawful, deserve the protection of the laws (Johnson and Porter, 1973, p. 139).

American party platforms are often dismissed as notoriously poor predictors of future policy; something to get in rather than stand on. No amount of research by political scientists showing that platform promises often make their way into public policy is likely to dispel the cynical view. But there is another important aspect of platforms: they serve as markers of new political forces and shifts in old balances of political power. And, as we have seen, class considerations are hardly absent from American party politics.

## Reform and repression: getting the mix right

Capitalist states do not rely only on reforms to control class conflict; they repress it. In 1916, Wilson presented one face of the state when he told the American Federation of Labor the purpose of his reforms was to get rid not only of any class division in this country 'but of any class consciousness and feeling' (Baker and Dodd, 1925–7, v. 1, p. 408). The great task, he told the AFL on another occasion, is to educate capital on the realities of labour. If this were done, class understanding would grow, and America would be spared destructive class conflict

(Baker and Dodd, 1925–7, v. 1, pp. 223–4). If the 'chief cloud' on the domestic horizon, the 'unsatisfactory relations of capital and labor', could be lifted, Wilson envisioned 'the triumphant development of American enterprise throughout the world' (Baker and Dodd, 1925–7, v. 1, pp. 302, 310). It is no small irony that confronted by labour uprisings during and after the war, revolution in Russia, and the manifest failure of reforms to quell labour unrest, Wilson the liberal peacemaker opted for repression.

War, Winston Churchill once said, is not good for liberals, but it proved disastrous to US leftists. Wilson's strategy for maintaining war production was threefold: 1) repress antiwar dissent; 2) court Gompers who, with Easley, created the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy to win labour support for war; and 3) spread government-directed propaganda led by George Creel working closely with Gompers and pro-war progressives to shore up ideological support for the war. Creel perfectly understood that war had latent domestic value: 'When I think of the many voices that were heard before the war and are still heard interpreting America from a class or sectional or selfish standpoint, I am not sure that, if the war had to come, it did not come at the right time for the preservation and reinterpretation of American ideals' (Montgomery, 1987, p. 331).

Prime targets were people who opposed participation in the war, in particular socialists and anarchists and such radical unions as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Wilson's Postmaster General seized *The Masses*, *The Appeal to Reason* (circulation 500,000), the *International Socialist Review*, and dozens of other publications. Congress refused to give Wilson the power of direct press censorship in the 1917 Espionage Act, but this act and others effectively squelched antiwar expression. Thousands of socialists, Wobblies, anarchists, and other vocal antiwar activists were arrested and jailed. Weinstein estimates that virtually the entire leadership of the IWW was imprisoned for their opinions (Weinstein, 1968, p. 236). When local authorities were slow in rounding up alleged traitors, vigilante groups emerged. In Bisbee, Arizona striking copper miners were rousted from their beds at gunpoint, taken in cattle cars to the desert, left without food or water, and threatened with death should they return home. Socialists Kate Richards O'Hare, Rose Pastor Stokes, and Scott Nearing were already in jail when, in June 1918, Debs spoke out against the war. Charged with ten violations of the Sedition Act, he was sentenced to ten years in prison, where he sat until Warren Harding, not Wilson, freed him.

The Bolshevik victory in Russia, followed by Russia's withdrawal from the war, fueled a red scare exceeding that of 1886. A 1918 *New*

*York Times* headline expressed the hysteria: 'Thug With a Rifle Russia's New Czar: Refugee Tells of Murder and Robbery Under Bolsheviks – Rule of Criminals: Bourgeoisie Burned Alive: Men Whose Only Crime Was Decency Herded Together and Drowned to Make a Holiday' (Kovel, 1994a, p. 14).

Wilson sent American troops to aid the Whites in the Russian civil war, but domestic communists proved easier targets. Communists were blamed for serious race riots in Washington, D.C., Chicago, and East St. Louis, and for stirring up labour unrest virtually everywhere. By 1920, Murray Levin reports, 35 states plus Alaska and Hawaii had peacetime sedition or criminal syndicalist laws, under which free speech for 'radicals' was suspended (Levin, 1971, p. 63). Thirty-two states and several cities passed Red Flag laws banning display of communism's symbol. In New York, five socialist assemblymen were expelled from the legislature as 'little Lenins and Trotskys', a move praised by the *New York Times*. When re-elected, three were again expelled; two resigned. Socialist Victor Berger, denied his seat in the House of Representatives, was re-elected, only to have the House again refuse to seat him. Loyalty oaths for teachers were effective muzzles. And then there were the Palmer raids.

A. Mitchell Palmer, Wilson's Attorney General, presidential-aspirant, and Quaker, established a General Intelligence division in the Justice Department under J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover compiled the index cards on which the Palmer raids were based. In January 1920, thousands of people were arrested in 33 cities, followed by the deportation of hundreds of aliens (including Emma Goldman and Frick's assailant, Alexander Berkman). Arrests without warrants, beatings, and incarcerations in sub-human facilities ultimately led to a reaction against Palmer. Wilson, who often lent his prestige to Palmer, finally joined Fiorella La Guardia in expressing concern that such tactics might do more to create radicalism than contain it. By the summer of 1920, the raids were over; so was A. Mitchell Palmer's political career.

Serious outbreaks of class conflict fed anti-Bolshevik hysteria and the red scare. Gompers and other labour leaders took a no-strike pledge when the US entered the war, but they could not control workers fed up with conditions and smart enough to see an opportunity. In 1916–18, over twice as many workers (on average) went on strike as in 1915 (Brecher, 1972, p. 103). Unions grew by about two million members. When wartime price controls were lifted, and the cost of living shot up, workers launched some of the bitterest strikes in US history.

One of the fiercest conflicts occurred in the steel industry. Most steelworkers worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week, with an occasional Sunday off. They lived in crowded company hovels. Tuberculosis, infant mortality, and other 'poverty diseases' were rampant. Men burned out by age 40. When they looked to unions, they were fired. In 1919, with a national strike looming, Judge Elbert Gary, head of US Steel, refused to discuss these issues with the union. Citing his rights as a capitalist, he saw the strike as a first step toward establishing soviets in the United States.

In September 1919, 350,000 steelworkers, most of them immigrants, went on strike. William Z. Foster, who led the AFL unionization drive (and later the Communist party) estimated that Allegheny County, Pennsylvania had 50,000 deputies under arms (Brecher, 1972, p. 123). Clashes between strikers and local authorities soon followed. In Gary, Indiana, public meetings were banned, the National Guard occupied the city, and the strike was broken. Violent strikes in the steel industry were not unusual. Three years earlier in Youngstown, Ohio workers attacked property after Republic Steel guards opened fire on them. The National Guard was called in to restore order, shot 20 workers, killing three. Four months later, striking steelworkers in and around Pittsburgh were fired on by company guards. After two workers were killed a furious crowd destroyed several plants. Troops were sent in, strike leaders were arrested, and the strike broken.

Steel was a spectacular case of labour-capital conflict, but it was only one of many in 1919. In Boston, the police struck when their union leaders were fired. Amid talk of revolution – the *Wall Street Journal* said Lenin and Trotsky were on their way – and some looting, the state guard occupied the city, the entire police force was fired, and a threatened general strike called off. In several cities, mostly immigrant textile workers – 120,000 strong – successfully struck for shorter hours.

People who worried about labour-capital conflict and capitalism's future in these years were not necessarily alarmists or paranoid. Far more violence was inflicted on workers than initiated by them (Sexton, 1991), but not all workers were pacifists who would never dream of attacking their enemies. Two brothers did confess to blowing up the *Los Angeles Times* building. Someone threw a bomb at a parade in San Francisco, killing ten people and wounding 40. Alexander Berkman did break into Henry Clay Frick's office after the Homestead strike, shoot him and stab him, and spend 15 years in prison. A bomb did explode outside A. Mitchell Palmer's house. A 1919 clash between Wobblies and American legionnaires in Centralia, Washington did result in three

dead legionnaires, after which a mob seized Wesley Everest from jail, hung his body from a bridge while he pleaded for death, castrated him, and let his corpse rot there. Capitalists did hire Pinkertons as private armies. Something like industrial war broke out often in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

## Competing approaches to the state

Neither Miliband nor Poulantzas, and certainly not Marx, would be surprised by evidence of class conflict and repression in the world's leading capitalist country. With capitalism's advance – often pushed by the state, very much as Miliband suggested – open class conflict became a staple of American politics. Most state officials favoured capital; others sided with labour; while others sought compromise. Outbreaks of intense class struggle grew, then subsided, only to erupt again, making class issues a commonplace of the state's agenda. Courts issued injunctions. Troops cracked workers' heads. Private armies and gun thugs patrolled factories and mines. And welfare state reforms and regulations were passed, just as in Europe. Granting the central role played by the state in managing capitalism's internal conflicts, are welfare states best thought of as largely autonomous institutions making policy relatively independently of socioeconomic influences, or as open systems so connected to socioeconomic influences that most political decisions cannot be understood apart from other influences?

Marx's political theory emanated from his theory of society, which asked: how do societies produce or otherwise obtain the necessities of life? Living at a time of industrial revolution and capitalism's production breakthroughs, Marx looked at what people had to work with – the means or forces of production – and at the social relations established as people went about using these forces to produce the necessities (and niceties) of life. Marx was not oblivious to how products were distributed, or to the market, but before goods could be distributed, they had to be produced. The forces of production were basic, but inextricably linked to the social or class relations of production.

In Marx's day, slavery and independent production were on the way out, and capitalism was ascendant, so he concentrated on capitalism and its leading antagonist, Socialism or communism. He saw that the *sine qua non* of capitalism was the extraction of surplus value from labour, which created several problems, most especially a political problem. Capital's illimitable appetite for surplus value, and labour's resistance, created an objective conflict or contradiction that Marx felt

would in time fulfill his fondest hope, capitalism's transcendence. The same hope infused Miliband's work.

When capitalism did not implode, when the working class fell short of his expectations, Marx asked why; and he came up with two main reasons. As against Adam Smith's hidden hand, the state might intervene in the economy if the subordinate class became sufficiently insubordinate and threatening to capital's prerogatives, its share of surplus value, and the system's survival. Second, capital's thirst for surplus labour might be curbed to ensure the system's stability and legitimacy. What Marx called capital's 'monstrous exactions' – the 'were-wolf's hunger for surplus labour' – led to reforms and regulations lest the ill-feeling among classes erode social order (making business impossible) (Marx, 1967, v. 1, pp. 243, 252). A third factor, repression of labour, was, as we have seen, often employed, but repression, with the advance of political democracy, was a weak long-term solution. By and large, Marx was hopeful that the extension of political democracy would strengthen labour's hand *vis-à-vis* capital.

Capitalist states exist in class-riven societies. However partial the state toward capitalism, it is perilous to ignore labour or take it lightly. Liberal democratic states include representatives of both capital and labour; the state incorporates the class struggle within itself. If capital fails to satisfy pressing needs, if restive workers become class conscious, or if the system falls into recession or worse, demands for state intervention may be impossible to resist.

If for Marx capitalism's fall was simply a matter of automatic internal laws there would have been little reason for him to take political action seriously. In analysing the class struggle in France, however, he saw universal (male) suffrage as putting political power in the hands of oppressed classes which, as the working class grew, might 'jeopardize the very foundation of bourgeois society' (Marx, 1964, p. 70). In the *Manifesto*, he and Engels associated the Communists with other proletarian parties seeking the 'conquest of political power by the proletariat' (McLellan, 2000, p. 256). Communists were advised to fight for the immediate demands of the working class (free education, abolition of child labour, etc.), not wait for capitalism to collapse by itself.

Marx did not see welfare-state reforms as necessarily antithetical to revolution. He praised the passage of the ten-hour reform bill and other labour demands (McLellan, 2000, p. 574). Abstention from politics, he said, was dangerous and fatal (Tucker, 1978, p. 523). He did not think reforms would be sufficient to make capitalism tolerable, and he thought force would usually be necessary for revolution, but he named

America, England, and perhaps Holland as countries where workers might obtain their goals peacefully (McLellan, 2000, p. 643). In one of his last writings, Engels praised the electoral achievements of social democracy, declaring rebellion in the old style – street fighting with barricades – now generally obsolete as 'revolutionists' were thriving better on legal methods than illegal ones (Marx, 1964, pp. 19–21).

In the last 20 years or so, Theda Skocpol and her associates have developed a theory of the state that bolsters exceptionalism's stress on the limited significance of class and class conflict in America. Skocpol's lamentably influential lead essay in *Bringing the State Back In* critiques Marx and neo-Marxists, along with pluralists and structure-functionalists, for being overly concerned with society-centred explanations (classes, interest groups, etc.) at the expense of the independent ability of states to shape policy and society (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol, 1985, pp. 4–6). She grants that Marxists may be right that classes and class tension are always present in industrial societies, but 'the political expression of class interests and conflicts is never automatic or economically determined'. The structures and activities of states 'profoundly condition' the political capacities of classes, she argues, concluding that 'the classical wisdom of Marxian political sociology must be turned if not on its head, than certainly on its side' (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol, 1985, p. 25).

Skocpol extended her critique to two political class struggle theories. She faults welfare capitalism, which stresses the role of corporate capitalists in advancing social policy, and the social democratic or political class struggle approach for deflecting attention from other socio-economic forces that shape policy-making. The once vital power of agricultural interests in Congress, the role of middle class women in passing laws benefiting American women and children in the early 20th century, and the importance of race and ethnicity are cited as equally or more telling in explaining public policy than industrial class conflicts. However much class struggle theories apply to European societies, she describes the United States as exceptional in its lack of a centralized bureaucratic state, programmatic political parties, or a well-organized working class (Skocpol, 1995, pp. 17–19).

Skocpol's argument that scholars should not privilege society-centred factors over the independence and autonomy of the state has been attacked for ignorance of the long history of mainstream literature stressing the autonomy of state managers and the power of the state to intervene socially (Almond, 1988, p. 863).[5] Her distinction between society-centred and state-centred research has also been attacked as simple-minded (Jessop, 1990, p. 285). The distinction is clearly open to the charge that it

exaggerates the autonomy and independence of the state from social forces so obviously represented and influential within the state. Scores of observers of the US national policy-making process have been struck by the close working relationship between state officials and those affected by state decisions. State officials play an important role in initiating, drafting, and enacting public policy, but a model of the state as intimately connected to society-centred interests comes closer to the reality in Washington, D.C. than a model drawing sharp lines between them. And, of course, even independent state officials anticipate the reactions of those likely to be affected by their decisions.[6]

The institutional model is also open to more basic objections. It caricatures Marx to see him as so fixated on the economy that he understated the importance of other social influences. Even in volume three of Capital, where Marx says the extraction of surplus labour out of the direct producers determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, revealing the innermost secret of the entire social structure and the specific form of the state, he adds immediately that 'the same economic basis ... due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., [shows] infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances' (Marx, 1967, v. 3, pp. 71–92).

Marx was, of course, not alone in conceptualizing capitalism in class terms, while allowing for the influence of other factors. Adam Smith also drew attention to the structural importance of class inequality in capitalist societies, and how this biased the state:

> The workmen desire to get as much, the masters to give as little as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter in order to lower the wages of labour. It is not, however, difficult to foresee which of the two parties, upon all ordinary occasions, have the advantage in the dispute, and force the other into a compliance with their terms. The masters, being fewer in number, can combine much more easily; and the law, besides, authorises, or at least does not prohibit their combinations, while it prohibits those of the workmen (Smith, 1973, pp. 74–5).

Smith added that although masters rarely combined, they had a tacit but shared interest not to raise wages above a certain level. Their class interest, in other words, did not require a class-conscious organization to have an effect, but should the clamor of labour grow too strong, the

masters did not hesitate to call on the state to enforce the laws protecting capital's privilege (Smith, 1973, pp. 75–6).

Perhaps most important, a focus on state autonomy deflects attention from the relationship between capitalism and liberal democratic states. The American working class has not been sufficiently class conscious and organized to overturn capitalism, but, as in western Europe, people in positions of power have been sufficiently alarmed to enact a variety of reforms and regulatory mechanisms to contain the perceived danger. In the US, as elsewhere, the welfare state emerged with the rise of capitalism and serious opposition to it.

It is also remarkable that for the last third of the 20th century and continuing into the 21st century, western welfare states have variously experienced an epoch of retrenchment. The power of workers throughout the 'late' capitalist world has contracted. Roll-backs have been the order of the day. Not all states have cut back to the same extent or in the same ways, but the pressure to retrench has been widely felt, and is inexplicable apart from developments and imperatives within capitalist societies.

The retrenchment of welfare-regulatory states, and its complement, freer reign for market competition between unevenly matched opponents, illustrates the vagaries of class conflict in capitalist societies, and the fact that the state does not and cannot even-handedly favour all groups equally. As Bertell Ollman argues, one job of the capitalist state is to promote social and political order, which favours reforms, but there is a contradictory, systemic bias to ensure capital accumulation, which inclines the state to favour some groups over others (Ollman, 1993, pp. 94–101). Debates over state autonomy miss the rich body of Marxist theories of the state which argue that, depending on historical conditions, and on the angle of vision, capitalist states may be seen as essentially instruments of the capitalist class (but not necessarily subservient to any particular group), an objective structure performing crucial political-economic functions, an arena of class struggle, an institution that fosters an illusory community amidst an alienated society, or as an institution ensuring capital's continual hegemony through the promotion of liberal domestic ideological values and beliefs (Ollman, 1993, pp. 89–93, 149–59). All of these perspectives on the state have much to offer compared to a narrowly focused debate over the autonomy or lack thereof of state officials.

## Conclusion

Our account of the US affirms Miliband's class analysis of capitalist states in *Divided Societies* over that of such eminent exceptionalists as

Seymour Martin Lipset. Liberal democrats and social democrats, backed by labour, enacted demands into programmes, but when economic exigencies seem to require it, welfare states are cut back, especially for those who can least afford it (Miliband, 1989, p. 73). In Miliband's work, social policy constitutes 'a crucial terrain of class struggle' in which state interventions take two distinct forms. One seeks to attenuate popular grievances, and thereby contain pressure from below. The other limits the scope and substance of social policies to those that are consonant with 'capitalist rationality and the predominance of the market' (Miliband, 1989, pp. 131–2). The pattern is dialectical: periods of intense class conflict favouring welfare states are followed by periods of renewed capital ascendancy and welfare cut backs, which, in turn, are supplanted as the balance of class power changes, almost as if there is something to the idea that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Miliband was also clear that while the state is often compelled to seek a compromise in the class struggle to defend the stability of the capitalist social order, the welfare state, its associated political parties, and trade unions seeking only 'more' have effectively blocked for over 150 years the revolution envisioned by Marx and Engels. As Miliband put it, social reform 'has been an intrinsic part of the politics of capitalism, and those who have supported it have not only not been concerned to advance towards socialism but have on the contrary seen in social reform an essential prophylactic against it' (Miliband, 1977b, p. 155).

Capitalist politics, as Miliband knew, revolved around a capitalist class divided into many conflicting 'fractions', a working class divided similarly, and a state to match. Unlike classical pluralists who saw these divisions as an argument negating class, Miliband, like Marx, was not blinded by the complexity of class struggle to the point of denying the existence of classes, while affirming the objectivity and independence of the state. In his final chapter in *Divided Societies*, Miliband addressed the great changes in the world order, asking whether these have fundamentally transformed the character of advanced capitalist societies, requiring a transformation of the socialist agenda. His answer was that capitalist societies remain highly structured and hierarchical class societies in which the life experience for everyone remains shaped by the fact of class and class inequity (Miliband, 1989, pp. 203–4). The capitalist state and its policies have been essential to the successful management of the ineradicable contradictions that still plague all capitalist societies.

Emphasizing what liberal democratic capitalist welfare states have in common over their many differences suggests the following:

1. The purpose of welfare states in liberal democratic capitalist societies is to prevent or contain Socialism.
2. Welfare states are a response to the class conflict and class-based fear structurally rooted in capitalism's division between capital and labour.
3. Welfare state programmes are enacted and expanded to protect capitalism from systemic threats; constrained by the imperative of capital accumulation, cut backs or elimination of programmes, when the danger subsides, may also be enacted. This suggests that the best strategy for those interested in expanding and retaining the welfare state is militant, disruptive class conflict (Piven and Cloward, 1977, p. xv).
4. The primary driving force behind the expansion (and contraction) of welfare states in liberal democratic capitalist societies is class conflict.
5. Despite many historical differences between the American welfare state and those of western Europe, America's exceptionalism has been highly exaggerated.
6. The US has been no more free of the influence of class conflict than other capitalist societies, though there are many differences in particular programmes and spending levels.
7. Despite strong antipathy toward 'socialism' in the United States, liberal and progressive reforms in America are fundamentally similar to social democratic programmes in Europe.
8. The state in liberal democratic capitalist societies is best understood not as an institution independent and autonomous from socioeconomic and other forces but as an institution engaged in mediating social conflict, and thus open to diverse external influences.
9. Capitalist states in liberal democratic capitalist societies not only pass social reforms to quell serious dissent, under certain conditions they repress it.
10. American labour history and the history of the US welfare state suggest the importance, as William Appleman Williams argued years ago, of ending the great evasion and admitting Marx's critical analysis of capitalism to the discussion (Williams, 1964, pp. 20–1).

Although Marxists have yet to produce a fully developed theory of the capitalist state, the general contours of one are clear. Miliband and Poulantzas (and Marx before them) centred the state in capitalist social

relations, with particular emphasis on capital's extraction of surplus value from labour. This relationship establishes an objective or structural class conflict at capitalism's core (Resnick and Wolff, 2005, pp. 33–7). Capitalist states are enmeshed in conflicts that, unless restrained, threaten the system such states are meant to protect. At times and under certain conditions, capitalist states may simply repress opposition. At other times, under other conditions, capitalist states pass reforms to compromise class struggle. Because liberal democratic states represent major classes and class fractions, such states enjoy considerable autonomy in deciding which strategy or mix of strategies to employ, as long as they stay within the boundaries of capitalism itself.

Marx, as Ollman notes, conceived the capitalist state as a complex social relation of many parts, the main ones being political processes and institutions, the ruling class, an objective structure of political/economic functions, and an arena of class struggle (Ollman, 1993, p. 89). Miliband did the same. Capital and labour are also complex social relations with many parts, which means no one-sided interpretation captures more than a part of the political-economic whole. Each approach may bring out something important, but just as surely hides or distorts much else (Ollman, 1993, p. 90). Small wonder that a general theory of the capitalist state remains a work in progress, not a settled property.

Research on US labour history and the welfare state amply demonstrates Miliband's relevance to understanding the US. The American state often appears, as Miliband emphasized, as an instrument of capital. In the late 19th century, craft and industrial workers encountered such resistance from capital and its political allies that before workers could fight back they had to wage a mighty struggle for the right to organize. Capitalists facing union organizers often (but not always) found the courts a reliable source of injunctions, state and local authorities reliable sources of armed protection for property rights, private security forces a reliable tool for intimidating workers, and the federal government a reliable source of intervention.

US labour history reveals much conflict dangerous to the system. However, the state emerged as an arena in which struggles were represented and variously resolved. Labour, despite its inferior position, was not without some victories. The 1914 Clayton Act, for example, implausibly declared human labour not a commodity or article of commerce, affirmed the right of unions to exist, and exempted them from injunctions unless necessary to prevent irreparable injury to property. Gompers prematurely hailed the Act as labour's Magna Carta before courts found

various loopholes for subjecting unions to the antitrust laws. A somewhat clearer if limited labour victory was the 1916 Adamson Act which provided interstate railroad workers with the eight-hour day and time-and-a-half for overtime (Dulles and Dubofsky, 1993, pp. 195–6). Capital and labour hardly appeared before the state on equal terms, but, at times, the state accommodated labour over significant capitalist opposition.

The state in capitalist societies also serves capital as a focal point of patriotic feelings, especially in times of war, and helps perpetuate capitalism by socializing people into a belief system that identifies capitalism with democracy, freedom, human nature, and progress. Socialism and communism are routinely presented as alien to fundamental American values, justifying, if necessary, the strongest possible resistance, up to and including armed opposition. Yet, as Miliband cautioned in 1969, on the eve of the conservative counter-attack on western welfare sates, there was even then a huge discrepancy between the promise and performance of liberal democratic capitalism. Though advanced capitalist societies are rich, he wrote, 'vast areas of bitter poverty endure in them; that the collective provisions they make for health, welfare, education, housing, the social environment, do not begin to match need; that the egalitarian ethos they are driven to proclaim is belied by the privileges and inequalities they enshrine; that the structure of their "industrial relations" remains one of domination and subjection; and that the political system of which they boast is a corrupt and crippled version of a truly democratic order' (Miliband, 1969, p. 269).

When liberal democratic politicians from the President on down rail against Socialism, communism, and anarchism, the economic system being protected is capitalism. The ultimate in reassurance is that 'it', Socialism, for peculiarly American reasons, did not happen here. But, of course, 'it' did happen here, and very much in the same way as in Europe: a revolutionary challenge to capitalism was turned aside with the help of a reformist, adaptive, liberal, social democratic alternative, yielding a 'corrupt and crippled version of a truly democratic order'.

Marxist theories of welfare states are often said to be strong at explaining similarities but weak at dealing with differences (Alcock and Craig, 2001, p. 8). Yet, unless similarities are found, how can comparative social research go further than the construction of typologies cataloguing what certain states have in common and what separates them? Regime studies build helpful typologies (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 1996; Jessop, 2002, pp. 58–68), but typologies are no substitute for theory. Granted the almost endless specific differences across states and programs, more

attention to commonalities is needed for greater general understanding, a point on which Miliband, Poulantzas, and Marx concur.

## Notes

1 For comments on a draft of this article, I want to thank Noam Chomsky, Bill Domhoff, Ira Katznelson, David Laibman, Rhonda Levine, David McLellan, Bertell Ollman, Leo Panitch, Jill Quadagno, Steve Smith, Jeff Surovell, Paul Wetherly, Rick Wolff, and Michael Zweig. Parts of this work appeared in Manley, 2006. Comments: manley48@msn.com.

2 Marx's comment on issues later debated by Miliband and Poulantzas was that laws *were* formed in the interests of the ruling class, but he warned: 'When investigating political conditions, one is easily tempted to neglect the objective character of the relationships and to explain everything from the wills of the persons acting. There are relationships, however, which determine both the actions of private persons and of individual authorities, and which are as independent of the will as breathing' (McLellan, 2000, p. 30).

3 A class analysis of welfare states not only questions American exceptionalism. It offers an alternative to such prominent exceptionalist-laden theories of the state as Theda Skocpol's institutional analysis, which stresses the autonomy of policymakers from the demands of classes, groups, and society generally. Class analysis also challenges Skocpol's argument that Marxist and neo-Marxist theories of the state are of secondary importance compared to state autonomy theories. Previous arguments for a class analysis of the New Deal have appeared, so the focus here is on the late 19th and early 20th centuries when modern welfare states emerged in response to Socialist critiques of capitalism (Manley, 2003; Levine, 1988). The evidence shows that a 'capitalist-centric' approach best explains the origins and development of welfare states. Finally, in using the term 'American exceptionalism' I am reluctantly bowing to conventional usage when it would be far more exact to refer to 'United States exceptionalism' as the US is not the centre of the known universe.

4 For a remarkable analysis stressing the similarities between the US and western Europe see the brilliant work of Stuart Hall in McLellan, Held, and Hall, 1984, pp. 7–49).

5 Although Almond pointedly criticized Skocpol, Stephen Krasner, and other 'statists' for their ignorance of the mainstream political science literature, he agreed completely with Skocpol's critique of Marxists for being overly society-centered and fixated on class, p. 863.

6 For a comprehensive critique of the case studies presented by Skocpol, see Domhoff, 1996; and Valochhi, 1991, pp. 167–83.

# 10

# The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan: Environmental Groups or Business Dominance?[1]

*George A. Gonzalez*

In 2000 the US Congress authorized the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). At an estimated cost of $7.8 billion, it represents the most ambitious effort in recent US history to reform a water management infrastructure. This infrastructure is located in South Florida and controls water in the Everglades. As the title of this plan indicates, the effort to reform this water manipulation system is being promoted as a means to restore the health of the Everglades eco-system. By placing CERP within a historical context, this paper demonstrates that CERP is a continuation of the historic process to utilize the Everglades – its land, water and soil – as a means to maximize capital accumulation. This process has been led and shaped by economic elites and producer groups, which is consistent with the business dominance view of the policy-making. This view of policy-making is inspired by Ralph Miliband who held that the business community is the dominant political force in capitalist society. Finally, the portrayal of CERP as an effort to restore the health of the Everglades eco-system obfuscates the fact that it is predominately a water supply plan designed to further urban growth, and that CERP contains some significant hazards for the environment in the Everglades. The inability of environmental groups to educate and mobilize the public on the environmental hazards inherent in CERP is consistent with Miliband's writings on social movements. He specifically held that without specific alliances with working class groups, environmental groups will be unable to mobilize mass support for their efforts.

## Social class and the new social movements

In his landmark book, *The State in Capitalist Society*, Ralph Miliband helped pioneer a conception of political power by empirically mapping

an identifiable economic elite that dominated public policy-making in the advanced capitalist societies. The US economic elite is composed of decision-makers within large corporations and of other persons of substantial wealth. These actors are integrated into a cohesive elite or class through social clubs, interlocking directorates of both private and public organizations, policy discussion groups,[2] and inter-marriage (Useem, 1984; Barrow, 1992, 1993, chap. 1; Domhoff, 2005). Altogether, the economic elite compose roughly 0.5% to 1% of the total US population (Barrow, 1993, p. 17).

This elite is a dominant factor in the development of public policy because it possesses large amounts of the most important political resources in the United States – wealth and income. These are converted into such key political tools as campaign finance, deference, access, organization, scientific and legal expertise (Barrow, 1993, p. 16). Thus, Miliband (1969, pp. 28–9) observed that 'a relatively small class of people do own a very large share of wealth in advanced capitalist countries, and that they do derive many privileges from that ownership' (cf., Lamare, 1993, 2000; Gonzalez, 1998, 2001a, 2001b, 2002/03, 2005, 2006). Given their collective wealth and income, as well as their high level of organization (e.g., business trade associations and local chambers of commerce), producer groups are also formidable political actors in their own right (Olson, 1971; Lindblom, 1977; Barrow, 1993, chap. 1). Miliband (1969, p. 146) primarily emphasized the political influence of large corporations by noting that 'business, particularly large-scale business, enjoys a [decisive] advantage in the state'. However, Miliband (1989) developed this idea further in *Divided Societies* by drawing a distinction between 'the power elite' and subordinate members of 'the ruling class' (i.e., medium-sized businesses and successful professionals). Due to their shared ideological, economic, and political interests, members of the economic elite, who are owners and decision-makers in large firms, are normally able to draw in political allies, who are more often members of broad-based producer groups (Domhoff, 2005). Economic elites are able to draw in as allies small to medium firms, because the larger and wealthier firms within most industrial and agricultural trade associations tend to dominate these associations financially and politically (Olson, 1971).[3]

This analysis of the CERP, and the political maneuvering surrounding it, utilizes Miliband's theory of political power to deepen our understanding of US environmental politics in two important ways. First, the analysis will document how the development of South Florida's water regime, including CERP, was dominated by the business community.

While this is an important element of Miliband's political theory, in his (1989, p. 96) later thinking he began exploring the radical potential of the 'new social movements' and found that like labour they too had already 'come up against the prevailing structures of power'. Second, the analysis will illustrate how one of these new social movements – the environmental movement – was not only unable to circumvent the power structure described by Miliband, but proved incapable of linking public concerns about environmental damage to broader class issues that could have mobilized an alternative (non-business) political agenda.

## The history of water manipulation in South Florida

When the main pieces of South Florida's water manipulation infrastructure were put in place in the early and mid-20th century, the political controversies that arose at that time were over issues such as whether government should expend large amounts of money on projects that would benefit specific regions of the state, and over how the economic benefits of water projects should be distributed among different social groups and regions. Since the early 1970s, however, concerns over the environment have grown significantly in Florida and indeed throughout the entire United States (deHaven-Smith, 1991; Carter, 2001; Guber, 2003). In the case of the CERP such concerns have been addressed largely by symbols, rhetoric, and symbolic inclusion.

While the area of South Florida is not arid like the western United States, its economic development has historically been similarly dependent on the large-scale manipulation of water. In the case of the American West, economic growth was specifically tied to the capture, storage, and targeted deployment of the region's limited water supply (Worster, 1985, 2001; Hundley, 1992; Kupel, 2003). On the other hand, the key to South Florida's integration into the national and international economy has been water drainage (Blake, 1980; McCally, 1999). Its flat, low lying topography, and high average rainfall created swamp conditions throughout the region. This swampland, or wetland, is the Everglades – the largest wetland area in the world. In order to proceed with agricultural and urban development in South Florida much of this extensive wetland had to be drained. Towards that end an extensive system of levees, drainage canals, and pump stations was constructed throughout the Everglades. With the CERP approved by the federal government in 2000, a new phase in South Florida's water works has been initiated. Now government agencies will construct major facilities exclusively designed to store water (US Army Corps of Engineers, 1999).

This modification of South Florida's water control regime is necessitated by the growth of the region's urban areas (Carter, 1974; Parks and Bush, 1997; Bush, 1999; Tebeau and Marina, 1999; Weisskoff, 2005). Growth predictions for urban South Florida indicate that significant amounts of additional water must be made available for urban use in order to accommodate future growth. Even now, urban and agricultural water demand leads to threats of water shortages during the dry season and mild droughts. To address the current and projected water needs of South Florida the authors of CERP propose capturing and storing much of the trillion gallons of water that is annually drained out to sea.

CERP, which according to initial estimates is to cost $7.8 billion aims to avert a potential confrontation between urban growth and farming interests in the region over usable water. The authors and supporters of CERP envision storing large amounts of water underground in what are known as Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) wells. More than 300 wells are planned and underground water storage does not affect water levels on the surface.

Donald Worster (1985) outlines three periods in the large-scale manipulation of water in the West: *incipience*, *florescence*, and *empire*. The first period was initiated in 1847 and lasted until 1890s. During this time, Worster observes that individuals or small communities manipulated water to the extent of their limited ability. He (1985, p. 64) adds that 'a number of private corporations also tried to harness the rivers for profit in this period, but the vast majority of them failed'. Worster explains that 'the year 1902 marks the beginning of the second period, the era of florescence. In that year the federal government took firm charge of the western rivers, furnishing the capital and engineering expertise to lift the region to a higher plateau of development'. Finally, Worster (1985, p. 64) notes that 'in the third period of empire, extending from the 1940s into the foreseeable future, the two forces of government and private wealth achieved a powerful alliance, bringing every major western river under their unified control' for the purpose of maximizing the private accumulation of capital. While the state government played a larger role in the case of South Florida than in the case of Western water manipulation, the development of South Florida's water regime conforms to the typology and time frame posited by Worster to analyse Western water history.

## Incipience

In his history of water management in Florida, Nelson Blake (1980, p. 15) offers the following description of the state when it became a

territory of the US in the 1820s: 'There seemed indeed to be two Floridas, northern Florida, an inviting region of gently rolling land, pine forests, and sparkling lakes and rivers, and southern Florida, a menacing country of barren coasts, scrubby pines and palmettos, and swamps – a fit home only for "varmints"'. In the late 19th century one observer noted that 'most persons regard the Everglades as a worthless stretch of dreary swamp and almost wholly submerged waste, a place of typhoid and malaria, of alligators and snakes' (*New York Times*, 1896). Shortly after its annexation to the US in 1821, however, 'boosters' in the territory sought to make 'improvements' in the region in order to attract investment and increase economic activity. One proposed improvement was the drainage of the area in the southern most part of the state (Blake, 1980, chap. 2). The federal government in 1845 (when Florida became a state), and again in 1850, granted the state government millions of acres of land, much of it swampland in the south. Land grants in the south were intended to finance land drainage (Blake, 1980, p. 36).

Instead of draining the land itself and selling reclaimed land to cover the costs of drainage, the state government sought to entice private investors to undertake the project of draining South Florida. The most significant effort to encourage private capital to drain the Everglades involved Hamilton Disston. Disston, the wealthy scion of a Philadelphia industrialist, came to control the 'largest American company manufacturing saws and files' (Blake, 1980, p. 73). In January 1881 Disston signed a contract with the state entitling his firm, the Okeechobee Land Company, to half of the land it could drain. In May of that same year the Governor negotiated a contract with Disston selling him four million acres of land in South Florida at 25 cents an acre, with the expectation that Disston would undertake an effort to drain much of the region's marshland.

Much like the history of water management in the West (Worster, 1985), Disston found that constructing major water control infrastructure was largely beyond the means of private groups and individuals (Strickland, 1999) – even of such groups as devoutly committed as Mormons (in Utah), or of major capitalists like Disston or like those who sought to tame the rivers in and around California. Furthermore, such grandiose projects as control of the Colorado River or draining a swamp the size of the Everglades generally yield returns that are too low to justify the investment of the capital necessary to make such projects succeed. This holds even in the Disston case, where the land was practically given to him. As Blake (1980, p. 83) notes, 'Despite Disston's

aggressive promotion, income from his land sales could not keep pace with his heavy expenditures' on land reclamation. By 1896 Disston's Florida land operation was defunct (Blake, 1980, chap. 4).

## Florescence

Almost concurrently with the establishment of the Bureau of Reclamation in 1902 and the federal government's direct involvement in water control in the West (Pisani, 2002), the state government of Florida assumed a direct role in water manipulation in South Florida. These new initiatives undertaken by the federal government and the state government of Florida occurred within the milieu of the Populist and Progressive movements at the turn of the century. While the populist movement was fueled by the discontent of small farmers and workers who were falling victim to government indifference, the progressive movement was led by capitalists and other economic interests who sought to use government to stabilize the economy and create new investment opportunities (Hays, 1959; Weinstein, 1968; Kolko, 1977; Gonzalez, 1998, 2001b, chaps. 2 and 3; Higgins-Evenson, 2003). In the case of land reclamation in South Florida at the turn of the century, the rhetoric used to advocate for state construction of a water control infrastructure in the Everglades was populist in character. The project itself, however, was characteristic of progressivism.

The drainage plan the state sought to implement was envisioned by James Ingraham in 1892, and adopted by Florida railroad magnate Henry Flagler. In 1893 Ingraham would become head of 'land operations' for Flagler (Akin, 1988, p. 140). According to a 1896 *New York Times* article, Ingraham convinced Flagler that 'part of the Everglades could be reclaimed by a simple system of drainage' ('Florida's Rich Rivals'). Blake (1980) explains that Ingraham was 'convinced that nothing held back the water in [the Everglades] except a rock ledge along 160 miles of the eastern coastal belt'. Hence, he (1980, p. 110) 'argued that by digging vents through this ridge a vast region could be reclaimed for agriculture' (p. 91). Ingraham's thinking on the issue presaged the four drainage canals that would be built under state auspices running from Lake Okeechobee to the Atlantic.

In 1893 when Ingraham took over management of Flagler's real estate holdings the Florida state legislature passed a law granting 8,000 acres of state lands to railroads for every mile of rail added below the town of Daytona, located in the central part of the state. This was significantly above the 3,840 acres per rail mile given to railroad firms

up to this point (Akin, 1988, p. 141). Also in 1893, Flagler announced he planned to extend his Florida East Coast Railroad south from St. Augustine, which is north of Daytona, to the Lake Worth area (present day Palm Beach), which lies east of Lake Okeechobee on the Atlantic coast – significantly south of Daytona (Akin, 1988, p. 144). Flagler would later extend his line south to Miami, and ultimately to Key West in 1912.

In 1903 Florida Governor William Jennings asked the federal government for $1 million for the purpose of reclaiming land in the Everglades. This money was not forthcoming, but the federal government did cede 2,862,080 acres of land in the area to the state (Blake, 1980, p. 94).

While Jennings first undertook an effort to directly involve the state in the drainage of southern Florida, it was his successor as governor, Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, who invested significant political capital in the drainage effort and started the project. The state's drainage efforts created a positive investment climate in the Everglades area. The railroads soon built lines into the interior to tap into the new potential that drainage created. In 1915 the Model Lands Company, owned by the Florida East Coast Railroad, developed Okeechobee City. That same year the railroad was connected to the town. The Atlantic Coast Railroad, which operated along the Florida Gulf coast, built its first line into the area in 1918. The drainage programme and the railroad links accelerated agricultural production and land sales in the area (Blake, 1980, pp. 131–4; McCally, 1999, chap. 5).

Heavy rains during the 1920s and two hurricanes, however, demonstrated the inadequacies of the state's water control campaign in South Florida. As result of heavy rain incidents, canals overflowed, levees broke, land flooded and stayed flooded, and in some cases lives were lost. The obvious failure of the state to manage water in South Florida led to a dramatic drop in land prices in early 1926, which precipitated widespread bank failures, and, subsequently, a depression throughout the state (Vickers, 1994).

## Empire

While the Florida state and federal governments initiated their water control regimes during the Progressive Era, national efforts at water manipulation did not proceed full throttle until the New Deal and the 1940s. Nonetheless, the water management system erected by the Army Corps of Engineers forwarded the interests and policy preferences of large landholders and other economic concerns in South Florida.

In 1942 the Soil Science Society of Florida passed a resolution calling for a comprehensive water control plan for the Everglades area. This society was a policy discussion group for economic interests affected by agricultural production and water use in Florida – especially South Florida. Policy discussion groups serve as means for economic elites and producer groups to come together with acceptable experts to form policy plans, and to develop a consensus on such plans and proposals (Barrow, 1993, chap. 1; Domhoff, 2005).

The leadership of the Society, as well as its membership and sources of finance, indicate that it served as a policy discussion organization for economic interests. Established in 1939, one of the four members of the Society's organizing committee was W.L. Tait, of the International Fruit Corp. (Soil Science Society of Florida, 1939, pp. 9, 75). In addition to experts on horticulture, chemistry, engineering, and plant pathology – including a number of professors from the University of Florida – a significant number of the Society's founding membership was comprised of individuals representing firms and groups who sought to profit from agriculture and the sale of land in the state. Included among these firms and groups was the Model Land Company, the Florida Association of Real Estate Boards, US Sugar, American Cyanamide (maker of pesticides), Armour Fertilizer Works, the Florida Fruit Company, Florida Citrus Growers, and the Ft. Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce. Two firms that were members, and that would economically benefit from increased economic activity resulting from increasing agricultural production in the state, were the Atlantic Railroad and Florida Power and Light (Soil Science Society of Florida, 1939, pp. 71–6). The US Sugar Corp., the Chemurgic Research Corp., and Florida Power and Light provided the financing to publish the proceedings of society's first conference (Soil Science Society of Florida, 1939, p. 4). By 1942 firms financing the society included the Southern States Land and Timber Company, the Atlantic Coast Railroad, and the Model Land Company [all major land holders in the South Florida region] (Soil Science Society of Florida, 1942, p. 2).

According to the forward of the Society's first proceeding, it 'was organized particularly to serve Florida Agriculture'. Moreover, 'its forum is open to all who are sincerely interested in discussing any of its multitudinous problems that have a definite relationship with the soil'. The author(s) of the forward go on to approvingly quote the 'Provost for Agriculture' at the University of Florida, who stated that:

> There is an important place in Florida Agriculture for a forum of this type that can be used as a 'clearing house' for the technical worker

> and the grower, as well as others engaged in closely related enterprises that find common interest in the practical application of the basic principles of Soil Science (Soil Science Society of Florida, 1939, p. 7).

To serve this purpose as a 'clearing house' of knowledge on agriculture in Florida the society created numerous committees, including ones on soil and water conservation, fertilizer recommendations, tropical soils, and research (Soil Science Society of Florida, 1939, pp. 61–70).

The Society remains as an important source of knowledge on agriculture in the state, with the organization – under the current name The Soil and Crop Science Society of Florida – continuing to hold and publish the proceedings of its annual meetings. During the 1940s and 1950s, however, the Society was particularly influential on state policies that dealt with agriculture and water management. The historian McCally (1999, p. 147) notes that 'the Soil Society of Florida played a crucial role' on issues important to agriculture 'by providing a forum where new knowledge could be spread from the scientific community to the state's political leaders'. McCally (1999, p. 148) goes on to explain that the society informed political leaders on water management questions in the Everglades and, specifically, 'During the 1940s, the society's annual meetings allowed scientists to apprise the state's political leaders of the newly acquired knowledge about south Florida's hydrology [and] geology ... and Florida's political leaders exhibited a keen interest in the activities of the society.'

The Society's 1942 resolution was entitled: 'A Resolution Pertaining to the Great Necessity for a Complete and Unbiased Investigation and Report on Everglades Conditions with Specific Recommendations for Its Use as a Basis for a Comprehensive Plan of Conservation and Development for the Entire Area' (p. 131). The author(s) of the resolution averred that 'conclusive proof has been submitted that great losses of soil and water resources have been sustained in the past from ... inadequate water control'. It was further resolved that 'the indicated solution of the related problems concerning the conservation and development of the natural resources of [the Everglades] Area lies in the determination and adoption of an over-all plan of appropriate land use and reclamation'. The Society concluded its resolution by calling for a pertinent state agency or 'other interested public agencies' to sponsor an investigation 'with definite instructions to prepare a full and complete report on the problems of the Everglades, with specific recommendations for an *over-all Plan of Reclamation*' [emphasis added].

McCally (1999, p. 148) reports that 'delegates from the society' met with 'Florida's governor and cabinet in Tallahassee in 1943, where the future plans for … the Everglades dominated the agenda'. Moreover, in a 1946 speech to the society, entitled 'Progress of the Unit Plan of Reclamation in the Everglades', the chief engineer of Everglades Drainage District explained that an 'Advisory Committee' made up of 'sixteen technical men' drawn from federal, state, and local agencies 'resulted from' the Resolution enacted 'by the Soil Science Society of Florida in 1942' (Soil Science Society of Florida, 1946, p. 94).

In 1948 the Corps of Engineers came forward with its *Comprehensive Report on Central and Southern Florida for Flood Control and Other Purposes*. This plan initiated the Corps water control programme in the Everglades. The plan laid out a comprehensive system of canals, levees, and pumps designed to maximize water manipulation in the region. A key result of this programme was a 700,000 acre Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) just south of Lake Okeechobee. Here land would be drained and kept free of floods to allow for agricultural production. This would be accomplished, in part, through the construction of a levee around Lake Okeechobee. The EAA would be farmed almost exclusively by large agricultural outfits, which have historically employed low wage migrant labour (Wilkinson, 1989; McCally, 1999, chap. 7; Kirsch, 2003).

Another salient feature of the Corps's water control plan was the conversion of the interior of the Everglades wetlands into what became known as Conservation Areas. Outside of the Everglades National Park in the southern most portion of the Everglades, these areas are what mostly remain of the marshland in South Florida. The conservation areas are managed, however, to serve the water and economic needs of the region. Their primary function is water storage (Blake, 1980; McCally, 1999). Water from throughout the region is pumped into the conservation zones. This includes water from the EAA, which is often polluted with phosphorous (Grunwald, 2002a June 25). Excess phosphorous causes cattail blooms on the surface water of the conservation area. These blooms starve the flora below of needed sunlight.

The water in the conservation areas supplies the water needs of agricultural and urban users. Additionally, the water in these areas is released to prevent salt water intrusion into the region's fresh water aquifer. The water levels in the conservation areas are managed to ensure that urban and agricultural lands are not flooded. Hence, when the region experiences 'too much' rainfall the conservation areas are drained down to avoid the flooding of farmland, or the urban zone

that lies largely along the eastern coast (the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale metropolitan area) and that sits mostly on former Everglades wetland. Conversely, during times of high demand and/or drought, water in the conservation areas, along with Lake Okeechobee (Grunwald, 2002 June 23), is pumped down. Water is pumped into, and out of, the conservation areas irrespective of the environmental impacts of doing so (Blake, 1980; McCally, 1999).

## The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) as a water supply plan

The proponents of CERP seek to modify the water manipulation infrastructure in South Florida by significantly expanding its water storage capacity. CERP does this in three ways. First, CERP identifies land areas in the region to act as additional conservation areas which would act as sumps, just like the current conservation areas (King, 2003).[4] Second, as noted earlier, the authors of CERP plan for approximately 300 ASR wells. Third, according to CERP, limestone pits which are to be dug in the southeast of the Everglades are to be converted into water holding facilities. This effort to substantially expand the water storage capacity of South Florida's waterworks is in line with the policy preferences and economic interests of the regional growth coalition and the agricultural community in the region.

A regional or local growth coalition is composed of those economic interests and economic elites who benefit from economic growth in a specific locality or region. The core groups of local growth coalitions are large land holders and land developers. Other important members of such coalitions include banks, utilities, regional media outlets, and law firms that specialize in real estate transactions. Local growth coalitions seek to attract investment and economic activity to their specific locality. Large land owners and land developers benefit from increased investment and economic activity in their specific area because such increases usually translate into greater demand for land and built facilities, and, hence, increased prices for such land and facilities. Other members of local growth coalitions benefit from local economic growth because such growth generally expands the local consumer base. In order to achieve the economic benefits derived from local economic growth, local growth coalitions strive to create a political and physical milieu that attracts investment, tourism, and other forms of economic activity to their locality (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Jonas and Wilson, 1999; Gonzalez, 2002/03, 2005, 2006; Gainsborough, 2003).

Local growth coalitions are able to have their desire for local growth dominate the local and regional political agenda because its members possess the political resources of wealth and income. These resources are readily converted into such key political tools as campaign finance, organization, status, access, publicity, and scientific and legal expertise (Barrow, 1993, p. 16). As a result, local and state governments promote strategies for local 'economic growth' over other potential agendas (Abbott, 1987; Eisinger, 1988; Savitch and Kantor, 2002) and often at the expense of competing values (Peterson, 1981; Harvey, 1985).

In 1999 the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Environmental Affairs Group and the Environmental Economics Council released a position paper endorsing the Army Corps of Engineers effort to reform South Florida's water control infrastructure. Roy Rodgers served on the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, which as discussed below was directly involved with the formulation of CERP, and – as a recently retired senior vice-president for Arvida (a land development firm now known as St. Joe Towns & Resorts) – is a member of the Miami Chamber. Rodgers is also former chair of the Audubon of Florida and current Board Member of the Florida chapter of Nature Conservancy. Rodgers (2003) stated that the Environmental Affairs Group is 'tracking the Everglades issue on a real time basis. So they're very well informed' (personal interview).[5]

The Environmental Economics Council is part of Audubon of Florida, the Florida chapter of the National Audubon Society. As stated in the joint affairs group and council paper (1999), the Environmental Economics Council 'was created in 1996 to promote a common, demonstrated understanding among the South Florida business communities of the critical relationships between regional and global economic viability and the sustainability of the South Florida ecosystem'. Additionally, 'the Environmental Economics Council is composed of 30 civic and community leaders representing South Florida's business and economic centers'. Finally, 'members include corporate CEOs, bankers, attorneys, small business owners, local government representatives, and elected officials' (Environmental Economics Council, 1999, p. 2). The title of the joint council and affairs group paper was 'In South Florida, the Environment is the Economy.' It was released in June 1999. CERP was submitted to Congress in July of the same year.

Firms that helped develop this joint paper included American Airlines (which operates a major hub out of Miami International Airport), the St. Joe Company (land development), Arvida, Florida Power and Light, Adorno & Zeder (law), Bank Atlantic, and Northern Trust Bank. The

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), the state government agency which is directly responsible for supplying water to agricultural firms and urban water utilities, also collaborated in the formulation of this paper. The Army Corps of Engineers also lent its expertise to this effort (Environmental Economics Council, 1999, pp. 2–4).

In the forward of this position essay, H. James Sigsbee, senior vice-president and chief financial officer of Northern Trust Bank, explains that 'if we *don't* restore the Everglades, we will end up with conflicting water demands … from urban areas and from agriculture' [emphasis in original]. In the introduction of the document it is noted that 'in December 1998, the [Greater Miami] Chamber [of Commerce] unanimously passed a resolution in support of Everglades restoration', which was subsequently mapped out in CERP (Environmental Economics Council, 1999, p. 7). This support for CERP is not surprising in light of the fact that 'the human population of South Florida is expected to more than double over the next 50 years' – from a current population of 5 million to one of 11 million by 2050 (*Ibid.*, p. 22). The affairs group and council go on to explain that 'the demand for fresh clean water is expected to increase by nearly two-fold' in South Florida. Hence, 'we must conserve and store fresh water, so that in the dry season it will be available for … the human system'. The authors of this paper explain that the Corps' Everglades restructuring effort 'is crucial to water storage and water supply for South Florida'. Therefore, 'the success of the US Army Corps of Engineers' South Florida ecosystem restoration project will be a crucial test of … economic sustainability' (*Ibid.*, p. 23).

According to Jim Garner, former chairperson of the SFWMD, long term water availability is central to the economic sustainability of the community development industry in Florida. Garner, who is currently a lawyer/lobbyist for major land development firms in Florida (Grunwald, 2002b June 25), notes that large community development companies in the state (e.g., St. Joe and WCI) are 'planning constantly, way out in front: where they're going [with their development activity], what's the market gonna be'. He also stated that 'in their planning process they've got to have certainty that they're going to have water'. He also explained that 'if you have a hiatus in water availability' land developers 'are going to go broke. They've got nothing to sell' (personal interview). Therefore, water shortages can have an injurious and lasting impact on Florida's otherwise lucrative real estate industry (Parks and Bush, 1997; Bush, 1999; Grunwald, 2002b June 25, 2006; Weisskoff, 2005).

In addition to the Environmental Affairs Group and the Economics Resources Council, another policy discussion organization formed by

economic interests in South Florida to consider CERP and water supply in the region was the Florida Water Council (FWC). Its president, James French, is one of the representatives for business on the Commission for the Everglades, appointed by the former Governor Jeb Bush. According to French (French, 2003), the FWC was formed to gain a consensus among agricultural and urban water users. In our interview he stated that:

> one of the reasons we started the Florida Water Council was historically agricultural and municipal users picked at one another. We finally figured out that the only way we're gonna win is if we stick together – urban and agriculture. That's what the Florida Water Council was formed for. (personal interview)

In the following French lists a number of the council members: 'Miami-Dade County's water utility, Broward's water utility, Palm Beach's water utility, Lee County's water utility, WCI, citrus growers, Alico [agriculture], US Sugar, Joe Marlin Hillard [agriculture], they were all members' (personal interview). James Garner was someone who helped organize and manage the FWC, which was formed in 1996. Here he describes its origins and its operation (Garner, 2003):

> Here's where [the Florida Water Council] started. I was one of those that helped create it. Doing what I've done for my clients, and what I had done for the [South Florida] water management district, I became very aware that we needed a dialogue among water users – large water users, because of the water supply problem. The Florida Water Council, the only thing it was interested in was water supply. So I sat down and talked to [water utilities in the South Florida region:] WASA [water and sewer authority of Dade County], Ft. Lauderdale, Broward County, talked to Palm Beach County … there are big water users like Florida Power and Light, I talked to Lee County, and all those people joined. In addition to them, agriculture joined: Gulf Citrus joined, individual growers joined, some of the sugar industry joined, we had Florida Fresh Fruit and Vegetable [Association] join, because water is their life … We had a part-time executive director, Cathleen Vogel, who used to work at the [South Florida Water Management] district, and we met once a month, sometimes once every three months. We spent the day in a dialogue of the current water supply planning – what the problems were. We were able to create an atmosphere where [water] utilities could talk to agriculture [and they] could talk to a

> [land] developer [and they in turn] could talk to a power plant. (personal interview)

Both French and Garner attest that the FWC formally endorsed CERP – with Garner stating that 'all of them [the members of the council] were involved' with it (personal interview). Mary Doyle, widow of James Webb – one-time head of Wilderness Society in South Florida – explains that leading members of the water utility and agricultural communities were involved with CERP from its inception. Webb took an active role in the initiation of the Everglades restoration project during the mid- to late-1980s (Betancourt, 1997; Doyle, 2003; Salt, 2003). Doyle, who was married to Webb and dean of the University of Miami Law School at this time, noted during our personal interview that Webb 'and some other guys were able to demonstrate to the water utility company leaders and to the AG [agricultural] leaders that the Everglades and its preservation was crucial to the future water supply of this area. They signed on and you could start the ball rolling' on reforming the Everglades water control regime. Doyle, as described below, would become the highest ranking official within the Clinton Administration supervising the formation and authorization of CERP.

## CERP as an Everglades Restoration Plan

CERP does not contain a clear means to restore the Everglades. This is largely because CERP does not address the factor that has historically undermined the area's eco-system: the disruption of the Everglades's historic water flow. Moreover, CERP's water storage features could inflict substantial damage to the flora, fauna, and geology of South Florida.

Before the deployment of the water manipulation infrastructure, water flowed at a glacial pace from Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay at the southern end of the peninsula. This slow pace of water flow created the Everglades wetland. The water level of this wetland would fluctuate according to the wet and dry seasons during the year, and according to wetter and drier longer term precipitation periods. Within this annual and multi-year fluctuating water cycle, parts of the Everglades would be perennially wet, except perhaps during times of extreme drought, while other lands could be dry or wet depending on the precipitation cycle. This precipitation cycle and the topography of the region, along with its mild to hot climate, had historically yielded an area of high bio-diversity – with a large number of flora and fauna successfully adapting

themselves to the different dimensions of the Everglades eco-system (Douglas, 1988 [1948]; Davis and Ogden, 1994; Lodge, 1994; Toops, 1998; McCally, 1999; Mooij *et al.*, 2002).

With the implementation of the Army Corps' water control regime, the historic water flow of the Everglades was severely disrupted. As noted above, Lake Okeechobee was leveed and the area south of it drained to create the EAA. Thus, the vital water flow that came into the Everglades from the overflow of the Lake ceased. In addition, water levels in the remaining marshland are managed to ensure that agricultural and urban lands do not flood, because most of these lands sit on former Everglades land that would flood were it not for the drainage regime. Finally, water in the conservation areas are drained to satisfy the consumption needs of agriculture and urban use. Among the environmental effects of this severe disruption of historic water levels has been the devastation of native flora and fauna (Levin, 2003; Cerulean, 2002). Sixty-nine plant and animal species in the Everglades area are on the threatened or endangered list (Grunwald, 2002 June 23).

CERP does not propose the restoration of historic water flows to the Everglades area. To do so would require returning large parts of the EAA to wetland conditions. This would help restore the sheet flow of water that historically ran from Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay. Because CERP does not seek to re-establish this sheet flow through the EAA, Friends of the Everglades – an environmental group that focuses on the Everglades – did not endorse it (Greene, 2003). Another barrier to restoring historic water levels in the Everglades is the urban development in the region. As stated earlier, much of the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale metropolitan area lies on land that was formerly wetland. To allow water flows to attain their former levels would flood significant parts of this urban zone.

Exacerbating the problem is the fact that urban development has increasingly encroached on the remaining marshland in the interior of the Everglades. One glaring example of this encroachment is the community developed by Arvida (now St. Joe Towns & Resorts), known as Weston. This town is in western Broward county, houses approximately 53,000 people, and is surrounded on three sides by marshland. In order to avoid flooding, the community had to be elevated by land fill. Mary Doyle, as an assistant to the Secretary of Interior, was the highest ranking official within the Clinton Administration overseeing the formation and authorization of CERP. According to Doyle (2003), when someone from the National Academy of Sciences suggested the removal of Weston she retorted to this individual that this suggestion

'is extremely unhelpful! Don't ever say this again! Weston exists, so turn your scientific attention to some other issue!' She went on to note in our interview that 'we're constrained so deeply already by all kinds of development' (personal interview).

Two features of CERP can be beneficial for the environment in the Everglades. This involves the filling in of one of the major canals that runs from Lake Okeechobee to the Atlantic and passes through the conservation zone.[6] The second aspect of CERP that could serve to help Everglades flora and fauna is the proposal to raise parts of the Tamiami Trail roadway. The roadway passes through the Everglades marsh. Both modifications could specifically improve the health of Everglades National Park by allowing more water to flow into the park. The canal in question and the Tamiami Trail presently obstruct water flow from the conservation areas into the southern most part of the Everglades, where the park is located. This is because the roadway runs along its northern border, and the canal is the closest major canal to the park, which like the road is north of the park.

National parks have historically been promoted by local economic interests as a means to generate tourism revenue (Runte, 1997; Sellars, 1997; Gonzalez, 2001b, chap. 3). In the joint Environmental Affairs Group and Economic Resources Council (1999, p. 15) paper it is noted that 'the economic benefits of Everglades National Park has continued to grow'. The authors of the paper go on to point out that in 1998 the park generated a 'sales benefit' of $131,519,619, which was up 10% from 1994. Sales benefits 'include income to local area businesses or individuals for goods and services' (*Ibid.*, pp. 14, 16).

While the benefits for the Everglades eco-system from CERP are limited, CERP does contain potential hazards for the geology and flora and fauna of the area. These hazards emanate from the underground wells, known as aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) wells. These wells are the key to increasing the water storage capacity of the South Florida water works as envisioned under CERP. Proponents of CERP expect these wells to hold billions of gallons of fresh water for an extended period of time. For a region with a flat topography and a warm to hot year-round climate – which results in a high surface water evaporative rate (German, 2000) – underground ASR wells appear as an ideal answer to the region's water supply needs.

The potential perils of these wells, however, are raised in two reports on CERP released by the National Academy of Sciences' Committee on Restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem (CROGEE) (2001, 2002). ASR wells are not new. They have been used in South Florida for a

number of years. ASR wells store fresh water in the region's subterranean aquifer, known as the Floridan Aquifer (Fernald *et al.*, 1998). Such wells, however, have not been used on the scale proposed within CERP. As a result, it is unknown what kind of impact a large number of ASR wells clustered together will have on the hydro-geology of the region. In other words, it is unclear how the pumping of hundreds millions of gallons of water into the Floridan Aquifer at any one time will affect it, or the surficial aquifer above it, known as the Biscayne Aquifer. Mark Kraus (2003), the lead ecologist of the Audubon of Florida, noted the uncertain effects of CERP's ASR plan on the region's aquifer system, and the irreversible damage that could result from it. He explains that:

> if you've got for sake of example ten wells and they're all pumping ten million gallons of water a day down into an aquifer, that's a tremendous amount of pressure, and so there is a likelihood – it's an unknown, but it's a serious question as to [whether] that aquifer barrier [between the surficial and subterranean aquifers] can explode because the pressure is too high. Are you going to breach it? Or it's just as possible when you're using that water, when you are sucking out water when you need it, are you going to implode your aquifer? At the scale we're talking that could be a very serious problem. (personal interview)

Kraus raises two specific problems that could arise from CERP's ASR well plan. One, the pressure created by pumping large amounts of water under the surficial aquifer could significantly breach the barrier that currently exists between this aquifer and the subterranean aquifer. The effects of such a breach are unknown. Two, pumping large amounts of water out of these underground wells could cause a collapse of substantial parts of the surficial aquifer.

## The policy-making process and CERP

Despite the narrow benefits that CERP contains for the Everglades, and the definite environmental perils contained in CERP, this plan is still entitled the *Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan*. While CERP is largely a water supply plan, it is touted as a plan to undo the environmental damage inflicted on the Everglades eco-system by the Corps's original water drainage and control regime (e.g., Bush, 2002). These pro-Everglades wetland symbols and rhetoric presumably helps draw public support for CERP, and, conversely offsets public opposition to it

(Cahn, 1995; Dicke, 2004). Another factor which serves to enhance public support of CERP is the 'symbolic' inclusion of representatives from environmental groups on the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida (Dryzek, 1996; Gonzalez, 2005, chap. 6).

Tamping down environmental-based opposition, and increasing such support for CERP is especially important because CERP sanctions the destruction of thousands of acres of Everglades marsh by limestone quarrying companies. As noted earlier, CERP proposes to convert limestone pits to be dug in the southeastern Everglades into water storage lakes. These pits are currently expected to consume over 20,000 acres of wetland (Grunwald, 2002 June 24). This aspect of the plan could serve as a focal point of environmentalists' opposition to CERP, and as a basis to mobilize segments of the public against it.

The Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida was the public entity designed to provide public oversight into the formulation of CERP. The governor's commission was convened in 1994. A specific purpose of this commission was to confer with the relevant state and federal agencies in the formulation of CERP. Along with environmentalists on the commission were representatives from business, agriculture, and various government agencies. In the following, Richard Pettigrew, who served as chairperson of the governor's commission, describes the role of this commission in the formulation process that produced CERP:

> We developed a conceptual plan of Everglades restoration, it was adopted unanimously by the [governor's] commission. Congress then directed that the Corps consider that plan and those principles in its comprehensive plan which they were charged to develop. We then had constantly monitored the development of the plan and had input into the plan a series of reports recommending things to be done to improve the plan. All of those were adopted unanimously [by the governor's commission]. All of those [were] approved by the planners [of CERP]. The Corps was the responsible agency, but it was a massive interagency group of engineers, planners, biologists, hydrologists, and so on. It was this comprehensive process. (personal interview)

Thus, according to Pettigrew, the governor's commission took an influential role in the formation of CERP, which as already discussed is predominately a water supply plan. Supporting Pettigrew's interpretation of the role of the commission in the formulation of CERP, Mary Doyle said of the commission that it served as 'the key policy engine for the

whole restoration' project (personal interview). The participation on the governor's commission of environmental group representatives opened the door for certain environmental groups (e.g. Audubon) to lobby Congress on behalf of CERP when the plan was submitted for Congressional approval (Grunwald, 2002 June 23). Richard Grosso serves as the legal counsel for the Everglades Coalition, which is made up of approximately 40 environmental major and minor groups interested in the Everglades (Everglades Coalition, 2003). Grosso (2003) describes how the composition of the governor's commission created a process that served to project unanimity among the different stakeholders seeking to shape the future of the Everglades:

> At that point [2000], Congress was being asked to authorize an $8 billion project that it would pay half of, and the work of the Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, created the dynamic that at that point environmental lobbyists and lobbyists for big sugar were both in D.C. lobbying Congress in agreement to authorize this [the CERP].

Grosso goes on to assert that this joint lobbying effort was so central to the Congressional authorization of CERP that it 'just never would have happened without the consensus that the Commission for a Sustainable South Florida had created, so that was really valuable' (personal interview).[7]

Those environmental groups that were strident about adding components to CERP that would have facilitated historic water flow to the Everglades were excluded from the governor's commission. Most glaring was the exclusion of the Friends of the Everglades (FOE). FOE was founded by Marjory Stoneman Douglas. Her writings (1988 [1948]) helped popularize nature in the Everglades. Moreover, it was Douglas who first publicly raised the need for Everglades restoration (Davis J.E., 2003). As already noted, FOE did not endorse CERP because it does not seek to restore the Everglades water flow through the EAA. Because CERP lacked this feature, Juanita Greene (2003), a senior member of FOE, holds that CERP only gives the 'impression the Everglades was being restored' (personal interview). Pettigrew said of groups like FOE that 'some [environmental groups] are not well-grounded in science or the programme details. They take kind of emotional potshots. Some people just insist that what you've got to have is flow, the Lake through the EAA.' He went on to add that 'the natural flow-way concept some people have is a very difficult one to address. We decided

it was not really feasible and not realistic. There are some people who still fight about a flow-way.' When asked to name who some of these people are Pettigrew named the Arthur R. Marshall Foundation and the Sierra Club (personal interview). Neither of these groups had representatives on the governor's commission.

Terrace 'Rock' Salt, as an engineer with the Army Corps of Engineers, took a central role in the formulation of CERP (Doyle, 2003). Additionally, he is currently the executive director of the South Florida Taskforce on Everglades Restoration. This group is composed of all government agencies that have a stake in CERP. Salt was 'also senior Everglades policy advisor to [the former] Secretary [of the Interior under George W. Bush, Gale] Norton' (Salt, 2003 [personal interview]). He said of the local representatives of the Sierra Club that they are a '*Pain-in-the-neck*. They're not helpful.' According to Salt, the Sierra Club critiqued CERP as 'nothing but a water supply plan'. Moreover, the club alleged that 'the only reason we're doing ASR is because we don't have the courage to stand up to some greedy sugar barons [which run operations in the EAA] and all this kind of stuff'. While acknowledging that he does 'have a little nervousness on a couple' of points raised by the local club, Salt felt that 'the way they say it you just can't even engage on it' (personal interview).

The ability of policymakers to exclude critical environmental groups and activists from directly participating in the CERP policy-making process supports Miliband's (1989) contention that '"greens" and all other new social movements are absolutely and inescapably dependent on the potential strength of labor movements and their political agencies' (p. 109). In other words, effective working class organizations are a necessary requisite to mobilize the public on environmental issues. Moreover, these organizations can educate the masses on the myriad ways that economic elites and producer groups, and their allies within the state, will seek to confuse and disorient public opinion on environmental issues (e.g., through pro-environment symbols). Without such public mobilization and education efforts, environmental groups will be politically outmanoeuvered. Miliband (1994b) goes on to assert that the only effective way for environmental groups to draw a coherent and durable alliance with working class organizations is for the development of a 'red-green synthesis', whereby such stances as opposition to the political/economic dominance of multinational corporations over the global economy become central to the environmental movement (p. 141).

With groups like FOE and the Sierra Club being excluded from the governor's commission, all recommendations on 'Everglades restora-

tion were adopted unanimously' by the commission (Pettigrew, 2003 [personal interview]). Those environmental groups included on the governor's commission were symbolically included. (These groups were the Audubon of Florida [then known as National Audubon], Florida Wildlife Federation, and Miami-Dade & Broward League of Women Voters.) In other words, those environmental groups that were directly incorporated into the policymaking process as it related to the formulation of CERP were so incorporated because they did not seek to challenge the water supply agenda that seemingly dominated the commission's proceedings (Governor's Commission, 1999) and the formulation of CERP. Pettigrew said of the governor's commission that 'we' were 'trying to develop a consensus coming in' (personal interview). While the inclusion of certain environmental groups into the CERP formulation process did not substantially increase its eco-system restoration features, their inclusion, as already discussed, led to their support for CERP in Congress, and helped create the impression of consensus and unanimity on this issue.

## Conclusion

The case of water control in South Florida demonstrates how the typology and time-frame used by Worster to analyse Western water politics and policies can be applied elsewhere in the US. The periods of *incipience*, *florescence*, and *empire* that Worster found in the West correspond to water manipulation efforts in the Everglades area. Moreover, in South Florida, like the US West, water control is central to wealth creation. The drainage of the EAA and the urban zone serve as the means to create multi-billion agricultural and real estate industries. Furthermore, as documented throughout this paper, the development of the South Florida water regime has historically been consistent with the policy preferences and economic interests of the economic elites and producer groups in the region. This extends to the formulation of CERP. Thus, the construction of the Everglades water control infrastructure is supportive of the business dominance view of policymaking in the US.

The period described by Worster as *empire* is the period when government resources would be sufficiently unleashed to perfect the system of water control both in the West and in South Florida. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan represents a continuing effort to perfect the water control regime in South Florida, by adding a significant water storage component to it. This modification of South Florida's water

management infrastructure is taking place within a context of broad public concern over the environment. Hence, CERP is pushed by its proponents not as a utilitarian project, but as an effort to protect the environment. The effort to portray CERP as an environmental restoration plan involves symbols, rhetoric, and symbolic inclusion.

Ralph Miliband's ideas on political power and his analysis of politics within capitalist societies lends significant insight into understanding how the ecology of South Florida has become, and remains, subservient to the economic and political needs of economic elites and producer groups. Moreover, his thinking on the new social movements helps us understand why South Florida environmental groups have been unable to challenge or even modify the region's environmental regime, inspite of widespread concerns about the health and viability of the environment.

## Notes

1 This is a revised version of an article which originally appeared as Gonzalez, G.A. (2005) 'The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan: Economic or Environmental Sustainability?', *Polity* 37 no. 4, pp. 466–90. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

2 For example, the US Business Roundtable, Council on Foreign Relations, and the Committee on Economic Development.

3 The theoretical approach that emphasizes the political behaviour and influence of economic elites is often called economic elite theory (Lamare, 1993, 2000; Gonzalez, 1998, 2001a). However, an alternative view that emphasizes the political influence of producer groups, as distinct from economic elites, is referred to by Andrew McFarland (2004) as neopluralism (Kamieniecki, 2006; also see Manley's [1983] concept of 'pluralism II'). Importantly, Miliband's concept of the 'ruling class' incorporates both ideas into a theory of power, while maintaining an analytic distinction between them, because producer groups and economic elites do not always have the same economic and political interests. In some instances they disagree over policy issues (Domhoff, 1978); for an example see (Gonzalez, 2001b, 69–77).

4 The CERP project is currently in the process of acquiring the lands that are to augment the existing conservation areas. This is to serve as the first stage of the project. The full implementation of CERP is expected to take a number of years (Landers, 2004).

5 A substantial portion of the data for this paper is composed of interviews with individuals who were either directly involved with formulation of CERP or strongly interested in it. I determined who I would interview through two means. One, I sought to interview individuals within government who took leading roles in the formation of CERP and/or Everglades issues. Examples of this group of interviewees include: Mary Doyle (former Assistant Secretary of the Department of Interior), Richard Pettigrew (Chairperson of the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida), Roy Rogers (Member of Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida), Mark Kraus, Deputy

Director Audubon of Florida (in lieu of Stewart Strahl who is President of Audubon of Florida and served on the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida), James French (Member of the Governor's Commission on the Everglades), and Terrace 'Rock' Salt (former district engineer in Jacksonville with the Army Corps of Engineers and current executive director of South Florida Eco-System Restoration Taskforce). Two, I sought to interview those individuals most prominently noted by my interviewees as active on the CERP formation process or in South Florida water/everglades politics. This means lead me to interview Richard Grosso (legal counsel for the Everglades Coalition), Juanita Greene (former vice-president of Friends of the Everglades), and James Garner (lawyer/lobbyist). Altogether, I conducted 13 unstructured interviews, averaging an hour in length.

6 The drainage capacity that is going to be lost by filling in this canal is going to be recovered by enhancing the drainage of another major drainage canal.

7 The issue that became most salient in the discussion surrounding federal approval of CERP was the question of 'water assurances'. Proponents of such assurances wanted Congress's authorizing legislation to specify how much of the water captured in the CERP water storage infrastructure would be allocated to serve the regional wildlife. Advocates of this proposal generally hoped that 80% of the water captured would be earmarked for wilderness areas. In the end, the authorizing legislation contained no assurances. For a detailed discussion of the federal legislative process that produced the federal government's authorization of CERP see (Doyle and Jodrey, 2002).

# 11
# Conclusion: Miliband for a Sceptical Age?

*Paul Wetherly, Clyde W. Barrow and Peter Burnham*

Ralph Miliband made an enormous contribution to the revival and development of Marxist political thought in the second half of the last century, through a range of books and articles, from *Parliamentary Socialism* (1961) to the posthumously published *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (1994b). These works stand as important statements and explorations of core concepts and theoretical claims drawn from classical Marxism, and as attempts to develop and apply Marxist analysis to understand and intervene in the shifting economic and political conditions of his time. But what of our time? Does Miliband's work still help us to understand and intervene in the world of the 21st century?

This collection of essays is testament to the continuing relevance of Miliband's work, at least in showing that Miliband's ideas continue to merit discussion and debate. That is as it should be for a major thinker. For example, any discussion of the state debate within Marxism is likely to pay attention to *The State in Capitalist Society* and the Miliband-Poulantzas debate (e.g. see Hay, 2006). However, for Hay the interest in Miliband's work is historical – it represents a stage in the development of Marxist state theory that has been superceded by subsequent theoretical developments, notably Jessop's 'strategic-relational' approach. In his own contribution to this collection Jessop argues the need to move on from Miliband's partial or one-sided analytical strategy which neglects the form of the capitalist type of state. There are scant references to Miliband in Jessop's writings on state theory: the Miliband-Poulantzas debate gets a few mentions in *State Theory* (1990), and there are no references to Miliband in *The Future of the Capitalist State* (2002). In this collection Burnham also argues, though from a different standpoint, that Miliband's state theory employs an analytical strategy that is wanting. In Burnham's view Miliband is wrong to

emphasize the institutional differentiation of state and economic structure when, in fact, the state should be analysed as an aspect of the social relations of production.

Jessop and Burnham are not alone in this collection in offering sharp criticisms of particular aspects of Miliband's work. Blackledge and Hoffman offer contrasting critiques based on the residues of Leninism in Miliband's thinking. Both argue that Miliband's conception of political strategy is wanting. For Blackledge this is because Miliband turned away from a Leninist revolutionary path, whereas for Hoffman it is precisely the residues of Leninism that are problematic. Blackledge urges a reconnection with and Hoffman a sharper break from Leninism. These contributions rehearse the argument between the claim that revolution (i.e. insurrection) is the only strategy that can find a path out of capitalism and the claim that what this path leads to is authoritarianism.

However other contributors to this collection emphasize the continuing relevance of a Milibandian perspective, rejecting the story told by Hay and Jessop according to which the chief merit of Miliband's contribution to state theory in the past has been in allowing the debate to move on to the higher stage of development attained today. As Barrow shows, the view of the Milibandian perspective as a more primitive version of state theory relies on a simplistic and one-sided interpretation of Miliband as an 'instrumentalist' thinker. Barrow and Wetherly both aim to replace this 'straw man' with a more nuanced and sophisticated interpretation of the conception of the state as an instrument, as an element within Milibandian state theory. Both argue that, in its essentials, this theory has not been surpassed but remains relevant today, even if it needs to be updated with regard to the empirical and institutional details of contemporary states in capitalist society.

Miliband's analysis of the state in capitalist society was an extension of his critique of Labourism and parliamentarism. The analysis of 'the western system of power' provided a more systematic theoretical framework for understanding the limits of social democracy and for setting out an alternative political strategy for socialist advance. Thus social democratic parties moved from the centre of analysis to becoming an element within a larger scale theoretical endeavour. Although the focus of Miliband's work moved away from Labourism to the wider concern with state power and class power, Labour party politics remained a theme of his writing throughout and constitutes an important part of his legacy.

In this volume Burnham argues strongly for the continuing relevance of Miliband's critique of parliamentary socialism. Indeed, while

Miliband has fallen out of favour in the realm of more abstract state theory in some quarters, his analysis of Labourism has continued to provide the basis for a productive, empirically focused, research programme. The continuing vitality of a Milibandian perspective in this field is shown in the work of, among others, Coates, Panitch and Leys (for a review of this work see Coates and Panitch, 2003). In this collection Manley and Gonzalez both, in different ways, draw on a Milibandian perspective to inform empirical analysis. Manley shows on a broad canvas how the development of welfare policy can be explained plausibly as a response to class conflict and as an aspect of a class state, incorporating into this analysis the role and limits of social democracy in the guise of progressivism. Gonzalez shows how a business dominance model of the policy-making process influenced by Miliband can be used to explain a specific case of environmental policy.

This collection of essays does not, then, furnish a straightforward or agreed conclusion on the relevance of Miliband today, for there are strong differences among the contributors. It is one of the privileges of editorship to have an opportunity, in a conclusion, to put a gloss on these differing assessments and come up with a brief, and inevitably contentious, assessment of the continuing relevance of Miliband's work. How should Miliband be positioned in relation to the Marxist tradition to which he contributed?

Despite Miliband's status as a key contributor to the New Left, as charted by Newman in this collection and in his biography (2002), he can be seen in much of his work as essentially a classical Marxist in the sense that, although he stressed the incomplete development of Marxist politics within the classical texts, his own work can be read largely as an attempt to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of the classical tradition. Thus, as Newman points out, Miliband always maintained a critical detachment from the New Left. For example, *Marxism and Politics* (1977b) was conceived as a work of 'reconstruction of Marxist politics' (p. 15), made necessary by the 'absence of systematic political theorization' (p. 2) in the classical texts, the restricting impact on theoretical enquiry of Stalinism, and the 'marked "economism" in Marxist thought' (p. 9) involving a strong tendency to 'devalue or ignore the importance of "mere" political forms' (p. 11).

Such a reconstruction could not be a question of just assembling the pieces to be found in the classical texts, because these were only fragments that did not comprise a whole and, of course, they were silent in relation to political experience in the 20th century. Equally important, the classical texts did not comprise a coherent body of work but 'incor-

porate tensions, contradictions, and unresolved problems' (p. 5). In particular, Miliband questioned the link between Marx's thought and its enlargement by Lenin, and consequently the coherence of 'Marxism-Leninism'. Thus an important feature of Miliband's approach is that it involved critical engagement with the classical tradition, and he emphasized that 'Marxism ... is full of questions to be asked and – no less important – of answers to be questioned' (p. 14).

One of the answers to be questioned by Miliband was, of course, economic determinism as a way of understanding the relationship between the economic and political realms, or between 'economic base' and 'political and legal superstructure'. Thus the very task of setting out the main contours of a Marxist political analysis in *Marxism and Politics* involved questioning the tradition. The possibility of such an analysis required a concept of the relative autonomy of politics and the state. However, adherence to key concepts and theoretical claims of classical Marxism is evident throughout his work. This is exemplified in the analysis of the state in capitalist society. Even though the state is relatively autonomous it remains, for Miliband, a class state or capitalist state. Indeed, Miliband's analysis can be interpreted as an elaboration of Marx's 'primary view' of the state in the *Communist Manifesto* as 'a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. Even though Miliband saw this as a too-simplistic formulation that, again, raises many questions, it conveys the essence of the classical Marxist view with which Miliband mounted a challenge to pluralist orthodoxy. The questions were how could a state that is institutionally differentiated from the economic system and state elite that is separate from the capitalist class be conceived as an 'instrument' of that class. In *The State in Capitalist Society* and, more systematically, in *Marxism and Politics*, Miliband answered these questions by setting out the interlocking three reasons given by classical Marxism: the ideological views of those in charge of the state, the economic power of capitalists, and the constraints faced by the state operating within a capitalist system. Miliband was saying that classical Marxism contains the raw materials for a nuanced theory of the state of which the famous line in the *Manifesto* is a pithy expression. There is not much doubt that Miliband saw his account of the state as respecting the constraint of what Marx wrote on the subject and as being consistent with Marx's views.

In his final work, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*, conceived as a reappraisal of socialism, Miliband refers to classical Marxism as no more than a 'major point of reference' (1994b, p. 5). Here again Miliband's approach emphasizes the need to engage with this tradition, using its

resources selectively. Nevertheless in its general tenor the work is a restatement of key classical Marxist arguments, qualified rather than rejected. What runs through this 'reappraisal' is the centrality of class analysis to diagnosing what is wrong with capitalism and identifying the agencies and strategies capable of achieving socialist advance. Politics in contemporary capitalist society is (still) largely constituted by class struggles; a relatively cohesive capitalist class is involved in a 'solid partnership' (p. 18) with the holders of state power to constitute a power elite; the state is fundamentally an 'instrument' of the capitalist class in virtue of the ability of 'the corporate partner … to exercise a major influence on its state partner' (p. 18); and, the working class or 'wage-earning population' (p. 127) remains the key agency of socialist advance. For Miliband, Marx's conception of the relationship between class and consciousness was 'greatly flawed' (p. 128) in imputing a revolutionary consciousness to the working class. However this is a qualification of Marx's view, and Miliband affirms that the link between class and consciousness is 'quite strong'. It is so for the reasons given by Marx, namely the experience of work and exploitation. Because of this there is chronic pressure from below, as 'the need to seek reform is … "organic" to the working class' (p. 135). Thus 'the working class … remains a potentially dangerous class' from a capitalist standpoint, that is, potentially a force for socialist advance.

Another way of characterisng Miliband's thought is as a doubly critical enterprise – critical, that is, of both social democracy and communism. This was, of course, what positioned him within the New Left. On the one hand he asserts the enduring theoretical and political significance of the Marxist tradition against liberal/pluralist political theory and social democratic political practice. Thus *Parliamentary Socialism* is a critique of Labourism as an ideology of social reform within the parameters of a political strategy confined to 'parliamentarism'. *The State in Capitalist Society* is a critique of the pluralist analysis of the state in capitalist society which advances a Marxist alternative. On the other hand, Miliband sought to rescue a questioning and even sceptical way of doing Marxist analysis from Stalinism and other simplistic or formulaic approaches. For example his critique of Labourism was not that a class conscious proletariat had been betrayed, and he rejected any straightforward connection between class position and consciousness. Similarly, his analysis of the relationship between class power and state power rejected any notion of a straightforward translation of the former into the latter, or of the capitalist class as principal to the state as agent. And he rejected the simplistic notion that the state could 'wither away' in a post-capitalist society.

Assessing Miliband's continuing relevance is closely bound up with the relevance of Marxism more generally, particularly in view of Miliband's close affiliation with classical Marxism. Miliband's work has been brushed to the margins of theoretical and political debate along with Marxism as a whole in an age when the 'death of socialism' has been widely proclaimed. This more sceptical, or hostile, climate for socialist thought was the starting point for Miliband's last work. However even within Marxism Miliband's work has suffered from a more sceptical attitude as intellectual fashions have shifted away from classical Marxism. For some thinkers Miliband's work is irretrievably tainted by the strong vestiges of orthodox Marxism. Miliband would, for example, be implicated in Marsh's rejection of economism, determinism and structuralism as the fatal errors of classical Marxism that must be expunged to enable Marxism to continue to flourish as critical social theory (1999). Yet Marsh prescribes a cure for an imaginary illness that leaves the patient unrecognizable. For some notion that political phenomena can be explained by the nature of the economic structure, and that class analysis is central to such explanation, is intrinsic to Marxism. Miliband's later works rejected these post- (or ex-) Marxist tendencies. His own questioning of classical Marxism continued to seek a more nuanced reconstruction that left the main theoretical pillars in place.

As an independent, classically-inclined Marxist, Miliband's entire work was focused on restating and refining the critique of capitalism (particularly in relation to politics and the state) and identifying the agencies and strategies capable of realizing socialist advance. In broad terms, the following themes and pre-occupations can be traced through Miliband's books. Beginning with the critique of Labourism and *Parliamentary Socialism* as a dead end for socialist politics, he moved on to a more general analysis of the state and politics, in *The State in Capitalist Society* and *Marxism and Politics*. This general analysis was then translated into a more concrete discussion of the specific example of *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*. As an essentially society-centred perspective focusing on the relationship between class power and state power, Miliband's state theory required the analysis of capitalist society, particularly with respect to class division and conflict, and this was elaborated in *Divided Societies*. Finally Miliband brought these themes together in the reappraisal of socialism and sketch of socialist strategy that was his final work, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*.

The critique of *Parliamentary Socialism* retains its relevance today, as shown by the capacity of the *Milibandian* perspective to sustain a research programme, and the extension of the perspective to an analysis of the

emergence of New Labour (e.g. see Panitch and Leys, 1997). One of the themes of this work has been to develop a political economy perspective that had been relatively neglected through Miliband's political lens (Coates and Panitch, 2003, p. 319).

One of the enduring strengths of Miliband's analysis of *The State in Capitalist Society* is the emphasis on identifying specific causal mechanisms through which the institutionally differentiated state system comes to operate as an 'instrument' of the capitalist class, backed up by detailed empirical analysis. In other words, Miliband was concerned to specify *how* economic determination works – how the nature of the economic structure explains the character of the state. It was a strength, rather than a weakness, of Miliband's approach that he was able to demonstrate the superiority of Marxism over a pluralist model empirically, and without appeal to a supposedly superior distinctive Marxist method.

In theoretical terms, Miliband's analysis combined structure (structural constraints) and agency (ideological dispositions of the state elite, economic pressure). These mechanisms provide a fruitful basis for empirical research, and their influence can be seen in subsequent work (e.g. Block, 1987; Luger, 2000). It is true that Miliband's work cannot, of course, be seen as the final statement of the Marxist theory of politics and the state. He never achieved a convincing synthesis of structure and agency, the concept of structural constraint was under-theorized as a consequence of the under-development of a political economy dimension in his work, the concept of relative autonomy was paradoxical in that it was explained as necessary to enable the state to serve the interests of the capitalist class, and Miliband didn't fully analyse the strategic selectivity of the state. While Miliband did address the international dimension of class struggle in his later works, the constraints of his own time did not allow him to fully incorporate an analysis of globalization and its implications for the nation-state, class struggles and global governance. Nevertheless the concepts and modes of analysis identified by Miliband provide an indispensable basis for a Marxist theory of the state (Wetherly, 2005).

For Miliband, a Marxist theory of politics is constructed on the basis of class analysis. Capitalism is a system of class relationships, class is the fundamental social division within capitalist societies, and politics is essentially an expression of underlying economic class conflicts. Thus state power is largely explicable in terms of class power. Indeed, Miliband's whole theoretical approach can be reasonably designated by the term 'class analysis'. It is, of course, the claimed exhaustion or

redundancy of class analysis that has been the focus of much post- or ex-Marxist theorizing, and this claim has also provided much of the intellectual justification for the end of Parliamentary socialism and the supposed 'renewal' of social democracy in the guise of the 'third way' (Giddens, 1994, 1998).

In broad terms the criticisms of class analysis are that: Marxism has a flawed understanding of the link between class position and consciousness – that the link is weak, that there is no necessary link or that there is necessarily no link; the class structure of capitalism that may have driven class-based political struggles in the past has fragmented; and, Marxism neglects non-class identities that drive political struggles and that have become more prominent.

Although class analysis is a theme throughout Miliband's work, its defence against these criticisms was the main purpose of *Divided Societies*: to demonstrate 'that … class conflict remained the most important, indeed the absolutely central, fact in the life of advanced capitalist societies' (1989, p. v). If pluralism was the main intellectual adversary in 1969, the decline of class thesis was his target 20 years later. The centrality of class remained a cornerstone of his analysis of the prospects for socialist advance in *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*.

In this work Miliband emphasizes the importance of the connections between class, party and state: the working class is the primary agent for socialist advance, and the vehicle in which that advance can be achieved is a political party. Socialist advance would require the exercise of state power, but in a context in which the democratization of the state is carried through, and through a process of 'dual power'. New social movements have an important supporting role in socialist advance, but they cannot replace class and party. Miliband is right to point out 'the limitations, in socialist terms, of new social movements' (1994b, p. 140) since, whatever their overall weight within political struggles and their achievement of their aims, such movements do not, by and large, aspire to 'fundamentally alter the existing structures of capitalist power' (1994b, p. 140). The question for socialist strategy is to what extent they are merely adaptive or potentially anti-systemic. The centrality of class, apart from the numerical weight of wage earners within the population, is that their interests are indeed 'organically' anti-capitalist, at least in the sense of the need to seek reform of the system. The major problem for Miliband, reflecting what is perhaps the greatest weakness in his work, is the failure to create a new socialist party that could, in the UK context, bypass or replace the Labour party as the main expression of and vehicle for socialist politics.

In the face of this failure, and the very remote possibility of constructing such a party in the adverse conditions at the end of the century, Miliband was reconciled to the reality that 'the best that the Left can hope for in the relevant future in the advanced capitalist countries … is the strengthening of left reformism as a current of thought and policy in social democratic parties' (1994b, p. 148). That is the best hope despite the fact that 'the outlook for left reformism is at present rather bleak' (1994b, p. 148), a judgment that has not been altered by ten years of New Labour in the UK.

*Socialism for a Sceptical Age* is, in some ways, the work of a sceptical Marxist. It reaffirms the critique of capitalism as having lost none of its relevance or force, but is cautious in terms of the prospects for change in a socialist direction, and moderate in the measures it advocates to effect such change. Although the book is intended to counter pessimism on the Left and to keep alive the belief 'that socialist democracy is a feasible and desirable alternative to capitalism and capitalist democracy' (p. 2), optimism is offered only in small measure.

It can be argued that the book does not live up to its aspiration to reassess the socialist enterprise in the light of 'the vast changes which have occurred in capitalism and in the world at large' (1994b, p. 2), particularly in relation to the nature and implications of globalization. Economic globalization profoundly alters the balance of risks and benefits facing the nation state in the area of economic management, but Miliband minimizes the problems that the extent of ownership by foreign multinationals and the trans-nationalization of the production process would pose for a strategy of socializing a 'predominant' element of the economy. The limitations of national economic strategies mean that democratic reforms also have to be considered at a supranational level, in terms of 'global governance' mechanisms. Finally, the question of agency, and the potential for the working class to act as a political force in support of socialist advance, also needs to be posed beyond the 'settling of accounts' at a national level.

Behind the questions of the party and the state as the vehicles for socialist advance lies the question of class and consciousness. Miliband emphasized the difficulties of developing class consciousness – rejecting Marx's '"imputation" of a "revolutionary consciousness" to the proletariat' (1994b, p. 128) – and that this would require a party dedicated to carrying out the arduous work of propaganda and education. The inability of the Labour party to engage in this task was, of course, central to Miliband's critique. But there is something of a chicken-and-egg problem here: although a party is needed to perform an educative function, a

certain level of consciousness is needed to enable such a party to get going as a viable organization.

For there to be any prospect of socialist advance it must be possible to impute some level of class consciousness to the working class. What grounds are there for optimism on this score? As we have seen, Miliband does maintain that there is an 'organic' link of some sort between class position and consciousness, that is the need to seek reform. And the historical record does show that 'at least a large part of [the working class] has frequently supported left parties which promised far-reaching changes in the social order' (1994b, p. 133). However Miliband strikes a sceptical note, acknowledging that theoretical analysis and empirical observation does not allow us to be certain about the feasibility of socialist democracy as an alternative to capitalism. We 'cannot prove this, since the proof has to be the construction of this alternative, which remains a task to be accomplished' (1994b, p. 2).

Miliband's view is that the future is more open and uncertain than classical Marxism suggests. Socialism is a possible future. In Miliband's view the realization of such a possibility will be 'a process stretching over many generations'. Socialism should be seen in terms of a 'permanent striving to advance the goals that define it', rather than a condition of society that can ever be 'fully "achieved"' (1994b, p. 3). The accessibility and lucidity of Miliband's writing means that it remains highly relevant to that striving.

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