

BEYOND THE INTERREGNUM:
THE PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION

by

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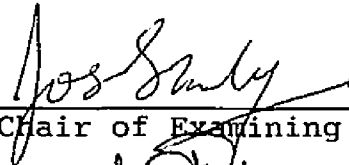
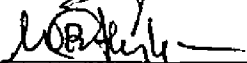
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Abstract

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The collapse of communism, the decline of social democracy, and the abandonment of socialist aims by many Third World states and popular movements have led many scholars to believe that the socialist experience is over. This dissertation challenges the view that we are witnessing the "End of Socialism" and explores the prospects and problems of socialist transformation in the advanced capitalist societies. This work develops a critique of the prominent recent obituaries for socialism advanced by Francis Fukuyama, the postmodernists, the postmarxists, and Adam Przeworski. The dissertation argues that the contradictions and problems of capitalism are likely to lead to a rebirth of socialist movements. This work also critically assesses recent scholarly literature on socialist strategy and politics, focusing on the writings of Nicos Poulantzas, Ralph Miliband, Ernest

Mandel, Ellen Meiksins Wood, Leo Panitch, Alex Callinicos, Raymond Williams, and Norman Geras. The dissertation develops a distinctive argument for a revolutionary and democratic process of socialist transformation in the advanced capitalist societies. This work defends the plausibility of such a process and discusses the political and ideological conditions for its success.

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Introduction

The very idea of a dissertation on the prospects and problems of socialist transformation in the advanced capitalist societies may appear curious or wrong-headed to some readers. After all, most of the Marxist-Leninist regimes and parties around the world have collapsed in the last several years. Many Third World governments and movements have abandoned their commitments to socialist objectives. And in the countries of advanced capitalism, the failures of communist and social democratic parties have contributed to a historically unprecedented "crisis of working class politics."¹ For many analysts, the present global crisis of socialism offers strong evidence in support of Francis Fukuyama's claim that liberal democracy may be the most satisfactory form of society imaginable, one whose ideals or principles cannot be improved on, and thus the "End of History."²

Moreover, Fukuyama's tentative case for the inevitability of democratic capitalism is hardly the only prominent obituary for socialism to be advanced in recent years. Reassessing the legacy of Enlightenment concepts of reason, freedom, and progress after two centuries which "have given us as much terror as we can take," various postmodernist writers

have repudiated the notion of emancipatory theory itself.³ At the same time, scholars as diverse as the postmarxists and the Analytical Marxist Adam Przeworski have virtually dismissed the potential of the working class as an agency of radical social change. From the Left, as well as from the Right, numerous scholars have argued that the socialist vision of a socialized economy, a state which is subordinated to society, and working class power must be discarded as an outdated and unworkable utopia. As postmodernists can appreciate, there has never been a greater diversity of theoretical challenges to socialist theory and practice.

It is hardly surprising that public and academic discourse in the advanced capitalist countries has been dominated in recent years by scholars arguing for the "End of History" or some other variant of the "End of Socialism." However, it is unfortunate that considerably less attention has been afforded the work of Marxist and socialist scholars who defend the desirability and viability of the socialist project in these societies. James Petras surely speaks for many of these writers when he acknowledges that "We are at a low point--perhaps the lowest in this century," but maintains that the "long march" toward socialism "is a viable project."⁴ Insisting that exploitation, domination, and oppression are inherent in capitalist society, Alex Callinicos submits that "There are good reasons for believing that, once the immediate clamor of the 'triumph of the West' dies

down, the need for visions of an alternative society to capitalism and for strategies to realize them will reassert itself."⁵ And Ralph Miliband suggests that while the conditions for radical social change do not currently exist in these societies, "It is quite realistic to think that these conditions will come into being within the next ten, twenty, thirty years--a long time in the life of an individual, but a mere moment in historical time."⁶

As Perry Anderson observes, the global crisis of socialism has not diminished "the vitality of the socialist tradition" or the importance of contemporary theoretical work on the Left.⁷ During the last two decades, many Marxist and socialist writers have made impressive scholarly contributions to the retheorization of the socialist project in the advanced capitalist countries. The work of Nicos Poulantzas, Ralph Miliband, Ernest Mandel, Ellen Meiksins Wood, Leo Panitch, Alex Callinicos, Raymond Williams, and Norman Geras, among others, has significantly expanded the intellectual reach of Marxist and socialist political theory and offered diverse and insightful perspectives on the renewal and revitalization of socialist movements in these societies. Recent Marxist and socialist discussions provide some powerful reasons for believing that the present historical conjuncture in the countries of advanced capitalism should be viewed not as the "End of History" or the "End of Socialism," but instead as an "interregnum" in which, as Gramsci

wrote, "the crisis consists in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born."⁸ Contemporary Marxist and socialist writers have also devoted considerable attention to the concrete political and ideological conditions required for any prospective rebirth of socialism, and the central strategic and political questions which must be addressed by new movements committed to socialist transformation.

This dissertation is concerned with the rebirth of socialism and the renewal of struggles to move beyond our "interregnum" toward the abolition of capitalism. The dissertation comprises a critical study of recent scholarly work on the prospects and problems of socialist transformation in the advanced capitalist societies, and the development of a sustained argument for a revolutionary and democratic conception of this process. The dissertation aims to contribute to the literature in contemporary political and social theory by presenting a strong case for the renewal of socialist movements in these societies and by articulating a compelling vision of how working class-led popular movements might be able to successfully overcome capital and the capitalist state in the decades ahead. The conception of a revolutionary and democratic process of socialist transformation outlined here is intended as a contribution to the further revitalization of Marxist and socialist political theory.

The first two chapters of the dissertation develop

rigorous critiques of the most prominent recent obituaries for socialism and argue that the rebirth of the socialist project in the advanced capitalist countries is likely. Chapter 1, "The End of Socialism?" challenges Fukuyama's theses on the "End of History" and the sweeping rejection of emancipatory theory by postmodernist writers such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard. This chapter argues that the exploitation, domination, and oppression inherent in capitalist society and capitalism's inability to solve "the major problems confronting human-kind" are likely to lead to the renewal of socialist movements.⁹ The chapter further argues that the postmodernist interrogation of philosophical "metanarratives" and universalistic foundationalism does not justify the wholesale repudiation of emancipatory or socialist theory.

Chapter 2, "The Working Class and Socialism," contests the dismissal of the working class as an agency of socialist transformation by postmarxists such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Jurgen Habermas, and Andre Gorz, and by the Analytical Marxist Adam Przeworski. This chapter argues that the postmarxists err grievously in depicting the working class as "declining" in "postindustrial" society, and in denying that the working class has an objective interest in, and potential capacity for socialist transformation. This chapter further argues that Przeworski is gravely mistaken when he contends that problems of working class formation

unforeseen by Marx and the "very structure" of capitalist democracy virtually preclude any possibility of viable new working class movements for socialism.¹⁰

Chapter 3, "The Rebirth of Socialism," draws on the theoretical contributions of Antonio Gramsci and contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars in exploring the political and ideological conditions required for the rebirth of socialism. This chapter argues for the development of a new kind of socialist party and a new kind of working class movement for socialism informed by Gramsci's insights. Particular attention is afforded here to the role of the socialist party and broader socialist movement in the self-transformation of the working class into an agency of revolutionary and democratic social change. The chapter further argues, against the postmarxists, that the creation of working class-led social alliances for socialism--new historic blocs--and the development of working class or socialist hegemony are possible.

The next two chapters interrogate the major perspectives on socialist strategy within contemporary Marxism and offer an alternative conception of revolutionary and democratic socialist transformation. Chapter 4, "Radical Reformism," examines the arguments of Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband on behalf of a socialist strategy which rejects the "total transformation" of existing political institutions and envisions a major role in socialist transformation for

"the main political institutions--notably parliament--inherited from bourgeois democracy."¹¹ This chapter agrees that socialist parties and movements must win "the battle of democracy," that radically democratized representative assemblies are integral to socialist democracy, and that the civic freedoms of bourgeois democracy should be protected and expanded in the process of socialist transformation.¹² The chapter argues, however, that Poulantzas and Miliband are far less persuasive in suggesting that socialist transformation could be achieved "more or less within constitutional bounds," and that they dispose too easily of the Marxist concepts of "smashing" the capitalist state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹³ This chapter argues that socialist transformation is inconceivable without the abolition of the capitalist state and the creation of a new state, and that this process of fundamental social change would require not only electoral and constitutional struggles, but also direct, extra-parliamentary, even extra-constitutional mass action.

Chapter 5, "Rethinking Revolution," assesses the case for socialist revolution presented by Ernest Mandel and argues that revolutionary and democratic socialist transformation must be critically reconceptualized. The chapter agrees that "smashing" the capitalist state and creating "the dictatorship of the proletariat," retheorized in the context of advanced capitalism, must be the central strategic objectives

of socialist parties and movements. The chapter further agrees that the development of workers' councils and the democratic coordination of extra-constitutional mass action are indispensable for socialist transformation, and endorses the view that a new, socialist state should comprise a central congress of workers' councils and radically democratized representative assemblies. However, the chapter criticizes Mandel's rejection of working class or socialist hegemony and electoral mandates for socialism as essential preconditions for socialist transformation, and challenges some of his views on the devolution of power and the abolition of bureaucracy. Drawing on the respective strengths of the radical reformist and revolutionary perspectives, this chapter outlines an alternative socialist strategy for a democratic revolution in the advanced capitalist countries.

Chapter 6, "The Conquest of State Power," explores the prospects and problems of such a revolutionary and democratic strategy in these societies. This chapter develops a critique of Adam Przeworski's argument that "an overwhelming mandate for socialist transformations is not a likely outcome of elections regardless of strategies parties adopt."¹⁴ The chapter argues that the development of new working class movements, a new historic bloc, and working class or socialist hegemony may well enable socialist parties to win "the battle of democracy" and achieve electoral mandates for socialist transformation. The chapter also argues, against

Miliband, that new socialist movements may well be able to win broad popular support for extra-constitutional direct action, and, against Mandel, that constitutional and extra-constitutional struggles could be successfully conjoined to break the power of capital and its state.

This dissertation follows Poulantzas in eschewing any confidence in "iron laws" of history which could guarantee the historic inevitability of socialism.¹⁵ And the dissertation recognizes with Miliband that "There is obviously no way of proving" the possibilities of socialist transformation "save in practice."¹⁶ Still, the critical study and arguments developed in this work aim to make plausible the rebirth of socialist movements and a revolutionary and democratic transition to socialism. The vision of working class-led popular movements bringing about a democratic revolution against capital and its state may appear improbable or unlikely to some readers. But a modicum of realism about the contradictions and problems of advanced capitalism, a belief in the ability of "ordinary people" to struggle against exploitation and domination, and a few moments of "serious historical imagination" may suffice to make clear that we have hardly reached the "End of Socialism."¹⁷

Notes

1. I borrow this expression from Leo Panitch, The Crisis of Working Class Politics: Essays on Labor and the State, (London: Verso, 1986).
2. Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man, (New York: The Free Press, 1992), pp.xi-xxiii.
3. Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.81.
4. James Petras, "Socialism: The Obits Were Premature," Guardian, (January 29, 1992), p.12.
5. Alex Callinicos, The Revenge of History: Marxism and the East European Revolutions, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p.135.
6. Ralph Miliband, Divided Societies: Class Struggle in Contemporary Capitalism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.234.
7. Perry Anderson, A Zone of Engagement, (London: Verso, 1992), p.361.
8. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, Edited and Translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p.276, cited in Miliband, Divided Societies, p.212.
9. This expression appears in Ralph Miliband, "Fukuyama and the Socialist Alternative," New Left Review, 193, (May-June 1992), p.113.
10. Adam Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.43.
11. This formulation is found in Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.178.
12. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argue that "the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy." See their "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in The Marx-Engels Reader, Edited by

Robert C. Tucker, Second Edition, (New York: Norton, 1978), p.490.

13. This formulation is also Miliband's. See Marxism and Politics, p.186.
14. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, p.4.
15. Nicos Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, Translated by Patrick Camiller, (London: Verso, 1980), p.265.
16. Ralph Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," Socialist Register 1990, Edited by Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, (London: Merlin Press, 1990), p.350.
17. I borrow this latter expression from E. P. Thompson, "An Open Letter to Lesjek Kolakowski," Socialist Register 1973, Edited by Ralph Miliband and John Saville, (London: Merlin Press, 1974), pp.99-100, Note 69, cited in Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.220.

Chapter 1. The End of Socialism?

Two of the most prominent recent obituaries for socialism originate in strikingly dissimilar approaches to the understanding of the present historical conjuncture. Although a great many voices have joined in celebrating the "triumph of the West," Francis Fukuyama has presented a distinctive and critically acclaimed case for democratic capitalism as the most desirable and viable form of society. Fukuyama develops a philosophical "metanarrative" which tentatively envisions liberal democracy as "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and "the final form of human government," hence the "End of History."¹ From Fukuyama's vantage point, the socialist project appears dead because democratic capitalism has proved better able to provide for the material well-being and social "recognition" of its citizens.

A rather different kind of obituary for socialism issues from the postmodernist perspectives of Jean-Francois Lyotard, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard. In marked contrast to Fukuyama, postmodernist writers acknowledge that both liberalism and socialism have been historically implicated in "crimes against mankind."² But what begins for these writers as a critique of metaphysical elements in the

"metanarratives" of liberalism and socialism culminates in a more or less total rejection of the Enlightenment concepts of reason, freedom, and progress.³ Although many postmodernist scholars seem to be genuinely concerned with criticizing domination and urging resistance, they repudiate the very idea of emancipatory theory. From the postmodernist vantage point, the socialist project appears dead because theory can no longer be viewed as grounding a critique of existing social conditions or struggles for an alternative society.

Fukuyama's theses on the "End of History" and the postmodernist repudiation of emancipatory theory have resonated widely among various scholars in the advanced capitalist countries. Still, neither of these obituaries for socialism has gone uncontested by Marxist and socialist scholars. Indeed, the growing and diverse critical literature on these perspectives points to many grave theoretical problems with each. Drawing on this literature, this chapter challenges the post-mortems for socialism developed by Fukuyama and the postmodernists. The first part of the chapter interrogates Fukuyama's ruminations on the future of democratic capitalism and argues that the exploitation and domination at the "core" of this society and capitalism's inability to solve "the major problems confronting humankind" are likely to lead to the renewal of socialist aspirations and movements.⁴ The second part of this chapter interrogates the postmodernist assault on the Enlightenment project and

argues that their critique of philosophical "metanarratives" and universalistic foundationalism cannot be taken to justify the sweeping repudiation of emancipatory or socialist theory.

The End of History?

In The End of History and the Last Man, Fukuyama outlines a universalistic view of history as a "single, coherent, evolutionary process...taking into account the experience of all peoples in all times."⁵ For Fukuyama, history does have a discernible "meaning" and "direction": it may well "eventually lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy...."⁶ The "engine" of history is not class struggle or collective political action by diverse social agents, but a generalized popular will for material well-being and social "recognition."⁷ At one level, Fukuyama offers an "economic interpretation of history" which points to the economic superiority of capitalism.⁸ But he also emphasizes the significance of "the struggle for recognition" and finds that only liberal democracy can provide "universal and reciprocal recognition" of individuals' humanity and dignity.⁹ As the twentieth century draws to a close, liberal democracy increasingly appears to be the terminus of humankind's "ideological evolution" and, in this sense, the "End of History."

Fukuyama's tentative case for liberal democracy as "the final form of human government" rests heavily on the claim that a "worldwide liberal revolution" has been developing over the past two decades.¹⁰ The "conquest" of communism by the ideas of democratic capitalism is only part of the story here, for authoritarian regimes of the Right have also collapsed in southern Europe and Latin America. In Fukuyama's view, "command" economies have proved unable to produce prosperity, economic growth, and technological innovation. "Strong" states "both on the Right and on the Left" have proved unable to provide the "universal and reciprocal recognition" that individuals need and desire.¹¹ In the wake of these momentous historical developments, liberal democracy "remains the only coherent political aspiration that spans different regions and cultures of the globe."¹² Fukuyama allows that some nations will continue to be mired in history but anticipates that "the greater part of humanity" will embrace the economic principles and political ideals of democratic capitalism.

Much of Fukuyama's work is devoted to arguing that while "earlier forms of government were characterized by grave defects and irrationalities that led to their eventual collapse," liberal democracy is "arguably free of such fundamental internal contradictions."¹³ Fukuyama acknowledges that the contemporary advanced capitalist societies face many serious problems "from drugs, homelessness, and crime

to environmental damage and the frivolity of consumerism."¹⁴ But he maintains that these problems are "not obviously insoluble on the basis of liberal principles, nor so serious that they would necessarily lead to the collapse of society as a whole...."¹⁵ In an earlier article, Fukuyama went so far as to claim that "the egalitarianism of modern America represents the essential achievement of the classless society envisioned by Marx."¹⁶ In the book, he maintains that while "the social structure of modern democracies still resembles the classic pyramid," the "middle of that pyramid remains fairly capacious," and "a high degree of social mobility permits almost everyone to identify with the aspirations of the middle class...."¹⁷ The limited amount of poverty and glaring inequality that remains--for example, among "the so-called black 'underclass' "--can best be understood as "arising from culture."¹⁸ With most citizens relatively well off, reasonably satisfied, and confident about their personal futures, the "old economic class issue" has "receded."¹⁹ Moreover, there is strong support for the popular sovereignty, the rule of law, and the system of rights which distinguish liberal democracy. Indeed, Fukuyama asserts that "we have trouble imagining a world" that is "essentially different" or "radically better" than our own.²⁰

Signally, however, Fukuyama equivocates on the future of democratic capitalism. Notwithstanding the demise of some

Right-wing dictatorships, he fears that authoritarian capitalism may be emerging as a serious challenger to liberal democracy, particularly in Asia.²¹ Even more fundamentally, he submits that the demise of communism and other "present-day rivals" must be accompanied by a critical re-examination of "the goodness of liberal democracy itself...."²² And the outcome of Fukuyama's own ruminations is not entirely optimistic. Although modern societies "have evolved toward democracy" and democratic capitalism may "in reality constitute the best possible solution to the human problem," Fukuyama finds that there is, in fact, one serious internal danger which must be overcome.²³ For Fukuyama, "the chief threat to democracy" is "our own confusion about what is really at stake."²⁴ He argues that "modern thought has reached an impasse, unable to come to a consensus on what constitutes man and his specific dignity, and consequently unable to define the rights of man."²⁵

This conceptual "impasse" has developed, Fukuyama suggests, because of radically divergent views on the "universal and reciprocal recognition" characteristic of liberal democracy. Voices on the Left insist that the promise of such social "recognition" is far from being realized, and that the very nature of capitalist property relations make its realization impossible. Fukuyama concedes that democratic capitalism cannot provide equal "recognition" and that inequality will continue to exist in these societies, but

he does not consider this a fatal problem.²⁶ What he does lament is the Left's "hyperintensified demand for the recognition of equal rights" and the "proliferation of new rights" supported by their movements in recent decades.²⁷ Fukuyama finds the critique of liberal democracy from the Right "more powerful."²⁸ These voices acknowledge that "the satisfaction of certain human beings" may well depend on being "recognized" not "just as equal, but as superior to others."²⁹ They also understand that "the desire for unequal recognition" may indeed "constitute the basis of a livable life...."³⁰ Fukuyama warns that liberal democracy could be "subverted" by either of these tendencies if taken to extremes, but he is primarily concerned with the danger posed by excessive attempts to eradicate social inequality.³¹ And in a series of passages which appear quite at odds with the overall theme and tone of the book, Fukuyama eschews any confidence about the "direction" of history, admits that the evidence for democratic capitalism as the "End of History" must be seen as "provisionally inconclusive," and anticipates a new form of Left political challenge in the advanced capitalist countries.³²

Fukuyama's theses on the "End of History" have often met with enthusiastic approval on the Right but have also been taken very seriously by many liberals in the advanced capitalist countries. The idea that liberal democracy may have proved to be the most satisfactory possible form of human

society has been echoed by the editors of the New York Times, Paul Berman, Salman Rushdie, and Jean-Francois Revel, among others.³³ Charles Krauthammer submits that "Until now the triumph of the West was merely a fact. Fukuyama has given it a deep and highly original meaning."³⁴ And Allan Bloom credits his former student with a "command of political philosophy and political facts" which "takes us beyond the daily newspapers to a grasp of the meaning of our situation."³⁵ Although a great deal of the scholarly literature on Fukuyama's work has been much more critical, it has tended to focus on the obstacles to the expansion of liberal democracy outside the countries of advanced capitalism. Fukuyama's mainstream critics have castigated his nonchalant dismissal of the various kinds of communist and socialist movements which remain across the world, the political and ideological power of Islam, the problems of capitalist development in the Third World, and the myriad of demographic, social, and ecological dilemmas which imperil much of the planet.³⁶ But the critique of Fukuyama's obituary for the socialist project in the advanced capitalist societies has been largely left to Marxist and socialist scholars.

The responses to Fukuyama by Fred Halliday, Michael Rustin, Alex Callinicos, Perry Anderson, Ralph Miliband, Joseph McCarney, Basil Hargrove, and others on the Left have been quite varied in focus and tone. Callinicos grants that The End of History may have captured "the spirit of the times,"

but insists that it is merely a polemic of Western triumphalism and apology for capital.³⁷ Anderson is more impressed by the force of Fukuyama's argument and allows that the socialist experience may be over, but proceeds to make a powerful case for the possible "redemption" of socialism.³⁸ Most Marxist and socialist writers, though, argue more confidently for the rejection of Fukuyama's claim that we may have reached the "End of History." Some critiques center on the profound philosophical and historical difficulties in Fukuyama's "metanarrative" on liberal democracy. Other discussions emphasize the extraordinary chasm between Fukuyama's sanguine depiction of liberal democracy and the realities of life in advanced capitalist society. The most powerful argument from the Left, capably articulated by Miliband, maintains that new struggles for socialist transformation are likely because capitalism remains "inherently and inescapably a system of domination and exploitation, and ...it is unable to make rational and humane use of the immense productive resources which it has itself brought into being."³⁹ And McCarney incisively explains how Fukuyama's own "engines" of history--the desire for material well-being and the desire for social "recognition"--surely point beyond democratic capitalism to a classless society.⁴⁰ Viewed as a whole, this literature offers some compelling reasons for believing that the rebirth of socialist movements in the advanced capitalist societies is likely.

Fukuyama's account of a "Universal History" has been widely criticized for being a philosophically embellished version of the doctrine of the U.S. State Department and the R.A.N.D Corporation.⁴¹ Various critics have taken Fukuyama to task for the invocation of "constitutional myth" and some important historical inaccuracies in his story of democratic capitalism.⁴² But an even more substantial difficulty emerges when it becomes clear that while some of his arguments suggest a kind of inverted historical materialism, Fukuyama's general perspective is palpably idealist.⁴³ As Halliday observes, Fukuyama's claim that "rational desire" and "rational recognition" are "the twin pillars of the historical process" is "an idealist assertion of a world spirit."⁴⁴ Moreover, the major protagonist in his "metanarrative" is the idea of democratic capitalism, the major conflicts in history are ideological, and the "End of History" arrives when we reach "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution."⁴⁵

Fukuyama's idea of liberal democracy is, however, an ideological construction with less historical scope and more historical tensions than he realizes. Liberal democracy can hardly be said to have begun in the United States by 1790 and in Great Britain by 1848, and was arguably "completed" in these countries only in the 1960's.⁴⁶ Fukuyama has too little to say about the central historical fact that for most of the last two centuries there has been a surfeit of

liberalism over democracy in the major capitalist countries, and too readily dismisses Fascism and other forms of capitalist authoritarianism in the West as mere atavisms or interludes. The problem here is not just that Fukuyama's reading of history is "selective and ahistorical."⁴⁷ More important, the concrete historical development of liberal democratic institutions simply cannot be explained as the evolution of the idea of liberal democracy, but must be seen instead as the historical product of popular struggles over many generations on behalf of democracy against capitalism.⁴⁸ As Halliday notes, Fukuyama's insistence on the primacy of ideas in history prevents him from understanding that "the main motor of human history" is collective political action by classes, other social groups, nations, and states.⁴⁹ And Fukuyama is unable to see that the "effective agency" in "the drive to supremacy of capitalist democracy" is not the "generalized fulfillment of needs or granting of respect" but the "innate drive of capitalism for its own self-reproduction and expansion."⁵⁰

Nowhere are the deficits of Fukuyama's "Universal History" more obvious than in his depiction of the "worldwide liberal revolution." In the first place, Fukuyama's characterization of its reach as global is undermined by his admission that Africa, the Middle East, and vast other regions remain largely unaffected and his observation that Asia may well evolve in the direction of authoritarian capitalism.⁵¹

Even more strikingly, Fukuyama's assertion that liberal democracy is the "only coherent ideology" with "widespread legitimacy" in the formerly socialist countries has surely proved to be wishful thinking during the three years since The End of History appeared.⁵² Electoral results, public opinion polls, and political protests in Russia have suggested instead that the majority of citizens support democratic rights and civic freedoms but are opposed to the development of capitalism.⁵³ Yeltsin, described by Fukuyama as a full-blooded liberal democrat, has bombed one parliament out of existence and has attempted to circumvent a new one dominated by communists and other opponents.⁵⁴ Western bankers and prime ministers may continue to hold Yeltsin dear even in the aftermath of the vicious war against Chechnya, but support for his presidency and his program for capitalist development has all but disappeared among most Russians.⁵⁵ As the economic, social, and political crises in Russia and the other former Soviet republics mount, it is impossible to know whether citizens will turn to communists and socialists, or to right-wing nationalists, for political leadership. But the possibility that a "reformed" communism or a new form of democratic socialism might gradually emerge can hardly be dismissed as unrealistic.⁵⁶

Similarly, recent developments in Eastern Europe cannot be said to bear out Fukuyama's confidence in the virtual inevitability of democratic capitalism. The madness of nation-

alist war in the former Yugoslavia and the resurgence of the crudest national chauvinism in several other countries demonstrate the potency of one historical alternative to liberal democracy.⁵⁷ Here, too, however, the possibility of some new version of the socialist project appears much more substantial than Fukuyama allows. As the editors of the New York Times recognize, citizens in Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania have democratically elected governments pledged to limiting or slowing market reforms and privatization.⁵⁸ The legacy of authoritarian socialism will continue to be an onerous one, and the development of new democratic socialist movements in these countries is presently quite limited. But the very great human and social costs of capitalism and considerable popular support for public ownership, workers' self-management, and social equality may combine to make possible "something approximating to the beginnings of socialist democracy" in the decades ahead.⁵⁹ A similar caution might be in order concerning what is likely to be the turbulent future of China.⁶⁰

Fukuyama's analysis of the "liberal revolution" in the Third World rates as one of the weakest parts of his case. The abandonment of socialist aspirations and objectives by many Third World governments and movements is not in question. But Fukuyama's account of "the triumph of the West" as chiefly a victory of democratic capitalist ideas must surely ring hollow in the killing fields of Latin America, Asia,

Africa, and the Middle East. Free-market economics came to Chile through a United States government-sponsored coup and dictatorship, and to Nicaragua, Cambodia, Mozambique, and Angola through bloody wars supported by Washington.⁶¹ Recent moves toward market reforms and privatization in countries as diverse as Mexico, Jamaica, Ethiopia, and India have occurred not because of a "remarkable transformation" in the "economic thinking" of citizens but because of the powerful economic and political pressure brought to bear on local elites by the major capitalist countries and international financial institutions.⁶² And the surrender of socialist orientations in countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania must be attributed more to the renewed power of capital in the contemporary global political economy and the actions of party-state elites than to any widespread popular embrace of the ideals of democratic capitalism.⁶³

Critics such as Halliday and Anderson point out that Fukuyama dramatically overstates the expansion of liberal democracy in the Third World in recent years and greatly exaggerates its potential for eradicating the poverty and misery there. As Halliday remarks, if we embrace a "historically more cautious" perspective than Fukuyama, then we must recognize that "there are only about two dozen established liberal democracies in the world today, out of what are now over one hundred and eighty independent states."⁶⁴ The thinness of Fukuyama's own criteria is evident in his character-

ization of governments in Chile, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, among others, as liberal democracies.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Fukuyama fails to recognize that democratic rights were achieved in many Third World countries not by liberal democratic forces, but by radical democratic political forces such as the Sandinistas, the F.M.L.N., the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe, the African National Congress, and the militant workers and students of South Korea.

But perhaps the most glaring weakness of Fukuyama's case here is his utterly fantastic assertion that liberal democracy in the Third World promises a future of prosperity for all those countries which embrace it. Fukuyama largely ignores the history of Western imperialism and its catastrophic effects on the Third World, unable or unwilling to confront the historical truth that for the vast majority of people on this planet capitalism has already proved "not a dream to be made reality, but a nightmare come true."⁶⁶ As Anderson emphasizes, there is "a damaging weakness at the join" of Fukuyama's case "between its registration of the progress of political democracy and its forecast of the spread of capitalist prosperity."⁶⁷ Anderson writes:

Outside the West, full economic success in building a high-technology capitalism has so far been confined to one region of Asia--whose political cultures conform least to liberal-democratic norms. Where it matters most, the dovetailing of the two great revolutions of

our time seems to go awry.⁶⁸

Anderson notes that Fukuyama commits a fallacy of composition when he asserts that because a few Third World countries have achieved "economic success" under capitalism, all may be able to do so.⁶⁹ And Anderson argues that there is "manifestly" no "material possibility" that Third World capitalist states could reproduce the economic achievements or consumption patterns of the First World.⁷⁰

Anderson's dire prognosis would appear to be substantiated by the World Bank's World Development Report for 1991.⁷¹ Reviewing the Report, William Lewis finds that "Tragically...the economies of most developing nations are beyond the help of the free market system of the developed world."⁷² Lewis concludes that "Political, ideological, and economic changes are coming too late to allow these young economies to converge with those of the industrial countries."⁷³ In contrast to Fukuyama, Lewis expects that the growing economic gap between rich and poor countries "will leave us a world that looks much like South Africa does today: a tiny, prosperous minority surrounded by a swelling, suffering, and volcanic underclass."⁷⁴ If the predictions of Anderson, the World Bank, and Lewis are more plausible than those of Fukuyama, then it may be presumptuous to think that any "worldwide revolution" in the decades ahead will necessarily be a liberal or capitalist one.

Although Fukuyama's obituary for the socialist project in the advanced capitalist countries may appear more persuasive than his global projections, there are solid grounds for believing that this "prophecy," too, will be "short-lived."⁷⁵ For while it is certainly true that the conditions for radical social change do not presently exist in these societies and may not exist for some time to come, a more hard-nosed realism than Fukuyama's points to some "fundamental internal contradictions" and apparently "insoluble" problems of democratic capitalism which may well lead to the renewal of socialist aspirations and movements. As we have seen, Fukuyama's post-mortem for socialism is considerably more equivocal and provisional than some of his more sweeping statements imply. As several Marxist and socialist writers have observed, a more accurate appraisal of the actually existing conditions of life in the advanced capitalist countries, an acknowledgement of the centrality of class, exploitation, and domination in these societies, and a critical rereading of Fukuyama's own arguments all suggest that we are likely to witness not the demise but instead the rebirth of the socialist project.

As Callinicos observes, "the apologetic element" in Fukuyama's work is "all too evident" in his grossly distorted depiction of life in the advanced capitalist countries.⁷⁶ Fukuyama's contention that the United States approximates "the classless society envisioned by Marx" is, as Callinicos

remarks, "almost engagingly absurd," as well as somewhat inconsistent with his own admission that the social structure "still resembles the classic pyramid."⁷⁷ Ironically, however, Fukuyama's extravagant claim invites attention to the most egregious weakness in his account: its utter failure to investigate the most "fundamental internal contradiction" between capital and labor at the heart of capitalism itself. Although long denied "by promises of individual freedom, by dreams of upward mobility," and by "recovered-memory fantasies" of "solid communities and coherent families," class is indeed the "dirty secret" of American history as well as that of the other advanced capitalist societies.⁷⁸ Fukuyama's portrait of these societies as "middle class" reinforces one of the most familiar staples of capitalist myth and ideology but simply evades the vital historical and social reality that these societies are fundamentally divided into two major classes--the owners of capital and the working class.⁷⁹ The fact that wealth and economic power are concentrated in the hands of a relatively small capitalist class and the fact that the overwhelming majority of adults are unpropertied persons who sell their labor power in order to make a living--in other words, members of the working class--are more or less ignored by Fukuyama.⁸⁰

As Miliband emphasizes, exploitation and domination are "ugly words that do not figure in Fukuyama's vocabulary" but they are "at the very core of capitalist democracy and are

inextricably linked to it."⁸¹ Like many contemporary writers, Fukuyama is loathe to explore the harsh realities of class, but there are at least a few "dirty secrets" about even advanced, democratic capitalism which must be acknowledged as part of any assessment of its "success" and prospects. As Marx and Engels saw long ago, capitalist exploitation may be less barbaric than slavery or serfdom, but it is exploitation: surplus value in particular and social wealth in general are produced by workers but appropriated by capitalists.⁸² This process of capitalist exploitation is what Marx called "the secret of profit-making" and the source of capitalist wealth and economic power, as well as the basis of the general subordination of the working class.⁸³ Although this process permits the successful accumulation of capital by a limited number of business owners, members of the working class fare significantly less well, consigned to wage labor or unemployment, and facing varying degrees of poverty, economic hardship, and social insecurity. The description of these societies as affluent is, as Miliband observes elsewhere, "an apologetic obfuscation which serves to hide the real condition of the working class, and that life for the vast majority remains cramped, insecure, alienating...."⁸⁴ Fukuyama's glowing platitudes are belied by the simple historical fact that the advanced capitalist societies have never been able to provide satisfactorily for the material well-being of all their citizens.

Most contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars readily concede that Marx was mistaken in anticipating the progressive immiseration of the working class in the short-term future. And, as Miliband notes, the fact that massive impoverishment did not develop surely helps explain the failure of the working class to create a "growing revolt" against capital.⁶⁵ However, the historical experience of advanced capitalism is far more turbulent and conflict-ridden than Fukuyama cares to admit. The decades extending from the first Great Depression in the late nineteenth century to the second Great Depression in the 1930's were a period not only of considerable economic ills but also of significant class struggle. Revolutionary insurrections, counter-revolutionary violence, the growth of communist and social democratic parties and the conflicts between them, militant workers' struggles, the Popular Front, and the rise of Fascism were all part of this epoch in Europe. In the years before and after the Second World War, socialist hopes and aspirations were repeatedly crushed, but workers in several countries succeeded in winning some governmental recognition of labor rights and state provision for social welfare.

The postwar economic boom in the advanced capitalist countries was a period of robust economic growth, relatively high employment rates, and wage increases for many workers. Fukuyama's depiction of a relatively prosperous, reasonably

optimistic capitalist democracy appears to be an idealized account of this period. But one would never know from reading Fukuyama that even "the Swedish model" could not eradicate exploitation, or domination, or profound social inequality, and that the problems of poverty, economic hardship, and social insecurity proved quite intractable in most advanced capitalist countries during these decades.⁸⁶ Nor is Fukuyama very interested in exploring the persistence of radical challenges to capital throughout this period, or in considering the possibility that the "recession" of "the old economic class issue" in recent years has been brought about not by widespread popular satisfaction but by the power of capital. Strikingly, Fukuyama shows little appreciation for the major economic and social convulsions that have beset advanced capitalism since the early 1970's and their grave implications for the future of democratic capitalism. This omission is particularly curious in light of the considerable mainstream literature on the "decline" of the American economy, as well as the extensive Marxist and socialist literature on the present crisis of the global political economy.⁸⁷

As F. R. Hansen explains, in recent years at least some mainstream scholars and analysts have joined Marxist and socialist writers in acknowledging the contradictions and crisis tendencies of advanced capitalism.⁸⁸ Although the normative and political commitments of these two groups of

observers diverge markedly, they share "an anticipation of crisis" and "image of collapse" as they assess the future of the capitalist political economy.⁸⁹ Marx's analysis of the intractable contradictions of capitalism may appear more compelling than ever amid the internationalization of capital, the restructuring of the global political economy, increased competition between capitalist states, the concentration and centralization of capital, crises of investment and accumulation, capitalist attempts to reduce "labor costs," and profound changes in labor markets. Even a casual review of current business reports and financial journals provides considerable evidence to support the hypothesis that Marx's projections on the progressive immiseration of the working class may be more relevant today than ever before.⁹⁰

Richard Sennett writes that "The plain fact is that in a new stage of capitalism, class divides Americans as ruthlessly as it did in the Age of the Robber Barons," and the same may be said as well for the other countries of advanced capitalism.⁹¹ Economic crises continue to pound these economies, followed by "recoveries" which, as Marx anticipated, are only "paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises."⁹² While a miniscule proportion of the population grows ever wealthier, the material conditions of life for the majority of people have begun to palpably deteriorate. In some of these societies, real wages and

average income for workers have been falling for two decades; secure, full-time, high-wage jobs have become much more scarce almost everywhere.⁹³ Marx's prediction of an ever larger "surplus population" discarded by capital surely resonates among the more than thirty-five million unemployed people and many millions more who can find only part-time work throughout the advanced capitalist countries.⁹⁴ While Fukuyama does not see a "fundamental internal contradiction" here, his confidence is not shared by O.E.C.D. researchers, who warn that mounting unemployment "brings with it unraveling of the social fabric, including a loss of authority of the democratic system."⁹⁵ Yet recent O.E.C.D. recommendations that wages, working hours, job security, social benefits, and state provision be reduced to spark economic growth and the creation of new jobs may well risk "provoking social breakdown" in at least some advanced capitalist countries.⁹⁶

Fukuyama's contention that most citizens are relatively well off, reasonably satisfied, and confident about their personal futures reveals more about the limits of the view from the U.S. State Department and the R.A.N.D Corporation than about the actually existing conditions of life for the majority of people in the countries of advanced capitalism. Today perhaps one-fourth of the population in the United States may be reasonably classified as poor; poverty is neither confined to urban "underclasses" nor caused

by "culture."⁹⁷ And a substantially larger proportion of the population is confronted with growing economic hardship and social insecurity.⁹⁸ There is an increasingly widespread sense among people in these countries, including the United States, that the next generation will live less well than the present one.⁹⁹ Even as Fukuyama tentatively celebrates the triumph of democratic capitalism, ever larger sections of the population in these societies are voicing anxiety, fear, and even despair over their material conditions and prospects.¹⁰⁰ As Robert Heilbroner observes, "acute unease with respect to the future" is "not difficult to anticipate in our own future...."¹⁰¹ Notwithstanding Fukuyama's confident rhetoric, the limits of democratic capitalism's capacity to provide for the material well-being of the population have arguably never been more obvious than they are today.

Fukuyama's confidence in liberal democracy's capacity to provide for the adequate "recognition" of its citizens is even more precarious. As we have noted, Fukuyama acknowledges that liberal democracy cannot bring about equal "recognition" and recognizes that the persistence of social inequality will spark new struggles for a more egalitarian society. These admissions are, as Miliband writes, "very damaging to his case...."¹⁰² But even more stunning is Fukuyama's failure to present "an unequivocal and authoritative answer" to the question of whether contemporary liberal

democracy adequately satisfies the human desire for "recognition."¹⁰³ In the end, rather than celebrating America as a classless society, Fukuyama is forced to wonder whether the forms of inequality inherent in democratic capitalism may not give rise to movements which bring about its destruction.

Fukuyama's own reluctant admission that what citizens may indeed desire is not merely "universal and reciprocal recognition," but equal "recognition" invites us to reassess the "success" and prospects of liberal democracy from a more critical perspective. For if Fukuyama's second "engine" of history turns out to be the struggle for equal "recognition" or equality, then the future of capitalist democracy must be seen as even more tenuous than he is willing to allow. On closer inspection, the "conceptual impasse" concerning "recognition" and equality which Fukuyama considers so threatening is rooted in a much more "fundamental internal contradiction" at the heart of capitalist democracy. And the mounting crises of government, politics, and society in the countries of advanced capitalism may well portend not the "End of History," but the end of the relative political stability of liberal democracy.

Perhaps the most eloquent socialist critique of capitalist democracy developed in recent years has been developed by Miliband. Challenging Fukuyama's apology for liberal democracy, Miliband argues that the profound limitation of

equality and democracy in even the most advanced of the capitalist societies provides compelling grounds for supporting radical social change.¹⁰⁴ Miliband clearly endorses the civic freedoms which have, through "centuries of unremitting popular struggles," become part of capitalist democracy.¹⁰⁵ But he strongly criticizes Fukuyama's depiction of popular sovereignty, the rule of law, and individual rights in these societies, insisting that capitalist democracy is a form of class domination through which the owners of capital are able to "create and maintain conditions" enabling them to "appropriate surplus labor."¹⁰⁶

Miliband contends that "capitalist democracy is a contradiction in terms, for it encapsulates two opposed systems."¹⁰⁷ Miliband maintains that capitalism "repudiates by its very nature" both the "rough equality of condition" and the substantive political equality required for any truly democratic society.¹⁰⁸ Because capitalist democracy is "based on a deep and insurmountable class division," it is "bound to involve the limitation of democracy so that it may not seriously challenge the power, property, privileges and position of the people at the top of the social pyramid...."¹⁰⁹ While the modern liberal democratic state claims to represent the citizens as a whole, in fact it tends to be chiefly, though not exclusively, "the guardian and protector" of the dominant economic interests.¹¹⁰ As Miliband emphasizes, existing democratic procedures and consistently

"manipulated" and are "utterly vitiated by the context in which they function."¹¹¹ The civic freedoms won through "centuries of unremitting struggle" always remain "precarious" and endangered by the "authoritarian tendencies and practices of traditional elites...."¹¹² In sum, Miliband makes a powerful case for the proposition that "capitalist democracy is, in fact, oligarchic rule, tempered by democratic forms."¹¹³

It is revealing that in various replies and rejoinders to his critics Fukuyama never seriously engages the kind of critique developed by Miliband or other contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars. For it is unclear what resources would be available to Fukuyama in responding to such a critique, and even a partial acknowledgement of some particulars would add considerable weight to his own deep reservations about the future of liberal democracy. But equally instructive is the absence of any recognition by Fukuyama that during the last two decades there has been increasingly widespread public scepticism and cynicism about the major institutions of capitalist democracy in many of these societies. One would never know from reading Fukuyama that there has been an escalating crisis of public confidence in these institutions for some time now, or that ever larger numbers of people in these countries say they are dissatisfied with their governments.¹¹⁴ Still less would one learn here that the real danger in the advanced capitalist coun-

tries today is not excessive egalitarian demands by the Left, but a growing Right-wing offensive to shore up capital at the expense of the limited progress that has been made toward the equal "recognition" of individuals.¹¹⁵

Perhaps the most important source of the mounting political anxiety in the countries of advanced capitalism is the apparent inability of these governments to resolve their profound economic and social problems¹¹⁶ During much of the postwar economic boom and the Cold War, liberal democracy presented itself as optimistic and confident about its capacity to generate not only ever greater prosperity, but steady progress toward a more equal and more democratic society. Such optimism and confidence have been disappearing for some time now.¹¹⁷ The failure of the modern liberal democratic state to adequately acknowledge the mounting economic and social crises, much less offer effective solutions to them, only exasperates the sense of "acute unease" about the future felt by so many people. Although Fukuyama cannot admit it, much more than a "conceptual impasse" is involved in contemporary political struggles over the future of the liberal democratic state. In the wake of the restructuring of the global political economy, it is the imperatives of capitalist accumulation which are increasingly leading the dominant economic interests to seek less expensive and more compliant labor power, the elimination of social rights and social benefits, and a general "downsizing" of both state

functions and popular expectations.¹¹⁸ As resurgent conservative political forces in various countries attempt to dismantle the welfare state and create more favorable conditions for profit-making and accumulation, they threaten not only the material well-being of the majority of citizens but also the "simulacrum" of equality and democracy that exists in these societies.¹¹⁹ The success of conservative forces in recent years has varied thus far in the different advanced capitalist countries. However, the ominous implications of the present Right-wing offensive are not difficult to make out.

In "a new stage of capitalism" characterized by "ruthless" class divisions and sustained "class struggle from above," conservative forces are working to ensure that the liberal democratic state abandons any responsibility for the material well-being of its citizens and any commitment to social equality or social justice. Deteriorating economic and social conditions, combined with the inaction of the state, are producing very grave social problems which increasingly appear "insoluble": the exclusion of an ever larger number of people from the means of production and subsistence; worsening economic conditions for much of the population; mounting pressures on children, youth, and families; increasing crime, violence, and drug abuse; growing crises in public health, public education, and the social services; and more.¹²⁰ But the Right disavows any

responsibility for the economic and social conditions which have led to these problems and instead scapegoats vulnerable social groups as responsible for their own misery.¹²¹

Mainstream conservative parties in a number of advanced capitalist countries, not content with their assault on the working class, are seeking to scale back the rights of women, people of color, and immigrants, among others.¹²² And in recent years, neo-Nazi and neo-Fascist parties have reappeared in several of these countries, organizing racist murders and political violence even as they prepare to enter the electoral process.¹²³ Although the ideological and political reach of Right-wing extremism may remain limited, it is difficult to avoid Hargrove's conclusion that "the greatest deficit, the one growing the fastest, the one that will cost future generations the most" is not a budgetary one but instead "the deficit in democracy, the deficit in our collective ability to shape our society and its vision so that it can truly address our needs."¹²⁴ As economic and social instability deepens and as "acute unease" about the future grows more widespread, the long-term viability of capitalist democracy appears increasingly in doubt.¹²⁵ Notwithstanding Fukuyama's more optimistic ruminations, the limits of democratic capitalism's capacity to provide for adequate social "recognition" or equality have arguably never been more obvious than they are today.

As McCarney argues, Fukuyama's own "engines" of history--

the desire for material well-being and the desire for social "recognition"--cannot reasonably be seen as leading to democratic capitalism as the "End of History." Indeed, McCarney insists that if we accept that the historical process is powered by these "engines," then we must accept that they point beyond liberal democracy to the struggle for a classless society.¹²⁶ McCarney offers a critical re-interpretation of Fukuyama's work which calls into question whether it should even be considered an obituary for socialism at all. McCarney contends that there are two distinct, incompatible "versions" of Fukuyama's "doctrine."¹²⁷ The first, "official version" celebrates the "triumph of the West" and proclaims liberal democracy to be the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution."¹²⁸ But the "second version" acknowledges that the evidence concerning the viability of democratic capitalism and the "direction" of history remain "provisionally inconclusive," and voices considerable scepticism and doubt about his "official version" of the future.¹²⁹

McCarney observes that there are "some large, even structural tensions" between these two "versions" in Fukuyama's work.¹³⁰ As McCarney explains, the latter part of The End of History "contains formulations which cannot be reconciled with...any End of History thesis."¹³¹ Some of these formulations go well beyond recognizing the prospective development of new Left challenges to social inequality in democratic capitalist society. In one curious passage, Fukuyama dis-

misses the long-term significance of problems such as unemployment, poverty, drug abuse, and crime but grants that if there are "deeper sources of discontent," and if life is not "truly satisfying," then liberal democracy cannot be taken as the "End of History."¹³² In another, more sweeping passage, Fukuyama asserts that no society, including democratic capitalism, can satisfy all people and that those who are dissatisfied always have the ability to "restart" history.¹³³ Near the end of his book, Fukuyama even allows that "the ability of liberal democratic societies to establish and sustain themselves on a rational basis over the long term is open to some doubt."¹³⁴ And in his concluding paragraph, Fukuyama explicitly acknowledges that, over time, people may well find liberal democracy "inadequate" and "set their eyes on a new and more distant journey."¹³⁵

As McCarney emphasizes, Fukuyama's work may be best understood not as a confident vindication of the desirability and viability of democratic capitalism but as an anxious inquiry into its prospects for survival. If we look beneath the "official doctrine" presented here, "what this book tells us" is that liberal democracy "is itself a transitory historical form, the process of whose dissolution is already well advanced."¹³⁶ Despite his claim that excessive Left demands for equality pose the greatest threat to liberal democracy, Fukuyama is in fact "haunted" by the possibility that the "End of History" may be authoritarian capitalism.¹³⁷

But as McCarney insists, the fact that democratic capitalism is "economically dysfunctional" and incapable of providing satisfying "recognition" need not be taken to suggest that authoritarian capitalism is the only alternative.¹³⁸

From McCarney's vantage point, "both of Fukuyama's historical regulators lead decisively away from liberal democracy" and point toward a society which is free from class exploitation and domination.¹³⁹ McCarney credits Fukuyama for his concern with the "struggle for recognition" but maintains that social equality is a condition of any meaningful "social recognition."¹⁴⁰ Thus McCarney argues that if we are to take this concept seriously, then we must also acknowledge the need for "a community of free and equal beings in reciprocal relations of acceptance and respect."¹⁴¹ And such a community, he submits, could only be created through the abolition of "the structural inequalities of which class is the type and emblem."¹⁴² McCarney understands that "it would be difficult to think of a conclusion less in tune with the spirit of our age than the one which holds that the concept of the classless society is the key to the direction and goal of history."¹⁴³ Still, he insists that a view of history "which puts the human struggle for recognition at its center" cannot avoid this radical conclusion.¹⁴⁴

As Miliband and other Marxist and socialist scholars suggest, the intrinsic incapacity of democratic capitalism to provide for the material well-being and social "recognition"

of its citizens is likely to become increasingly clear to broader sections of the population in these societies in the decades ahead.¹⁴⁵ Although businessmen and mainstream economists have been working to cover up capitalist exploitation as the "secret of profit-making" since Marx discovered it, the harsh realities of class are sure to be more keenly felt and more widely criticized as economic and social conditions deteriorate. And the ugly truth that capitalist democracy remains a form of class domination is certain to become ever more apparent amid "ruthless" class divisions and continuing "class struggle from above." As Anderson cautions, even the serious exasperation of grave problems within democratic capitalism should not be viewed as automatically or inevitably bringing about the "redemption" of socialism.¹⁴⁶ But as Miliband and other Marxist and socialist scholars contend, the exploitation and domination inherent in capitalist society and capitalism's inability to solve "the major problems confronting humankind" are likely to give rise to new socialist aspirations, movements, and struggles.¹⁴⁷

Most contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars appreciate the dimensions of the global crisis of socialism and the "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist countries. They acknowledge that the conditions for radical social change do not presently exist in these societies and may not come into being for some time.¹⁴⁸ But Miliband's

argument that such conditions may well develop during the next few decades would appear to be strongly supported by the mounting difficulties of democratic capitalism, as well as the "second version" of Fukuyama's own "doctrine." If the future of liberal democracy turns out to be as grim as it now appears, it will hardly be surprising for growing numbers of people to consider the need for "visions of an alternative society" and "strategies to realize them."¹⁴⁹ Fukuyama's assertion that we cannot even imagine an "essentially different" or "radically better" kind of society surely reveals more about the limits of his own reading and imagination than about the intellectual and theoretical resources available for a prospective rebirth of socialism. And his speculation on the potential for a new Left challenge to democratic capitalism suggests that he may in fact share David Gordon's view that socialism's "wounds" are "not terminal" and that "the patient, if properly nursed back to health, may be stronger and more conceptually appealing than ever."¹⁵⁰ It is ironic that Fukuyama's tentative announcement of the "End of History" has actually put the future of capitalism--and the socialist alternative--back on the agenda.¹⁵¹

The End of Emancipatory Theory?

The obituary for socialism presented in recent years by various postmodernist writers differs radically from Fuku-

yama's account of the apparent triumph of liberal democracy. In the last two decades, an enormous and diverse postmodernist literature has developed in the advanced capitalist countries.¹⁵² Although the meaning of postmodernism and precisely which writers should be considered postmodernists will continue to be the subject of discussion and debate, at least two kinds of central claims can be distinguished in this literature. One major assertion made by various postmodernist writers is that these countries have undergone a fundamental change, becoming "postindustrial" and "postmodern" societies characterized by the declining salience of class, the multiplication and diversification of personal identities and lifestyles, the discrediting of both liberal democracy and socialism, and the diminution of possibilities for radical social change.¹⁵³

The second major assertion, closely related to the first, is that the Enlightenment conceptions of reason, freedom, and progress which inspired both liberalism and socialism must be abandoned as not only metaphysical but dangerous. In the wake of the last two "bloody" centuries, postmodernists such as Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard reject the critical capacity of theory to ground a critique of existing social conditions or struggles for fundamental social transformation. On this view, the very notion of emancipatory theory--including socialist theory--must be discarded.¹⁵⁴ The proposition that the working class is inevitably declining

in postindustrial society and can no longer be considered a potential agency of socialist transformation will be critically assessed in the next chapter. The remainder of the present chapter explores and evaluates some of the major themes in the postmodernist repudiation of emancipatory theory.

In his seminal book, The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard provides perhaps the most succinct statement of the postmodernist critique of the Enlightenment project and the two major "metanarratives" of modernity. Lyotard defines as modern "any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse...making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth."¹⁵⁵ On Lyotard's reading, the philosophies of history inspiring modern liberalism and socialism "claim to assure passages over the abyss of heterogeneity or the event," but "the passages promised by the great doctrinal syntheses end in bloody impasses."¹⁵⁶ After a century of world wars, genocide, death camps and death squads, political upheavals against both liberalism and socialism, economic crises and depressions, Lyotard submits that speculative philosophy, economic liberalism, and historical materialism have been overwhelmingly "refuted" by actual historical events.¹⁵⁷ He writes:

This idea of progress as possible, probable, or necessary was rooted in the certainty that the development of the arts, technology, knowledge, and liberty would be profitable to mankind as a whole. After two centuries, we are more sensitive to signs that signify the contrary. Neither economic nor political liberalism, nor the various Marxisms, emerge from the sanguinary last two centuries free from the suspicion of crimes against mankind.... What kind of thought is able to sublimate (Aufheben) Auschwitz in a general (either empirical or speculative) process towards a universal emancipation?¹⁵⁸

Lyotard's harsh assessment of the actual historical record of ostensibly emancipatory ideas and movements is conjoined with a critique of metaphysics in modern philosophies of history which is inspired by Nietzsche and Heidegger, and the assertion that important recent "progress in the sciences" makes references to any "grand narratives" unacceptable. For Lyotard, the postmodern perspective is characterized by "incredulity towards metanarratives."¹⁵⁹

Lyotard and other postmodernists argue that there can be no absolute or universal philosophical foundations for reason, justice, or progress, and that there can be no transcendental, a priori, or ahistorical framework through which social or scientific practices can be valorized.¹⁶⁰ As Lyotard insists, "Speculative or humanistic philosophy is forced to relinquish its legitimation duties...."¹⁶¹ The postmodernists contend that Marxist and socialist theory is as tainted with metaphysical assumptions as Hegel's idealist account of the History of Spirit.¹⁶² On this view, contempor-

ary observers have ample grounds to reject the view of history as the history of class struggles leading inevitably to socialism and communism, the "privileged" role of the working class as the subject of modern history, and the belief that socialism, if attained, would usher in an age of emancipation or liberation.¹⁶³

But postmodernists go beyond a critique of metaphysical elements in modern philosophies of history. These writers reject the modern notion of society as an objective, representable, and knowable whole.¹⁶⁴ Foucault writes that "'the whole of society' is that which we need not take account of, except as an objective to be destroyed."¹⁶⁵ Instead, postmodernists emphasize the fragmentary, pluralistic, diverse, unstable, indeterminate aspects of social and historical reality.¹⁶⁶ From the postmodernist vantage point, there can be no meaningful discussion of society as a whole because society is constituted by a plurality of "incommensurable" discourses or "language games" or "phrase-regimes," each of which contains its own immanent standards of legitimacy.¹⁶⁷ In Lyotard's view, "The social subject itself seems to dissolve in this dissemination of language games."¹⁶⁸

Accordingly, postmodernists reject the very possibility of "totalizing" or large-scale theories of society or history.¹⁶⁹ Not only the universalist claims of philosophical "metanarratives," but also broad theoretical generalizations and unifying explanatory principles are considered incapable

of comprehending the local, particular, pluralistic truths of diverse "language games" and "forms of life."¹⁷⁰ As Lyotard explains, "The social bond is linguistic, but is not woven with a single thread."¹⁷¹ Therefore, "no common measure" exists among these heterogeneous "language games," and no theoretical "metalanguage" can situate, describe, or explain them.¹⁷² For Lyotard and other postmodernists, the problem of "incommensurability" is insurmountable and precludes the possibility of "totalizing" or large-scale truths.¹⁷³ Baudrillard dramatically declares that "The secret of theory is, indeed, that truth doesn't exist."¹⁷⁴ Moreover, the postmodernists deny that there can be a critical or normative role for theory. They move beyond the rejection of grounding values or norms in philosophical "metanarratives" to argue that an unbridgeable gulf exists between cognitive, epistemic claims and evaluative or normative claims. The postmodernists reject any attempt to validate or justify any kind of values through any kind of theory. In postmodern society, normative standards and legitimation can only be local and particular.¹⁷⁵

Another postmodernist objection to emancipatory theory is that theory and knowledge are inevitably constituted by power. Lyotard writes that "Reason and power are one and the same thing."¹⁷⁶ Foucault insists that "We are subjected to the reproduction of truth through power, and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."¹⁷⁷ On

this view, there is no possibility of developing theory or knowledge which can avoid the corruption of power, and any such attempt will only be a "destructive admixture of knowledge and power" which leads to "domination on the level of thought."¹⁷⁸ Thus, theory is condemned as "totalitarian" and "terroristic" because it violates the uniqueness of distinct "forms of life" and "language games," obliterating or neglecting the experiences and voices of those who are "Other" than the subject.¹⁷⁹ For Foucault and other postmodernists, the nexus between "totalizing" theory and "totalitarian" practice is most dramatically exemplified in the fate of the socialist project: Marx's theory of "universal human emancipation" eventually led to the mass murders and gulags of Stalinism.¹⁸⁰

Postmodernist writers repudiate not only the "false universalisms" of "metanarratives" whose subjects are essentially Western, white, and male, but also the modern conception of the autonomous, rational subject--the individual human being who is at least potentially capable of rationally understanding society and history, and of using this knowledge in the pursuit of freedom, justice, and progress.¹⁸¹ At least some postmodernists announce the "death" of the subject.¹⁸² These scholars tend not only to dismiss "essentialist" accounts of human nature, but also to reject the claim of rational and effective subjectivity as "a mask, a role, a victim, at worst an ideological construct, at best

a nostalgic effigy."¹⁸³ As Thomas McCarthy observes, the postmodernist critique emphasizes

the influence of the unconscious on the conscious, the role of the preconceptual and the nonconceptual in the conceptual, the presence of the irrational--the economy of desire, the will to power--at the very core of the rational...the intrinsically social character of "structures of consciousness," the historical and cultural variability of categories of thought and principles of action...forms of life and systems of language....¹⁸⁴

From the postmodernist perspective, the conception of subjectivity or individuality which originates in the Enlightenment and finds distinct but related expressions in liberalism and socialism must be abandoned. The "rage against reason" in postmodernism consumes not only theory, but also individual subjects.¹⁸⁵

While postmodernist perspectives have become increasingly influential in scholarly and public discourse in recent years, a very broad group of writers on the Left have critically interrogated the bold proclamation that the advanced capitalist countries have entered a new, postmodern epoch, and challenged the sweeping postmodernist renunciation of emancipatory theory. It is worth noting that at least some Marxist and socialist writers, while arguing for the continuing centrality of class exploitation and domination in these societies, and for the imperative need for emancipatory theory in general and socialist theory in particular,

have acknowledged that some of the momentous social and cultural changes in these societies may merit the label "postmodern." Callinicos totally rejects the claim that these societies should be described as "postindustrial" or "postmodern," insisting that there has been no fundamental change in the countries of advanced capitalism.¹⁸⁶ In contrast, Fredric Jameson and David Harvey rigorously criticize the major theses of postmodernism but grant that a certain "postmodern condition" may be said to have developed.

Jameson agrees that no fundamentally new social order has come into being and follows Ernest Mandel in analyzing the momentous economic changes since the early 1970's as signaling a new, third stage of "late" capitalism.¹⁸⁷ Yet Jameson submits that "we are within the culture of postmodernism," which he theorizes as "the cultural logic of late capitalism."¹⁸⁸ Harvey also maintains that "the turn to postmodernism does not reflect any fundamental change of social condition" or diminution of the significance of capital and class.¹⁸⁹ But, following Michel Aglietta and the "regulation school" theorists, Harvey argues that recent changes in the political economy of the advanced capitalist countries should be viewed as "a transition in the regime of accumulation and its associated mode of social and political regulation."¹⁹⁰ On Harvey's view, the "profound shift in the structure of feeling" and the important "departure...in ways

of thinking about what could or should be done about that social condition" which characterize postmodernism should be understood as the cultural product of the transition from a Fordist-Keynesian regime of accumulation to a new, "flexible" regime of accumulation.¹⁹¹

It is also worth noting that various Marxist and socialist critics of postmodernism often acknowledge some "positive" implications of this literature.¹⁹² It is readily granted that the postmodernist assault on universalistic foundationalism has made an important contribution to the critique of metaphysics in contemporary philosophy.¹⁹³ Marsha Hewitt recognizes that "the false universalisms of abstract humanism" in both the West and the East have indeed submerged or ignored the voices of the "Other"--women, people of color, and marginalized groups--in tragic ways.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, as Harvey remarks, postmodernism reminds the Left that historical materialism is an "open-ended and dialectical inquiry," not a "closed and fixed body of understandings" or a "statement of total truth"; that race, gender, religion, and other dimensions of social organization are important; that more attention must be afforded "the production of images and of discourses"; that "aesthetic and cultural practices matter"; and that real "geographies of social action" should be understood as "sites of innumerable differences and othernesses," as well as struggles shaped by "the overall logic of capitalist development."¹⁹⁵

However, the postmodernists' more or less "totalizing" rejection of emancipatory theory in general and socialist theory in particular has been subjected to devastating criticism by many scholars on the Left in recent years. Jurgen Habermas is widely recognized by mainstream scholars as perhaps the most eloquent defender of the Enlightenment project and the most incisive commentator on "the philosophical discourse of modernity."¹⁹⁶ But an arguably broader and stronger defense of the possibilities of emancipatory theory--and of socialism--has been mounted by Marxists and socialists such as Callinicos, Jameson, Harvey, and Miliband, and by socialist-feminists such as Hewitt, Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, and Carol Stabile. Quite a number of these writers follow Hewitt in arguing that "blanket proclamations" of the demise of the Enlightenment project "in the name of pluralism, difference, and local narratives" should be rejected as "theoretically insufficient and politically dangerous...."¹⁹⁷ And as Harvey points out, notwithstanding its "positive" implications, the radical or emancipatory potential of postmodernist thought is largely undermined by its striking neglect of capitalism as a system of power, class exploitation and domination, and class struggles, and by its facile dismissal of Marxism and socialism as just another metaphysical "metanarrative."¹⁹⁸ As these scholars and other critics of postmodernism argue, the harsh realities of class oppression and other forms of domination in the advanced capital-

ist societies provide all the grounds that are required for continuing efforts to theoretically articulate--and practically struggle for--the kinds of fundamental social changes required for their eradication. On this view, what is urgently needed in these societies is not the wholesale repudiation of emancipatory or socialist theory in toto, but its renewal and revitalization.¹⁹⁹

The postmodernist critique of the Enlightenment project draws much of its force from the ugly but inescapable truth that both modern capitalism and modern socialism have, as Lyotard insists, been implicated in "crimes against mankind." Lyotard's insistence that the last two centuries "have given us as much terror as we can take" resonates deeply among broad sections of the population of the world.²⁰⁰ It would be difficult to deny that for hundreds of millions of people across the planet, these competing ideologies of emancipation and progress have each been associated with significant historical injustice and oppression. An "incredulity towards metanarratives" such as the "Universal History" of Fukuyama or the "frozen catechisms" of orthodox Marxism-Leninism is not only understandable but prudent in the closing years of the twentieth century.²⁰¹ And the recognition that history cannot be simply understood as a "grand narrative" of emancipation and progress is so widespread as to be uncontroversial.

Nevertheless, Lyotard and other postmodernists are unper-

suasive in depicting these "crimes against mankind" as the inexorable consequences of the Enlightenment's commitment to the power of human reason and the possibility of social progress. After all, the most horrible and catastrophic events of this century--Fascism, the world wars, the Holocaust, Stalinism, and the plunder of the Third World--may be more reasonably understood as historical phenomena brought about by forces opposed to the Enlightenment ideals of reason, freedom, and justice.²⁰² As Terry Eagleton writes,

Modernity for Lyotard would seem nothing but a tale of terroristic reason and Nazism little more than the lethal terminus of totalizing thought. This reckless travesty ignores the fact that the death camps were among other things the upshot of a barbarous irrationalism which, like some aspects of postmodernism itself, junked history, refused argumentation, aestheticized politics, and staked all on the charisma of those who told the stories.²⁰³

Moreover, as Miliband points out, the crimes and atrocities committed by authoritarian socialist regimes should be recognized as profound and tragic perversions, not inevitable consequences, of the ideals of socialism.²⁰⁴ Indeed, the "bloody impasses" identified by Lyotard should be understood not as the inevitable consequences of the Enlightenment project, but rather as the work of very powerful historical actors and agencies arraigned against what Hegel would call the progress of reason in history. As Thomas McCarthy writes, summarizing Habermas's opposition to the postmodern-

ists, "the real problem is too little rather than too much enlightenment, a deficiency rather than an excess of reason."²⁰⁵

The sweeping postmodernist renunciation of critical reason has been widely criticized as theoretically flawed, internally inconsistent, and politically irresponsible. Although social scientists and social theorists certainly disagree a great deal about what constitutes good theory, the need for such theory is recognized by most of them. As Pauline Rosenau observes, "Rigid truth-claims are unfashionable in the social sciences today, but the need for theory is central."²⁰⁶ And Harvey surely speaks for many Marxists and socialists when he insists that "Meta-theory cannot be dispensed with."²⁰⁷ The striking logical lapse at the heart of the postmodernist case has been noted by Fraser and Nicholson, who criticize the postmodernists for moving too easily from the rejection of philosophical "metanarratives" to the repudiation of theory per se.²⁰⁸ Fraser and Nicholson accept the postmodernist critique of metaphysics in some modern philosophies of history but insist that this does not entail abandoning "the project of social theory tout court."²⁰⁹ For Fraser and Nicholson, as well as for most social scientists and social theorists, the postmodernist challenge to universalistic foundationalism can hardly be taken as grounds for rejecting "large historical narrative" and the "identification and critique of macro-structures of

inequality and injustice...."²¹⁰ The abandonment of any such large-scale historical analysis or social theory would appear to deprive postmodernist writers of any resources other than rhetorical ones for the critical analysis of domination and the articulation of possibilities for resistance.

None of the central themes in the postmodernist case need be taken as the last word on the desirability and viability of emancipatory or socialist theory. The postmodernist dismissal of the modern notion of society as an objective, representable, and knowable whole in favor of a plurality of "incommensurable" discourses or "language games" has come under especially heavy criticism. As Christopher Norris points out, Lyotard and other postmodern writers make an important logical error when they move from the premise that claims and concepts are promulgated within "discourses" or "language games" to the conclusion that these claims and concepts have no "real-world experiential truth."²¹¹ Norris emphasizes that this "ultra-nominalism" is, in effect, an anti-realist view that denies the "facts" or objective realities of social life.²¹² He criticizes the postmodernists for denying "what should surely be apparent to any commentator, that is to say, the continuing facts of unemployment, social deprivation, unequal opportunities, two-tier health care, educational under-privilege, and all the rest," and for rejecting the possibility of assigning more than "notional (speculative) content" to terms like "society," "class,"

"human interests," and "knowledge."²¹³ From the vantage point of contemporary critics, the postmodernist dissolution of historical and social reality into language and discourse may be considered just as metaphysical as some of the philosophical "metanarratives" these writers are concerned with criticizing.²¹⁴

Moreover, the postmodernist suggestion that the plurality of discourses or "language games" in society prevents the development of authentic emancipatory theory falters under even cursory examination. As John McGowan notes, Lyotard takes a giant step from the premise that different cultures, historical epochs, scientific practices, and "forms of life" employ different languages to the conclusion that there is "nothing in common" among these "discourses."²¹⁵ McGowan observes that the "walls" between "language games" would have to be "rather high" in order to establish any viable claim of "incommensurability," but Lyotard fails to develop any sustained historical or empirical argument here.²¹⁶ More generally, Hilary Putnam argues that "incommensurability" is not a significant problem, and that the successful "translation" or interpretation of different languages and cultures is a "fact" of life.²¹⁷ Putnam submits that "It is a constitutive fact about human experience" that "we are...able to do this; able to interpret one another's beliefs, desires, and utterances so that it all makes some kind of sense."²¹⁸ Richard Bernstein develops a different critique of the

"incommensurability" thesis, conceding that there may not be a "universal" or "neutral" framework in which all languages or "vocabularies" can be adequately "translated" and evaluated, but arguing that this does not entail "relativism" or "perspectivism."²¹⁹ In Bernstein's view, "incommensurable languages and traditions" are not "self-contained windowless monads that share nothing in common."²²⁰ There are always, he insists, "points of overlap and criss-crossing," and "incommensurable" languages can be "compared and rationally evaluated in multiple ways."²²¹

The postmodernist argument that emancipatory theory can no longer ground values and norms or justify radical praxis is scarcely more compelling than the assertion of insurmountable "incommensurability." Although emancipatory precepts and practices cannot be legitimated by universalistic foundationalism in philosophical "metanarratives," they can be justified or validated through non-foundationalist critical social theory which links a critique of existing conditions of exploitation and domination to struggles for an alternative society.²²² As Hewitt contends, while the conception of reason as "purposive, instrumental, and manipulative" has indeed become "prevalent" in the major "metanarratives" of modernity, "The task of all theories of emancipation...is to develop and reconstruct the counter-discourse of modernity that also conceives reason as the possibility of justice, freedom, and human happiness."²²³

From this vantage point, what Norris calls "the postmodern variant on the drastic dichotomy between fact and value" may be seen as just another version of the truncated conception of reason which has been challenged by Marxism, socialism, and other emancipatory theory.²²⁴

In the closing years of the twentieth century, it appears impossible to deny that science and ideology have been pressed into the service of repression in both capitalist and socialist societies. And the work of Foucault, in particular, should be credited with making some important contributions to the theorization of certain forms of power which are indeed linked to "the production of truth." However, as Peter Dews suggests, the broader postmodernist argument that theory or knowledge is inevitably constituted and corrupted by power is much less persuasive and may be rejected as an unwarranted "totalizing" claim.²²⁵ Dews notes that the most famous response to Foucault comes from Habermas, for whom "it is not truth itself which is intrinsically linked to power, but rather truth-claims which could not be upheld if they were not shielded from critical probing by coercion and manipulation."²²⁶ It bears repeating that the "bloody impasses" lamented by Lyotard must be attributed to the various forms of "coercion and manipulation" which have characterized capitalist and socialist societies, and not to any inherent feature of theory per se. Interestingly, as Dews points out, in his last years Foucault retreated from

his earlier position, denying that he had ever equated knowledge and power, rejected the possibility of truth, or held that the concept of truth necessarily implies "domination and forcible unification" of the heterogenous and the particular.²²⁷

As we have seen, the postmodernist critique of the autonomous, rational subject posited by the major "metanarratives" of modernity has undoubtedly had some salutary effects. In addition to criticizing "false universalisms" for submerging or neglecting the voices of the "Other," the postmodernists have sparked some important discussions and debates over aspects of subjectivity and social agency. But the more sweeping announcement of the "death" of the subject, the denial of the human capacity to rationally understand nature and society, and to use this knowledge in the pursuit of freedom and progress, should be seen as not only "regressive" but patently ridiculous.²²⁸ Hewitt speaks for many on the Left when she grants that the autonomy and rationality of the subject must be reconceptualized in ways that recognize the "communitarian and intersubjective...social, situated, and historical character" of the subject.²²⁹ She endorses McCarthy's conclusion that "The challenge, then, is to rethink the idea of reason in line with our essential finitude--that is, with the historical, social, embodied, practical, desirous, assertive nature of the knowing and acting subject--and to recast accordingly our

received humanistic ideals."²³⁰ But as McCarthy emphasizes, this reconceptualization of the subject does not entail the abandonment of reason, truth, and justice as norms or ideals. McCarthy explains:

The undeniable "immanence" of the standards we use to draw...distinctions--their embeddedness in concrete languages, cultures, practices--should not blind us to the equally undeniable "transcendence" of the claims they represent--their openness to critique and revision and their internal relation to intersubjective recognition brought about by the "force" of reasons. The ideas of reason, truth, and justice also serve as ideals with reference to which we can criticize the traditions we inherit; though never divorced from social practices of justification, they can never be reduced to any given set of such practices.²³¹

Although the "sanguinary last two centuries" have certainly produced too many instances of force masquerading as reason in the name of progress, the postmodernists cannot be said to have developed a serious challenge to the desirability or viability of emancipatory theory which appeals to "the 'force' of reasons."

It has been widely remarked that not only are the central themes of postmodernism deeply problematic, but the entire enterprise is riddled with the most profound internal contradictions, inconsistencies, and logical difficulties. In the first place, as Rosenau points out, the postmodernist assault on theory "is itself a theoretical stand."²³² Al-

though they disparage "totalizing" or large-scale theory, the postmodernists make significant, substantive claims about the changing nature of the advanced capitalist societies.²³³ And even as they emphasize the fragmentary, pluralistic, indeterminate nature of social reality, they seek to develop "a unifying" discourse to establish and explain their claims.²³⁴ As Jameson notes, there is a "deeper paradox" in the postmodernist attempt to grasp "the logic of difference or differentiation" and "heteronomy" as "a unified system."²³⁵

A second important internal contradiction in postmodernism lies in its rejection of truth and truth-claims. On the one hand, the postmodernists dismiss the possibility of "totalizing" or large-scale truths; on the other, they insist that their own sweeping claims are true.²³⁶ Lyotard claims that the "incommensurability" thesis is true. Foucault claims that his proposition that "truth is a matter of discourse" is true. Indeed, Baudrillard claims that his proposition that "truth doesn't exist" is true.²³⁷ Yet none of these writers have shown too much concern for the extraordinary contradiction here. Nor have these writers fully faced up to a third major kind of inconsistency: the presence of critical or normative assumptions in work that denies any objective basis for such assumptions.²³⁸ McGowan finds, for example, that Lyotard's endorsement of a plurality of "language games" derives from a commitment to "the

justice of multiplicity," which he admits in his later work is "a prescriptive of universal value."²³⁹ More generally, the many normative elements present in the postmodern critique of Enlightenment and modern theory leads Habermas to argue that postmodern writers, like Nietzsche, are caught within a "performative contradiction," in which they seek to practice critique even as they undermine its very possibility.²⁴⁰

Although postmodernism contains some important insights and has some "positive" implications, its virtual abandonment of any substantial concern for actually existing conditions of oppression and subordination--or for the historical and social analysis of these conditions--is clearly "regressive." As a host of Marxist and socialist scholars have emphasized, the poverty of postmodernism is nowhere more evident than in its more or less total disregard for the fundamental realities of class. Not only are the postmodernists uninterested, as Norris observes, in the facts of unemployment and "social deprivation," but they are more generally unconcerned with the very great human costs of class exploitation and domination. As Stabile writes, postmodernist theory suffers from "a marked lack of critical attention to the context of capitalism...."²⁴¹ And Harvey contends that "the rhetoric of postmodernism is dangerous for it avoids confronting the realities of political economy and the circumstances of global power."²⁴²

Whether this tendency toward what Wood calls the "retreat from class" among postmodernist and postmarxist writers can be attributed to the frustration of their own radical hopes as members of the "generation of 68," or more broadly to the many important defeats suffered by the Western Left during the past two decades cannot be explored here.²⁴³ But even if Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard have abandoned their own former concerns with capital and class, the momentous--and ominous--contemporary developments in the global political economy and the countries of advanced capitalism surely invite the renewal and revitalization of historical materialism and socialist theory, not its wholesale repudiation.²⁴⁴ Amid increasingly "ruthless" class divisions, escalating "class struggle from above," deteriorating material and social conditions, and a mounting crisis of liberal democracy, an emancipatory theory which centers on capitalism as a system of power and the class exploitation and domination which are at the "core" of these societies cannot be reasonably dismissed as metaphysical.

The postmodernist reduction of the rich intellectual and theoretical traditions of Marxism and socialism to a philosophical "metanarrative" has been strongly challenged by Callinicos, Jameson, Harvey, Hewitt, Miliband, and other writers. As these writers point out, the postmodernists are egregiously "superficial" and reckless in their treatment of Marx, as well as the varieties of Marxism and socialism that

have developed since his time.²⁴⁵ Contra the postmodernists, Marxism is not logocentric, for it is not "founded" on any Hegelian Idea or metaphysical first principle, but is instead grounded in the critical analysis of the social structures, social relations, and social conflicts of capitalist society. As Eagleton remarks, Marxism has long rejected the notion that the critique of capitalism can be anchored in any "transcendental vantage-point...."²⁴⁶ Contra the postmodernists, Marxism is not a system of Absolute Knowledge or "statement of total truth," but as Harvey insists, an "open-ended and dialectical inquiry." What Miliband calls the "frozen catechisms" of orthodox communism have been exposed by many contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars as a very grave distortion of Marxism, and any fair-minded review of contemporary Marxist and socialist scholarship must acknowledge that it is, in fact, remarkably "open-ended and dialectical."

Contra the postmodernists, Marxism is not a teleological "grand narrative" which envisions history evolving toward a predetermined or preordained "end." The belief of Marx and Engels that the fall of capitalism and the rise of socialism are "historically inevitable" was not a teleological assumption but a historical projection based on the critical analysis of the contradictions and problems of capitalism. Most contemporary writers on the Left recognize that capitalism has proved much more tenacious than the authors of the

Communist Manifesto expected, and follow Nicos Poulantzas in eschewing any confidence in "iron laws" of history which guarantee the inevitability of socialism.²⁴⁷ Still, as we noted in the first part of this chapter, Marx's discovery that exploitation is the "secret of profit-making," his critical analysis of capitalist social relations, and his projections on the crisis tendencies of capitalism remain remarkably relevant today. As Miliband suggests, the class analysis at the center of Marxist and socialist theory, "handled with all due care...does constitute a uniquely valuable approach to the interpretation of social reality."²⁴⁸ Marxist and socialist theory not only illuminates class exploitation and domination as no other mode of analysis can, but also explains why their eradication is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for a "universal human emancipation," and points to the historical possibilities for the kind of radical social transformation that can bring both about.²⁴⁹

As Jameson reminds us, the claim that "totalizing" emancipatory theory inevitably leads to terror or totalitarianism is neither new nor distinctively postmodern, for it has its origins in the reaction of Edmund Burke to the French Revolution of 1789.²⁵⁰ But however fashionable the disparagement of "totalizing" theory may be today, the supposed nexus between "totality" and terror has always been a specious one.²⁵¹ And as Jameson, Harvey, and Wood emphasize, the

commitment to the critical analysis of "society as a whole" and its fundamental internal contradictions is one of Marxism's greatest strengths.²⁵² Because Marxism provides a "comprehensive analysis of social relations and power," and elucidates "the centrality of production and exploitation in human social life," it is able to identify the working class as not only the primary subject of capitalist domination but also the primary social agency in the historical project of the abolition of capitalism.²⁵³ And the "totalizing" reach of Marxism enables it to identify the socialization of the economy, the subordination of the state to society, and the development of working class power as the primary features of an alternative, socialist society, which would not be a "magic formula and a cure-all for everything that is wrong in the world," but simply "an essential condition of human progress."²⁵⁴

The sweeping postmodernist obituary for emancipatory and socialist theory fails not only because of its grave theoretical and logical problems, but also because it represents an abdication of critical thought about the actually existing conditions of coercion and unfreedom which characterize even the most advanced capitalist democracies. The persistence and exasperation of various forms of oppression and subordination in these societies is certain to evoke continuing theoretical and practical resistance in the decades ahead. And while the socialist project is presently "at a

low point," as we noted in the first part of this chapter, the exploitation and domination inherent in capitalist society and capitalism's inability to solve "the major problems confronting humankind" are likely to spark the rebirth of socialist aspirations and movements. As Heilbroner points out, "History's lesson" may teach us that human social progress is not inevitable, but "What ever form up and forward takes, it seems very likely that it will have something to do with the idea of socialism."²⁵⁵

Although one would never know it from reading the post-modernists, there are already strong indications that Marxist and socialist theory may indeed recover from its serious "wounds" and, if "properly nursed back to health, may be stronger and more conceptually appealing than ever."²⁵⁶ During the past two decades, a very broad, diverse group of Marxists, socialists, and socialist-feminists have made some truly significant contributions to the retheorization of the socialist project and its role in "universal human emancipation." Many of these scholars have devoted considerable critical attention to the divergence between the emancipatory promise of socialism and the historical record of communist regimes, developing an incisive critique of authoritarian socialism while arguing for the desirability and viability of a humane and democratic socialism. Other writers have focused on strengthening and sharpening the explanatory power of historical materialism as "an open-

ended and dialectical inquiry." Still others have chiefly concerned with reconceptualizing the major features of socialism--the socialization of the economy, the subordination of the state to society, and the development of working class power--as well as socialist strategy in the advanced capitalist countries. Much of this literature has explicitly sought to reclaim a radical vision of democracy as the heart of the socialist project. And much of it has been deeply concerned with more capably theorizing other forms of domination, such as sexism, racism, and national oppression, and their complex relationships with class exploitation. As the remainder of this dissertation will make clear, this literature offers valuable theoretical and intellectual resources for the renewal and revitalization of the socialist project.

Although we live in a age which questions not only the possibility of socialism but the very idea of emancipation, Harvey is undoubtedly right to insist that a renewal of historical materialism and socialist theory could "indeed promote adherence to a new version of the Enlightenment project."²⁵⁷ As Callinicos insists,

It is in any case this orientation, that of the radicalized Enlightenment, of using reason to understand, to control, and to change the forces of which the Aufklärer had not dreamt, that provides the only appropriate guide through modernity--in which we still find ourselves, despite the postmodernists' proclamations of New Times.²⁵⁸

The emancipatory promise of "the radicalized Enlightenment" and a renewed socialist project lies in its commitment to the view, eloquently articulated by Miliband, "that 'ordinary people' are capable of ruling themselves and ensuring the viability of a cooperative, humane, and rational social order."²⁵⁹ However unfashionable this view may be today, the specter of barbarism already evident on the horizon of advanced capitalism is certain to hasten its revival.

Notes

1. Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man, (New York: The Free Press, 1992), pp.xi-xxiii.
2. Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Defining the Postmodern," ICA Documents, 4, (1985), p.6, cited in Alex Callinicos, Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p.10.
3. The expression "metanarrative" originates with Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
4. This is the central argument advanced by Ralph Miliband in "Fukuyama and the Socialist Alternative," New Left Review, 193, (May-June 1992), pp.108-113.
5. Fukuyama, The End of History, p.xii.
6. Ibid., pp.xii-xiii.
7. Ibid., pp.xii-xix.
8. Ibid., pp.xv-xvi, 131-132.
9. Ibid., pp.xvi-xix.
10. Ibid., pp.39-51.
11. Ibid., p.12.
12. Ibid., p.xiii.
13. Ibid., p.xi.
14. Ibid., p.xxi.
15. Ibid.
16. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" The National Interest, 16, (Summer 1989), p.18, cited in Alex Callinicos, The Revenge of History: Marxism and the East European Revolutions, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p.9.
17. Fukuyama, The End of History, p.291.

18. Ibid., pp.291-292.
19. Ibid., p.294.
20. Ibid., p.46.
21. Ibid., especially pp.242-243.
22. Ibid., p.xxi.
23. Ibid., pp.337-338.
24. Ibid., p.337.
25. Ibid.
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Chapter 2. The Working Class and Socialism

Fukuyama's theses on the "End of History" and the post-modernist repudiation of emancipatory or socialist theory are not the only prominent obituaries for socialism to be advanced in recent years. Other writers, ranging from post-marxists such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Jurgen Habermas, and Andre Gorz to the Analytical Marxist Adam Przeworski, have announced the final demise of the working class as an agency of socialist transformation in the advanced capitalist countries. Of course, proclamations of the "end" of the working class as a social agency with an interest in, and capacity for revolutionary change have been a recurrent theme in Western scholarship for decades. The assorted versions of the "End of Ideology" thesis developed by Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, Raymond Aron, Herbert Marcuse, and others developed in the late 1950's and early 1960's were seemingly falsified by the resurgent working class and popular struggles of the late 1960's and the 1970's.¹ Today, however, amid momentous historical changes in the global political economy and "the circumstances of global power," obituaries for the working class such as those advanced by the postmarxists and Przeworski resonate

widely.²

The postmarxists hold, with Bell and the postmodernists, that these societies have entered a "postindustrial" age in which the size and significance of the working class are steadily declining. Moreover, the postmarxists challenge on various grounds the Marxist and socialist view that the working class can be said to have an objective interest in, and potential capacity for socialist transformation.³ Although he employs a "rational choice" theory which diverges markedly from the perspectives of the postmarxists, Przeworski reaches similar conclusions. Przeworski argues that problems of working class formation unanticipated by Marx make it highly unlikely that working class-led popular movements for socialism will ever develop in the advanced capitalist societies. Further, he insists that the "very structure" of capitalist democracy renders all but impossible the "organization of workers as a class" for socialist transformation.⁴

In a historical conjuncture marked by a global crisis of socialism, a "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist countries, the resurgence of conservative and Right-wing political forces, and an escalating threat to the political achievements, social rights, and material well-being of the working class, these obituaries for the working class as an agency of radical social change may appear plausible to many analysts.⁵ However, the abandonment

of any substantive critical concern with the harsh realities of class in much of this work appears strangely incongruous with the increasingly "ruthless" class divisions and "class struggles from above" which, as we noted in the first chapter, characterize the contemporary advanced capitalist societies.⁶ As many Marxist and socialist scholars point out, the postmortems developed by the postmarxists and Przeworski are open to devastating criticism and can hardly be taken as the last word on the future of the working class and the possibilities of socialism.

Drawing on this recent critical literature, this chapter challenges the dismissal of the working class as a potential agency of socialist transformation. The first part of this chapter examines and criticizes the postmarxist theses on the decline of the working class and the repudiation of any objective working class interest in socialism. The second part of the chapter explores and critically evaluates Przeworski's argument that problems of working class formation and the institutional arrangements in capitalist democracies almost certainly preclude any possibility of viable new working class movements for socialism. This chapter acknowledges the significance of both the "recomposition" of the working class in recent decades and the present "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist countries, but argues that the working class has greatly expanded--not declined--in these societies, and maintains

that the working class may be reasonably said to have an objective interest in, and potential capacity for, socialist transformation.⁷

The End of the Working Class?

Two decades ago, Bell attempted to theorize what he saw as "the coming of post-industrial society."⁸ Bell contended that we are witnessing the emergence of a new stage of society which is distinctly different from both traditional agricultural and industrial society. For Bell, the advent of "postindustrial" society is heralded by a historic transition from an economy based on the production of industrial goods by an industrial proletariat to a new kind of economy based on the expansion of the service economy and the new leading role of knowledge as a major force of production. Bell announced not only a substantial decline in the size and significance of industrial or manual workers, but also profound modifications of capitalism amid the evolution of the "knowledge society." He anticipated that the major corporations in the advanced capitalist societies would abandon a narrowly profit-oriented "economizing" mode to a "socializing" mode in which economic "goals" and "practices" are decided politically, the material satisfaction of the workforce becomes "the primary levy on resources," and workers are guaranteed lifetime employment security.⁹

Many of Bell's theses on "postindustrial" society have been embraced by postmodernist writers, and their influence is especially evident in Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition.¹⁰ The views of postmarxists such as Laclau and Mouffe, Habermas, and Gorz diverge in some important ways from Bell's but share his belief in the diminished salience of class and the decline of the working class as a social group and political force in the countries of advanced capitalism. Although the postmarxists eschew some of Bell's more sweeping claims, they are able to offer their own bold conclusions on the contemporary class structure, the future of labor, and the fate of the working class. Habermas asserts that transnational capital "has ostensibly severed any ties it might once have had with an identifiable class structure," and submits that new working class movements for socialism are unlikely in societies which "bear little resemblance to the Manchester whose misery Engels once so tellingly described."¹¹ Furthermore, Habermas sees the development of contemporary science and technology as promising "the historically foreseeable end of a society based on labor."¹² From a somewhat different vantage point, Gorz concludes that the ongoing "technological revolution," especially automation, will increasingly lead to "the abolition of work."¹³

While these more extreme pronouncements are not shared by all postmarxist scholars, a consensus appears to exist among

them concerning the generally reduced role of the industrial proletariat and the working class in the advanced capitalist societies. Laclau and Mouffe acknowledge fleetingly that "the wage form has become generalized in advanced capitalism," but emphasize the practical and theoretical implications of the fact that "the class of industrial workers has declined in numbers and importance."¹⁴ For Laclau and Mouffe, as well as for other postmarxists and for Przeworski, too, the historical failure of the industrial proletariat to ever encompass a majority of the population and the likelihood that its size and significance will be further reduced in the future, present a lethal blow to both Marxist theory and socialist aspirations.¹⁵ On this view, Marxism's promise of radical social change was inextricably tied to the industrial proletariat and must be abandoned once and for all in contemporary society.

At least some of the postmarxists recognize a growing social division in these societies, but they deny that this can be understood in terms of a polarization between classes. Laclau and Mouffe suggest that "the current general tendency is towards a polarization between two sectors of the economy: a well-paid and protected general sector, and a peripheral sector of unskilled or semi-skilled workers for whom no security exists."¹⁶ From the postmarxist perspective, a not inconsiderable number of workers share in the relative affluence of the advanced capitalist societies.¹⁷

Moreover, the historic changes associated with "postindustrialism" and contemporary developments in the global political economy are seen as producing increasing fragmentation and deep divisions among the various wage-earning and lower-income strata. In addition to a "well paid" sector of workers and a "peripheral" sector, Laclau and Mouffe also identify a third and "constantly growing sector, the "structurally unemployed."¹⁸ Their three-fold classification strongly resembles that of Gorz, who distinguishes an "aristocracy of tenured workers," a "proletariat of temporary workers," and a "growing mass of the permanently unemployed."¹⁹

The postmodernists contend that this fragmentation among various fractions of a broadly defined working class will prevent it from ever becoming a relatively unified agency of radical social change. Both Habermas and Gorz emphasize that certain highly skilled and better-paid sections of the working class often support capitalist property relations. They explain this, in part, as the product of corporatist arrangements or "class compromises" that have been institutionalized in the postwar decades, much as Przeworski does. But Habermas and Gorz also stress that large sections of the industrial proletariat have come to identify with the "productivist logic" of capitalism.²⁰ And while these writers recognize that growing numbers of "peripheral" or "structurally unemployed" workers face economic hardship and social insecurity, and are much less supportive of capitalism,

they dismiss any real prospect of these workers, or "non-workers," as Gorz would have it, helping to organize new movements for socialism.²¹ In Gorz's opinion, the "non-class of non-proletarians" does not see itself as part of any class, does not want to perform alienating labor, and does not consider the socialization of the economy to be a desirable or viable objective.²²

This account of the decline of the industrial proletariat and the working class provides only part of the basis on which the postmarxists reject the view that the working class has an objective interest in, and the potential capacity for, socialist transformation. For the postmarxists hold that the more general historical failure of working classes to lead socialist revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries must be taken as decisive evidence against any nexus between working class interests and socialism.²³ Laclau and Mouffe, Habermas, and Gorz all seem to believe that if working classes were ever going to bring about socialism, they would have done so already--and that the advent of "postindustrial" society and the "exhaustion" of the "utopia of social labor" undoubtedly signal the final demise of socialist aspirations and movements.²⁴ This apparent verdict of history moves Gorz to castigate the theory of the working class and socialist transformation developed by "Saint Marx."²⁵ Abandoning the democratic socialist perspective he held in 1968, Gorz now asserts that Marx's theory is little

more than an amalgam of myth, prophecy, "religiosity," and dogmatism.²⁶

However, the most renowned and controversial postmarxist assault on the Marxist theory of the working class and socialist transformation has been made by Laclau and Mouffe. The strong influence of the postmodernist critique of Marxism as a philosophical "metanarrative" and the associated postmodernist aversion to "totalizing" social theory is evident in Laclau and Mouffe's dismissal of the working class as a potential agency of radical social change. For these writers, the Marxist anticipation of an "absolutely united working class" which becomes "transparent to itself at the moment of proletarian chiliasm" has proved to be illusory, and any nexus between the working class and socialist transformation must now be abandoned.²⁷ Laclau and Mouffe go far beyond arguing that the objective or structural location of the working class does not automatically or inevitably produce revolutionary working class movements for socialism. More fundamentally, they reject altogether the notion that the objective or structural location of the working class "determines" an objective working class interest in, and potential capacity for, the overthrow of capitalism.²⁸ Laclau and Mouffe eschew not only recognition of any "logical and necessary" relations between "the positions of social agents in the relations of production" and "socialist objectives," but also any conception of objective interests at

all.²⁹ In their judgment, the notion of objective interests "lacks any theoretical basis whatsoever" and amounts to little more than an arbitrary attribution...by the analyst."³⁰

The postmarxist obituary for the working class as a potential agency of socialist transformation has become especially influential among sections of the academic Left in the advanced capitalist societies during the last fifteen years. Many scholars who embrace postmarxist perspectives are, like Laclau and Mouffe and Gorz themselves, formerly Marxists or socialists who have felt it necessary to move "beyond" Marx in the wake of the failures and frustrations of socialist movements in Western Europe in the 1970's and early 1980's. Other writers have come to similar conclusions amid the growing global crisis of socialism and the "crisis of working class politics" in the countries of advanced capitalism. Still others have found the postmarxist post-mortem for the working class and socialism compelling in light of the emergence of the "new social movements" as significant agencies for radical social change.

However, as we observed in the first chapter, a host of Marxist and socialist scholars acknowledge that the socialist project may be "at a low point" today but argue that its rebirth is likely because of the exploitation and domination inherent in capitalist society and capitalism's inability to solve "the most important problems confronting humankind."³¹ As Alex Callinicos, Ellen Meiksins Wood, Ralph Miliband,

Norman Geras, and others emphasize, the postmarxist challenge to this proposition is far less substantial and far less persuasive than intended. Although various postmarxists may be credited with some important insights, both their account of the decline of the working class and their repudiation of any objective working class interest in socialism are rooted in a striking, systematic disregard of the social relations of exploitation, oppression, and domination which are at the "core" of advanced capitalist society.³² The postmarxist obituary for the working class and socialism fails precisely because it neglects the harsh realities of class almost as egregiously as Fukuyama and the postmodernists, and because it ignores how these realities of class may be said to provide an objective basis for the renewal of socialist aspirations and struggles. Viewed from this perspective, what Wood calls the "retreat from class" among postmarxist writers represents not an advance but an unfortunate regression in emancipatory theory.³³

The theory of "postindustrial" society which was developed by Bell and which has influenced both the postmodernists and the postmarxists has been castigated as "nonsense" by Callinicos, and there are solid grounds for his critique of Bell's more sweeping claims.³⁴ The relative decline in the size of the industrial or manufacturing section of the working class, the growth of employment and output in services, and the increased significance of scientific and technologi-

cal knowledge in the economy are undoubtedly major historical developments. But the characterization of knowledge as the principal force of production is a fetish which conceals not only that knowledge is the product of a certain kind of labor but even more crucially that its utilization in production and other economic activities is inherently dependent on other forms of labor, including industrial and manual labor. And while the latter kind of labor can certainly no longer be taken as the exclusive or most common kind of work in the advanced capitalist countries, the description of these societies as "postindustrial" evades the simple historical and social reality that industrial and manufacturing labor continues to be uniquely important and absolutely central in advanced capitalism.

Even more crucially, as Callinicos emphasizes, Bell's announcement of a new, essentially postcapitalist stage of society has been sharply refuted by the actual historical experience of the advanced capitalist countries during the last two decades. As Callinicos remarks, today it is undeniable that Bell erred in anticipating that the power to decide economic "goals" and "practices" would be passed from capitalists and managers to "the political level," and in predicting that the tenured employment and material satisfaction of the workforce would become chief among these "goals" and "practices."³⁵ Indeed, as we observed in the first chapter, the capitalist classes in these societies

have been in more of what Bell calls an "economizing" mode than ever before, as they seek to shore up profits and accumulation through a wide-ranging assault on the material well-being, social rights, and political achievements of the working class. It may also be reiterated here that, amid the contemporary "restructuring" of the global political economy and its profound convulsions in the countries of advanced capitalism, the fundamental antagonism between capital and labor is arguably more apparent than at any point in the last half-century.³⁶

Although the postmarxists recognize that these societies are, in fact, capitalist, some of their own more dramatic pronouncements reveal an extraordinary shallowness and lack of common sense when it comes to the question of class in general and the future of the working class in particular. As Callinicos observes, Habermas's anticipation of "the historically foreseeable end of a society based on labor" represents a stunning indifference to the most elementary facts of social life. As Callinicos points out, "The fact that manual industrial workers no longer form the majority of wage laborers does not of itself imply the beginning of the end of the work-based society."³⁷ Habermas somehow forgets that labor is, as Engels wrote, "the prime basic condition for all human existence."³⁸ But it is surely unreasonable to deny that this is the case, or deny that labor is "common to all forms of human society."³⁹ It would

appear difficult to disagree with Callinicos's finding that Habermas errs grievously in failing to recognize that any society must "rest on what Marx called the kingdom of necessity, upon the material production of the physical use-values without which human existence would cease."⁴⁰ And, as Callinicos concludes, "It is a measure of current intellectual disarray that as cogent a thinker as Habermas should lose sight of such fundamental realities."⁴¹

Gorz's own anticipation of "the abolition of work" fares little better under sustained critical scrutiny. Few contemporary scholars, least of all Marxists and socialists, would dispute the fact that the ongoing scientific and technological revolution in general, and automation in particular, are eliminating many jobs in the advanced capitalist societies. But Gorz greatly overstates the impact of automation on employment. As Ernest Mandel reports after analyzing O.E.C.D. studies on automation and job loss, "the short- and medium-term impact of full-scale automation or robotization on total employment...remains modest today and for the foreseeable future."⁴² Miliband follows Mandel in stressing that "the working population in the advanced capitalist countries will not be significantly reduced in the relevant future" because of automation.⁴³ Moreover, Gorz does not seem to be interested in the fact that a considerable decline in employment in these societies must be attributed to the export of capital and jobs to lower-wage Third World countries, as

well as other corporate measures to reduce "labor costs."⁴⁴ Indeed, Gorz's account of science and technology leading to "the abolition of work" is, as Wood writes, a kind of technological determinism which is much more "metaphysical" than the Marxist and socialist theory he criticizes.⁴⁵ As Wood points out, Gorz's account is based on "a kind of inverted technologism, a fetish of the labor process" which over-emphasizes "the technical process of work" while abandoning any real concern for the social relations of exploitation, oppression, and domination at the heart of the capitalist mode of production.⁴⁶ While Gorz rightly underscores the tendency toward increasing unemployment in the countries of advanced capitalism, this can hardly be construed as "the abolition of work." And, in the end, Gorz himself acknowledges that labor will continue to be essential in any conceivable form of society.⁴⁷

The broader postmarxist suggestion that the class structure of the advanced capitalist countries has fundamentally changed, and that the material and social conditions of the working class have so greatly improved since the nineteenth century as to render socialist aspirations obsolete is scarcely distinguishable from the major currents of mainstream scholarship which has been insisting on the "end" of classes and class struggle for decades. As we noted in the first chapter, it may be readily admitted that Marx's anticipation of mass impoverishment did not come to pass. And it

may be further acknowledged that working classes have been able to improve their material and social conditions through political struggles and workplace struggles during the last century. However, as Miliband emphasizes, neither the historical failure of working classes to assume the revolutionary role ascribed to them by Marx and his successors, nor the present "crisis of working class politics"--much less the "recomposition" of the working class--may be taken to mean the "end" of the fundamental division and antagonism between capitalists and workers in these societies.⁴⁸ Indeed, the resurgence of increasingly "ruthless" class divisions and determined "class struggle from above", and the associated threat to the material and social welfare of the working class lead one to wonder how Laclau and Mouffe can deny that the growing social polarization in these societies is between classes. Habermas's inability to see that transnational capital, as capital, remains rooted in "an identifiable class structure" and his failure to see that conditions of poverty and deprivation not so dissimilar from the misery of nineteenth-century Manchester are re-emerging among sections of the working class can only be explained by a willful neglect of the "dirty secret" of class.⁴⁹ As quite a number of Marxist and socialist scholars underscore, the postmarxist obituary for the working class is made possible only by the remarkable avoidance of any sustained critical attention to the social relations of exploitation, oppres-

sion, and domination which continue to characterize even the most democratic of the advanced capitalist societies.⁵⁰

Contemporary Marxist and socialist writers acknowledge that the industrial or manufacturing section of the working class has declined somewhat in these societies during the past few decades, but contend that this phenomenon requires much more careful attention than provided by the postmarxists.⁵¹ One would never know from reading the postmarxists that this phenomenon has hardly affected all of the advanced capitalist countries to the same extent. In Japan, for example, between 1964 and 1982, there was a marked increase in the share of the Gross Domestic Product generated by industry and manufacturing, and a relative decline in the share generated by the service sector.⁵² But even in those Western countries where the phenomenon of deindustrialization is real enough, as Callinicos and Miliband stress, this can hardly be taken to represent the pending demise of the industrial or manufacturing worker.⁵³ Recent downward trends in industrial employment and output should be seen as a relative decline of this sector of the economy, and their significance should not be overstated.⁵⁴ It should also be understood that the dramatic expansion of the service economy has largely occurred at the expense of agricultural employment, not industrial or manufacturing employment.⁵⁵

As an impressive body of recent Marxist and socialist literature makes clear, the postmarxist depiction of the

relative decline of the industrial proletariat as an overall decline in the size and significance of the working class is deeply and profoundly mistaken. It is, of course, true that Marx and Engels saw the industrial proletarian as the most important kind of wage laborer and expected the industrial working class to eventually include the bulk of the population in developed capitalist societies. And it is also true that this projection has proved to be erroneous. However, the postmarxist reduction of the working class to the industrial proletariat is predicated on the identification of class with "the technical process of work" instead of social relations of exploitation, oppression, and domination. The postmarxists forget that Marx and Engels conceived the working class as encompassing all propertyless persons who must sell their labor in order to make a living. For Marx and Engels, the working class was first and foremost the class of wage laborers--workers who are exploited when they are employed and economically oppressed when they are not.⁵⁶ Although Marx and Engels' critique of capitalist production led them to distinguish productive labor from non-productive labor, they did not regard this distinction as the criterion for membership in the working class.⁵⁷ Notwithstanding their focus on the industrial proletariat, Marx and Engels recognized that "clerks" and "commercial employees," some agricultural laborers, even "schoolmasters" and writers in certain circumstances could be considered part of the work-

ing class.⁵⁸

While acknowledging the relative decline of the industrial proletariat in the advanced capitalist societies, contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars are able to persuasively defend this conception of the working class as "the class of modern wage laborers" as a whole.⁵⁹ On this view, the working class today includes not only industrial workers, but also clerical workers, service and distributive workers, public and state employees, part-time workers, and unemployed persons.⁶⁰ As Leo Panitch observes, "The fact that older manual occupations have declined in relative numerical terms does not mean that exploitation has changed its character...."⁶¹ Callinicos makes the same point, insisting that "The fact that much of this labor now involves interacting with other people rather than producing goods does not change the social relations involved...."⁶² Wood emphasizes that white-collar workers and other wage-earners, like industrial workers, are "completely separated from the means of production," are "compelled to sell their labor power," are required to "perform surplus labor whose nature is determined by capitalist relations of production," and are exploited.⁶³ Both Wood and Miliband submit that public and state employees, too, provide indispensable support for the production and appropriation of surplus value, and are subject to the same general "compulsions" as the rest of the working class.⁶⁴ Moreover, as Miliband writes, it would be

unreasonable to deny that unemployed persons and part-time workers are part of the working class.⁶⁵

These scholars are able to show without much difficulty that when the working class is understood as "the class of modern wage laborers" as a whole, then it must be recognized as having dramatically grown in the advanced capitalist societies during the past fifty years. As noted earlier, Laclau and Mouffe themselves admit that wage labor has become "generalized in advanced capitalism" although they are unable to recognize that this represents a historic increase in the size and significance of the working class.⁶⁶ Callinicos explains that "Wage labor has if anything become a more pervasive feature of social experience in the past half century, with the decline of peasant agriculture and the growing involvement of women in the labor market."⁶⁷ Miliband rigorously criticizes the "familiar notion" that the working class "is in steep decline," pointing out that while "the manufacturing part of the working class is declining in these countries...the working class as a whole...is actually growing in numbers...."⁶⁸ Even as the working class has been undergoing processes of "recomposition," Panitch stresses the "passage of the vast majority of the population to the status of those who had to sell their labor to gain a livelihood."⁶⁹ Callinicos and Miliband join Panitch in underscoring that the working class today includes the preponderant majority of the population in these societies.⁷⁰

As Miliband readily acknowledges, whether this "sociological majority" is ever likely to develop into a "political majority" is indeed "a very different question," but it is one which the postmarxists dispose of much too easily.⁷¹ The postmarxist account of fragmentation and division within the working class as an insurmountable barrier to the creation of new socialist movements comes under especially heavy criticism from contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars. These writers grant that Marx and Engels's anticipation of working class "homogenization" through massive impoverishment has proved to be mistaken and recognize various forms of fragmentation and division within the working class as a whole.⁷² But the "proletarianization" of the population has certainly occurred through the "generalization" of wage labor and the subjection of the majority of people to the "compulsions" and constraints of capitalist accumulation.⁷³ As these scholars make clear, when it comes to analyzing the working class and its fractions, the postmarxist tendency to privilege particularity and difference at the expense of any common or unifying conditions--along with a stubborn disregard for these social relations of exploitation, oppression, and domination--leads to a critically deficient dismissal of the objective basis on which the working class as a whole may be reasonably said to have an interest in socialist transformation.

In the first place, the postmarxists are seriously mis-

taken to claim that a sizeable portion of the working class should be considered part of the "well-paid and protected general sector" which shares in the relative affluence of these societies. It need not be disputed that certain sections of the working class have achieved higher wages, broader benefits, and improved conditions of work and life through workplace and political struggles over generations. But as we observed in the first chapter, the suggestion that these societies, or at least their "general sector," should be considered affluent is "an apologetic obfuscation" which hides "the real condition of the working class...."⁷⁴ As Miliband reiterates, "life for the vast majority remains cramped, insecure, alienating...."⁷⁵ Criticizing the depiction of many better-paid workers as virtually "middle class," Miliband remarks that "the people who belong to the bourgeoisie would--quite rightly--think themselves catastrophically impoverished and intolerably impaired if they had to share the condition of the working class, even if it was the condition of 'the aristocracy of labor'...."⁷⁶

The postmarxist assertion that the better-paid sections of the working class almost inevitably identify with the "productivist logic" of capitalism or support "class compromises" rather strikingly ignores what Wood calls "the whole history of working class struggles against capital" and eschews any more comprehensive critical account of the failures of socialist movements in these countries during the

twentieth century.⁷⁷ As Marxist and socialist writers point out, while it is undoubtedly true that some sections of the working class have been greatly influenced by capitalist ideology and have sometimes embraced corporatist arrangements, this can hardly be taken as evidence of their relative affluence or general satisfaction with existing social arrangements.⁷⁸ The "engineering of consent" in the advanced capitalist societies is a complex and contradictory process which, as we will note in the second part of this chapter, cannot be adequately explained as the product of "class compromises" in which workers abandon socialist objectives because they are able to gain significant improvements in their material and social conditions.⁷⁹

Even more crucially, though, the postmarxists largely ignore the deleterious impact of the contemporary restructuring of the advanced capitalist economies on the better-paid sections of the working class. One would never know from reading the postmarxists that relatively few workers can be said to be "tenured" or "protected" today. Still less could one learn that this part of the working class, too, has been painfully afflicted by mounting unemployment, increased insecurity of employment, declining real wages, loss or threatened loss of benefits, and growing anxiety for the past two decades. But the general decline in the conditions and prospects of these workers has been widely recognized by both mainstream and socialist commentators in recent

years.⁸⁰ As full-time, high-wage employment become increasingly scarce and ever larger numbers of workers find it virtually impossible to earn an adequate living, much less win "tenure" or "protection," the postmarxist depiction of a large, relatively comfortable section of the working class becomes progressively more difficult to sustain.

The postmarxist analysis of "peripheral" and unemployed workers also falters under critical scrutiny. Their focus on the growing ranks of poorly-paid and insecure workers, temporary workers, part-time workers, and unemployed workers is salutary to a point. But their account is gravely marred by the inability to recognize that these are, in fact, all workers--or to comprehend that these workers have, despite some differences in their specific situations, a great deal in common with each other and with the better-paid section of the working class as well.⁸¹ Now it is certainly true, as Gorz insists, that many of these workers do not see themselves as such, but it would be unwise to deny that many others do. Moreover, as we will observe in the next part of the chapter, the absence of class consciousness cannot be taken as evidence of the absence of class. In any event, marginalized or unemployed workers who do not see themselves as workers are hardly the only members of the working class with no sense of class identity or class interests.⁸² And the limited development of class consciousness and class-based politics among workers as a whole should not be seen

as the inevitable consequence of sectoral differences but analyzed in a broader historical and social context which affords attention to the material and ideological reach of capital, the progressive bankruptcy of both communist and social democratic parties as agencies of radical social change, and much else.

But perhaps the most glaring weakness of the postmarxist account here is their extraordinary disregard for the material and social conditions of want, deprivation, and insecurity faced by many millions of people in the lower strata of the working classes--and for how these conditions may well lead many "peripheral" and unemployed workers to support new movements for radical social change in the decades ahead. Although Gorz and other postmarxists appear to interpret contemporary trends toward massive unemployment as eroding the potential of the working class for such fundamental social transformation, this seems rather presumptuous. After all, Marx anticipated that the crises of capitalist production and accumulation would generate a progressively larger "surplus population" excluded from the means of production and the means of subsistence.⁸³ And Marx expected that many of these workers would join with employed industrial workers in creating "a movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority," for socialism.⁸⁴ Surely, the historical experience of the twentieth century has made clear the capacity of "peripheral" and unemployed workers to

significantly contribute to radical political action.⁸⁵ And while Gorz may believe that these workers do not want permanent full-time work and will come to cope with their precarious circumstances, this confidence is not entirely shared by business and government leaders in the advanced capitalist countries. As we noted in the first chapter, a recent O.E.C.D. report warns that mounting unemployment poses a serious threat to the stability of capitalist democracy, and yet O.E.C.D. proposals for economic growth and job creation require a dramatic lowering of "labor costs" and social benefits which threaten to "provoke social breakdown."⁸⁶ The postmarxist dismissal of the many millions of increasingly insecure or impoverished "peripheral" and unemployed workers as potential supporters of radical social change is exceedingly presumptuous and short-sighted.

Still, in the end, the most fundamental failure in the postmarxist analysis of the contemporary societies of advanced capitalism is their inability to recognize that the working class as a whole is subjected to social relations of exploitation, oppression, and domination, and that the various forms of subordination and unfreedom inherent in capitalism constitute an objective basis for the renewal and revitalization of socialist movements. As Miliband emphasizes, "even though distinctions have to be made in regard to the degree of subordination experienced by different sections of the working class, it is nevertheless the work-

ing class as a whole which is subordinate...."⁸⁷ As Miliband insists, a more critical analysis of these societies might well begin with the acknowledgement of the continuing centrality of work--and the subordination of workers--in the advanced capitalist countries.⁸⁸

Despite all the talk of "post-industrial society," work will remain of crucial importance in shaping the life circumstances of the vast majority of people; and for members of the working class, it will remain a profoundly oppressive and stultifying process as well as an exploitative one, steeped in hierarchical and authoritarian relations, and marked by virtual or actual exclusion from responsibility and power....⁸⁹

Notwithstanding postmarxist suggestions to the contrary, it is the working class as a whole which will continue to be compelled to sell their labor in order to live, which will continue to be exploited and oppressed in various ways, which will continue to be threatened by inadequate and deteriorating public services and state provision, and which will continue to suffer most of the human and social costs of mounting social crises in these societies.

Moreover, it is the working class as a whole which will continue to experience the "virtual or actual exclusion from power and responsibility" in the governance of the advanced capitalist societies, and the ominous consequences of what Basil Hargrove calls the growing "deficit of democracy...."⁹⁰ It is the working class as a whole which will

continue to experience, as we noted in the first chapter, this "deficit in our collective ability to shape our society and its vision so that it can truly address our needs."⁹¹ It is the working class as a whole which will continue to be imperiled by "class struggle from above" which aims to shore up profits and growth by removing democratic constraints on capital forged through generations of popular struggles. And it is the working class as a whole which will continue to be threatened more generally by the increasing tension between the imperatives of capitalist accumulation and the democratic forms which do exist in these societies.

As we have seen, contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars grant that some of Marx's historical projections were mistaken but insist that his theory of the working class and socialist transformation can hardly be discarded as a philosophical "metanarrative" or a metaphysical dogma. As Geras points out, the depiction of Marxism by writers such as Laclau and Mouffe and Gorz as nothing more than "myth" and religious "prophecy" is an astounding caricature--and one which largely evades the critical explanatory and emancipatory power of historical materialism in general and the critique of capitalist political economy in particular.⁹² Notwithstanding Gorz's derision of "Saint Marx" and Laclau and Mouffe's repudiation of "proletarian chiliasm," the postmarxist rejection of any objective working class interest in socialism is made possible only by what Wood

describes as a theoretically and practically disastrous "retreat from class."⁹³ Although the postmarxists claim to be moving "beyond" Marx and the broader Marxist and socialist traditions, it seems clear enough that their work represents a serious digression in emancipatory theory precisely because it evades any critical analysis of the social relations of exploitation, oppression, and domination which constitute capitalism. In their haste to reconstruct, deconstruct, or otherwise supersede the Marxist and socialist traditions, the postmarxists lose sight of the fundamental historical and social reality that these constitutive social relations of capitalism will continue to produce and reproduce conditions of subordination and unfreedom for the vast majority of the population in these societies. And in so doing, they dispose all too easily--and all too carelessly--of the objective interest the working class may be reasonably said to have in abolishing such social relations and conditions.

Contemporary Marxists and socialists readily acknowledge that the objective position or social location of the working class within capitalist society does not automatically or inevitably lead workers to support movements for socialist transformation. But as both Wood and Geras emphasize, the postmarxists err grievously in moving from this premise to the conclusion that the working class has no objective interest in the creation of a society without exploitation,

oppression, and domination.⁹⁴ Laclau and Mouffe's assertion that the notion of objective interests "lacks any theoretical basis whatsoever" reveals a stunning neglect of the ways in which social structures and social relations condition the interests of social groups and, as we will note in the next chapter, effectively dissolves historical and social processes and conflicts into matters of discourse.⁹⁵ And it is Laclau and Mouffe's denial of an objective working class interest in socialism which should be seen as "an arbitrary attribution," for it ignores what Wood calls "the centrality of production relations and exploitation in the constitution of human social life," as well as the simple truth that the abolition of the forms of subordination and unfreedom inherent in capitalist society would be enormously beneficial to the vast majority of the population.⁹⁶

As Miliband writes, "It is difficult to see what is wrong with the notion that the working class ought to be aware of the nature of its subordination and exploitation; that it has an interest in the creation of a society in which it would no longer be subject to them; and that it ought therefore to struggle towards that goal."⁹⁷ Indeed, Wood criticizes Laclau and Mouffe for implying "that capitalists derive no fundamental advantage from the exploitation of workers, that the workers derive no fundamental disadvantage from their exploitation by capital, that workers would derive no fundamental advantage from ceasing to be exploited,

that the condition of being exploited does not entail an 'interest' in the cessation of class exploitation...."⁹⁸

Geras criticizes Laclau and Mouffe for being unable to see that "a common structural situation, of exploitation, and some common features, like lack of autonomy or interest at work...and some pervasive economic tendencies, proletarianizing ones among them, and such also create widespread insecurity of employment" provide "a solid, objective basis --no more, but equally no less--for a unifying socialist politics."⁹⁹ As Geras concludes,

We may consider that the revolutionary transformation of that social order, painfully difficult of achievement, would be, not a religious consumation or advent, just the condition for a marked improvement in millions of people's lives. And on the strength of this judgment--that it would be an improvement, for their health and their welfare, their possibilities of self-fulfillment and happiness, and one they could themselves come to recognize and fight for--we may hold that we are entitled to speak of objective interests.¹⁰⁰

The postmarxist obituary for the working class as a potential agency of socialist transformation draws whatever force it possesses from the global crisis of socialism and the "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist countries. But as we have seen, the very grave weaknesses in their central arguments raise considerable doubts about their sweeping conclusions. As we observed in the

first chapter, contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars recognize that socialism has suffered some serious "wounds" in recent years, and understand that the conditions for radical social change do not presently exist in these societies.¹⁰¹ Moreover, these writers acknowledge that even significantly deteriorating material and social conditions for the majority of the population in these societies will not automatically or inevitably produce new socialist movements in the decades ahead.¹⁰² But as these analysts establish, far from being in "steep decline," the working class is larger than ever, encompassing the vast majority of people in these countries. And as these scholars make clear, the exploitation and domination inherent in capitalist society and capitalism's inability to solve "the most important problems confronting humankind" will continue to constitute what Geras calls "a solid, objective basis" for the renewal and revitalization of the socialist project. In the closing years of the twentieth century, the parties and politics associated with both orthodox communism and traditional social democracy way indeed be "exhausted." But as Miliband emphasizes, "it is capitalism itself, not the idle dreams of disaffected individuals, which provides the basis for a permanent striving toward radical alternatives."¹⁰³ A more realistic and critical appraisal of contemporary capitalism than the one developed by the postmarxists suggests that Miliband may be right to insist that "class struggle for

the creation of democratic, egalitarian, co-operative, and classless societies, far from coming to an end, has barely begun."¹⁰⁴

The End of Class Struggles for Socialism?

In Capitalism and Social Democracy and Paper Stones, Przeworski examines the fate of social democracy, or what he calls "electoral socialism."¹⁰⁵ His finding that social democratic parties have forsaken their original commitment to radical social change and will not lead working classes to socialism is hardly novel. But his broader argument that the historical experience of social democracy reveals virtually insurmountable barriers to "the organization of workers as a class" in the advanced capitalist societies constitutes a sweeping obituary for working class movements for socialism.¹⁰⁶ Przeworski observes that the original raison d'être of the social democratic parties formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the fundamental transformation of society, the development of socialism. European social democracy before the First World War held that socialist transformation could occur through winning control of parliaments and introducing radical reforms that would culminate in the progressive abolition of capitalist property relations. Shunning the revolutionary or insurrectionary strategy introduced by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and

frightened by the radical workers' uprisings and factory occupations in the 1920's, European social democrats began to abandon their commitment to the nationalization or socialization of production. By the end of the 1930's, social democrats had generally come to support promotion of "the general welfare" as their central strategic objective and had adopted Keynesianism as their new creed.¹⁰⁷

Half a century later, Przeworski notes, social democratic parties have become the prevalent form of working class political organization in democratic capitalist societies. He asserts that social democracy has been the only possible alternative on the Left to minority insurrection, and the only Left political force that can claim credit for social reforms in these countries.¹⁰⁸ Yet he emphasizes that no social democratic party has even won an electoral mandate for socialist transformation. In contrast to Marx's prediction, capitalism has been perpetuated under democratic conditions for quite some time. For Przeworski, the failure of "electoral socialism" cannot be explained by the familiar Marxist "nostrums" of state repression, capitalist ideology, and betrayal of working class interests by social democratic leaders. Instead, Przeworski insists, the explanation of the fate of social democracy lies partly in problems of working class formation unanticipated by Marx, and partly in "the very structure" of democratic capitalism.¹⁰⁹

Przeworski finds that Marx's theory of working class

formation has proved to be mistaken in two crucial respects. In the first place, Przeworski contends that the working class has never become a demographic majority in democratic capitalist societies. Przeworski is able to reach this conclusion because he defines the working class as the socialist movement in the nineteenth century did--as manual, industrial workers. Employing this definition, he is able to show that the working class has remained a minority in these societies.¹¹⁰ Przeworski acknowledges that many other scholars have argued for broader definitions of the working class but dismisses their work without sustained discussion. For Przeworski, as for the postmarxists, it is enough to observe that non-manual, non-industrial wage-earners do not see themselves as workers, that their party loyalties and voting behavior often differ from those of manual, industrial workers, and that the former group is not considered by the latter group to be part of the working class.¹¹¹

Even more significantly, Przeworski rejects Marx's view that classes are constituted by the social relations of production. Przeworski denies that classes are formed on the basis of objective social relations, contending that "Class structure can no longer be read from the relations of property alone..."¹¹² Przeworski is able to reach this bold conclusion because he insists that social relations are "structures of choice," and that these "structures of choice"--not "relations of property"--explain working class formation.¹¹³

Strikingly, Przeworski claims that individuals choose to become workers. He provides the example of a hypothetical Mrs. Jones, who works as a salesperson in a department store. Mrs. Jones is married to a machinist, has a son who is studying to be an accountant, and owns some land which she inherited from her father. Przeworski insists that Mrs. Jones "becomes a worker because she chooses to become a worker."¹¹⁴ After all, he suggests, she really "does have a choice."¹¹⁵ As Mrs. Jones considers the alternatives, she realizes that she could sell her land, have her husband work overtime, or have her son help her establish her own "resale shop." Her decision to become a worker is a rational, purposive choice to do what is "best for her."¹¹⁶ Przeworski appears a little embarrassed with his own example but maintains that "Individuals face choices, and one choice might be to become a worker...."¹¹⁷

Furthermore, Przeworski argues that classes do not exist, except as "effects of class struggles."¹¹⁸ Przeworski holds that a class is neither "a collection of individuals" within the system of production nor "participants in collective actions."¹¹⁹ For Przeworski, "class is the relation between them," and "in this sense, class struggles concern the social organization of such relations."¹²⁰ Przeworski maintains that Marx was wrong to expect the objective economic situation of the working class to automatically "find expression" in the political and ideological conditions neces-

sary for socialist transformation.¹²¹ On Przeworski's view, these objective economic conditions structure only a "realm of possibilities" and are not sufficient for understanding concrete class struggles, whose outcomes are "indeterminate."¹²² He contends that politics and ideology must be considered as objective phenomena, too, and he emphasizes the significance of political parties in shaping workers' political behavior. Class struggles are structured by the totality of economic, political, and ideological conditions.¹²³

Przeworski's study of social democracy leads him to identify two distinctive structural features of democratic capitalism that practically preclude any possibility of working classes moving toward socialism. The first structural feature, on which we will focus here, is the ability of the working class to pursue and achieve some of its interests through "class compromises" in capitalist democracies. The second structural feature, which we will evaluate in the last chapter, is the electoral process itself. Przeworski prepares the grounds for his analysis of working class interests in capitalist society by recalling Gramsci's claims that capitalist property relations persist in large part because of capitalist hegemony, and that this hegemony has a material basis. The organization of consent among "subaltern" groups is based, in part, on the material benefits they receive through alliances, compromises, and collabora-

tive arrangements with the ruling class.¹²⁴ However, Przeworski then abruptly abandons Gramsci's historical sociology in favor of a form of "rational choice" theory which rests on the assumptions of methodological individualism, strategic behavior, game theory, and the analysis of social relations as "structures of choice." Interpreting the historical experience of democratic capitalism with these analytical tools, Przeworski finds that the ability of working classes to realize some of their interests in these societies leads them to rationally prefer "class compromises" with capitalists to class struggles for socialism.¹²⁵

Central to Przeworski's argument here is the definition of working class interests as short-term material interests. These interests are, in brief, human needs that can be satisfied by the consumption of commodities.¹²⁶ He specifically excludes from consideration interests in democracy or freedom or justice as "transcendental," and he discards any notion of long-term interests. Przeworski explains that the uncertainties of capitalism necessarily reduce the notion of interests to material interests and force individuals to conceive of their own interests in immediate or almost immediate terms.¹²⁷ On Przeworski's view, the working class is primarily interested in the immediate and continual improvement of its material conditions of life. Using this conception of working class interests, Przeworski proceeds to argue that the working class can be said to have an interest

in the preservation and improvement of capitalism, not a fundamental interest in socialism as claimed by Marx.¹²⁸

Przeworski believes that democratic capitalism is itself a form of "class compromise", in which the working class and social democratic parties accept capitalist property relations in exchange for democracy.¹²⁹ In capitalist democracies, working classes and social democratic parties can use collective bargaining and parliamentary processes to achieve at least some improvements in their material conditions. Accordingly, working classes embrace what Przeworski calls "the social democratic compromise" in which they support capitalist accumulation and profits in exchange for increased wages in the future, some social welfare provision by the state, and some social control over investment.¹³⁰ Przeworski contends that, absent a viable socialist challenge, society and the state are "dependent" on capitalism. The general welfare really is inextricably linked with the successful accumulation of capital. The improvement of material conditions of the working class requires capitalist accumulation and profits because these are the preconditions for the expanded investment and economic growth which make possible wage increases.¹³¹ When crises of capitalism occur, it is the short-term material interests of the working class that are most severely harmed.¹³² Thus Przeworski argues that there is an objective economic basis for alliances between industrial workers and the "expansionist" fraction of the

capitalist class.¹³³ Przeworski suggests that the working class usually eschews excessive militancy in the rational expectation that part of future capitalist profits will be returned to them in the form of increased wages, benefits, and state provision.¹³⁴

Moreover, Przeworski argues that it is not in the short-term material interests of the working class to support socialist transformation. Przeworski asserts that working classes will only choose to struggle for socialism if they see it as more efficient than capitalism in satisfying their short-term material interests, and if this struggle is compatible with the immediate, continual improvement of their material conditions.¹³⁵ Focusing on the second of these conditions, Przeworski insists that any conceivable transition to socialism is inherently bound to result in the immediate or short-term deterioration of material conditions for the working class. For working class militancy and struggles for socialism would be met by capitalist disinvestment, mounting economic crisis, escalating unemployment, and a general threat to workers' immediate material welfare.¹³⁶ Przeworski holds that even if the capitalist economy is already in crisis, the short-term material interests of the working class can only be severely harmed by any significant movement toward socialism. In Przeworski's judgement, the transition costs of socialism are simply prohibitive for the working class. Even if the working class could somehow

manage to begin the transition to socialism, these costs make it impossible for the transition to be completed under democratic conditions.¹³⁷

Occasionally, Przeworski acknowledges that there is uncertainty and indeterminacy in some possible scenarios for class struggle in the democratic capitalist societies. He grants that "consent is always tentative," that "class compromises" cannot be established if the prospects for their realization appear too uncertain, and that the outcomes of some of these scenarios cannot be determined without additional "assumptions."¹³⁸ He also acknowledges that "the social democratic compromise" has come under increasing attack from the Right in recent years. But Przeworski maintains that capitalists will continue to be able to offer "compromises" to the working class, and that the working class will "normally" choose to accept them in order to improve their immediate material conditions of life.¹³⁹ Socialism, Przeworski contends, cannot be "deduced" from the material interests of the working class.¹⁴⁰ In Przeworski's view, the difficulties of working class formation unforeseen by Marx and the distinctive structural features of capitalist democracy render all but impossible the renewal and revitalization of working class movements for socialism. Przeworski concludes that, notwithstanding exploitation and oppression, capitalism is likely to persist, while "the conditions for socialism are rotting."¹⁴¹

Although Przeworski may be credited with some important insights concerning the historical experience of social democratic parties, his broader analysis of the working class, its interests, and its potential as an agency of socialist transformation leaves a great deal to be desired. As we have noted, contemporary Marxists and socialists are well aware that the working classes of the advanced capitalist countries have generally failed to fulfill the revolutionary role ascribed to them by Marx and his successors. However, as some of these writers emphasize, Przeworski's work is of limited value in helping us understand why this has been the case. Wood, Panitch, Miliband, and others have subjected Przeworski's theses on class and class formation, working class interests, "class compromises," and socialist struggles to devastating criticism and shown how his sweeping conclusions cannot be sustained. Przeworski's obituary for the working class and socialism, much like that of the postmarxists, largely evades the vital historical and social reality that the working class constitutes the vast majority of the population in the countries of advanced capitalism, and disposes all too easily of the objective interest that the working class may reasonably be said to have in abolishing the social relations of exploitation, oppression, and domination inherent in capitalist society. In the end, it is difficult to avoid Wood's conclusion that Przeworski's "tough-minded" scepticism about the prospects of socialist

transformation "has less to do with a hard-headed assessment of capitalist realities than with an abdication of the ground on which any such assessment could be made."¹⁴²

Far from being an improvement on Marx's theory of working class formation, Przeworski's analysis suffers from some fundamental problems of its own. As we have seen, contemporary Marxists and socialist scholars readily acknowledge that Marx and Engels were mistaken when they anticipated that the industrial proletariat would eventually encompass the majority of the population, and recognize that the composition of the working class has changed greatly in recent decades. But as the first part of this chapter indicates, the reduction of the working class to the industrial proletariat cannot be justified either on the basis of Marx's own theory or on the basis of the class structure in the advanced capitalist societies. Although Marx and Engels turned out to be wrong about its composition, they were certainly right when they predicted that most people would become part of the working class, i.e. be compelled to sell their labor in order to make a living. As we have noted, the critical understanding that the working class includes all those who are subjected to the social relations of capitalist exploitation, oppression, and domination leads to the recognition that the vast majority of people belong to this class. It bears repeating that, contra Przeworski, the working class today should be understood to include not only industrial and manual work-

ers, but also clerical workers, service and distributive workers, public and state employees, and unemployed workers.¹⁴³

As Panitch points out, Przeworski's limitation of the working class to manual, industrial workers is a "narrow, a priori definition" which imparts a "sheer rigidity" to his entire work.¹⁴⁴ The fact that some non-industrial workers may not consider themselves part of the working class, or may not be considered as such by some industrial workers can hardly be accepted as grounds for such a "narrow, a priori" definition of the working class. As we saw with Gorz, the absence of class consciousness or class identity can be found among different sections of the working class and cannot, in any event, be taken to mean the absence of a common class situation. Moreover, like Gorz, Przeworski tends to forget that many different kinds of non-industrial workers have been able and willing to engage in militant class struggles during the past few decades.¹⁴⁵ Przeworski's claim that the limited size of the industrial proletariat is one of the primary causes of socialist failures is not supported by any comprehensive historical account and, ironically enough, evinces a kind of determinism which is just as objectionable as its counterparts on the Left. But most importantly, Przeworski's "narrow and a priori" definition of the working class leads to a similarly "narrow and a priori" conception of working class interests and a gravely flawed

account of "class compromises."

Przeworski's broader challenge to the Marxist and socialist understanding of classes as constituted by the social relations of class exploitation, oppression, and domination discloses the poverty of "rational choice" analysis as critical social theory. To begin with, Przeworski's view of social relations as "structures of choice" and his argument that individuals choose to become workers neglects the most elementary material and social realities of capitalism. As Wood points out, Przeworski affords little attention to the fact that most individuals in capitalist society are compelled, for the sake of "sustaining human life itself," to sell their labor power.¹⁴⁶ Przeworski appears generally unable to recognize that compulsion, not choice, is the "essence of exploitative relations."¹⁴⁷ Moreover, his analysis fails to allow for what Wood calls "the social construction of choice."¹⁴⁸ As Wood explains, "rational choice" theory neglects

the many ways in which individual choices are structured not only by the social conditions of self-preservation and self-reproduction, by the determinate range of viable options made available within any system of social relations, but also by the complex mechanisms which operate to reproduce the system itself, including its cultural and ideological supports and their effects in the shaping of preferences.¹⁴⁹

Wood finds Przeworski's hypothetical Mrs. Jones instructive,

but not in the way he anticipates. As Wood remarks, the land-owning Mrs. Jones must be considered "exceptional," and the important question that must be asked is "Could a landless Mr. Smith be said to choose his class position in the same sense as the lucky Mrs. Jones?"¹⁵⁰ Wood notes that Przeworski "seems aware of how absurd this example is...but he is apparently unconcerned about the extent to which the whole model depends upon the analytic centrality of exceptional cases."¹⁵¹

Przeworski's argument that classes do not exist, except as the results of struggles about class, hardly seems consistent with his use of objective or structural criteria to identify the industrial proletariat as the working class elsewhere in his work.¹⁵² Signally, this denial of the objective social reality of classes, their interrelationships, their antagonistic interests, and their struggles represents yet another "retreat from class" and unfortunate regression in emancipatory theory. Although Przeworski acknowledges the influence of E. P. Thompson on this issue, he chooses not to explore the resounding criticisms of Thompson's views by a host of other Marxist and socialist scholars.¹⁵³ Przeworski's pivotal mistake here is the conflation of the working class as a social or sociological group with organized working class social and political agencies. Even if Przeworski's work includes some insights on the formation of working class agencies and how these agencies help shape class

struggles, his inability to see that classes are formed through exploitative and oppressive social relations prevents him from developing an adequate analysis of working class interests and the potential for new working class movements for socialism.

As G. A. Cohen explains, "A person's class is established by nothing but his objective place in the network of ownership relations...His consciousness, culture, and politics do not enter the definition of his class position."¹⁵⁴ Miliband emphasizes that "The existence of a class does not in fact depend upon the consciousness, organization, and struggles of its members."¹⁵⁵ In a friendly critique of Thompson, Miliband writes,

Class, however, does not "happen" because people feel and articulate interests opposed to other interests; it exists quite independently of their feelings and the articulation of these feelings.¹⁵⁶

Perry Anderson adds that "It is probable that for most of historical time," classes have existed without necessarily identifying antagonistic interests or organizing class struggles.¹⁵⁷ Viewing class as an "effect" without roots in exploitative social relations arguably makes "nonsense of the concept of class."¹⁵⁸

As we observed in the first part of this chapter, contemporary Marxists and socialists recognize that the objective

position or social location of the working class does not automatically or inevitably give rise to militant class struggles for socialism. But as Miliband emphasizes, the importance of an objective or structural definition of classes in a given society is "indispensable for the understanding of the fundamental relations prevalent in it."¹⁵⁹ As Miliband explains, the "social map" provided by such an identification of classes "is no substitute for the analysis of these relations, but it is an essential point of departure for that analysis."¹⁶⁰ Accordingly, any "retreat" from an objective or structural definition of classes tends to obscure or de-emphasize the centrality of the social relations of exploitation, oppression, and domination to which the entire working class is subjected, albeit to varying degrees.

Przeworski would appear to be on firmer ground when he argues that class struggles are structured by "the totality of economic, political, and ideological conditions." Przeworski comes close to acknowledging that Marx himself subscribed to this view, and credits Gramsci with further developing it in his groundbreaking work on hegemony. In his own way, Przeworski seems to concede the Marxist proposition that the social relations of production have a predominant role in shaping this totality of conditions. Strikingly, however, Przeworski does not explore many of the concrete historical conditions in which various kinds of

working class struggles have developed. His work does not provide a comprehensive historical account or sociological analysis of working classes and class struggles in the advanced capitalist societies. As Burawoy notes, Przeworski "never describes or analyzes the concrete relations in which individuals are embedded."¹⁶¹ Instead, Przeworski develops a "model" which relies on "mythological" individuals and an abstract, ahistorical view of classes and social relations generally.¹⁶²

Przeworski's failure to recognize the central role of compulsion and the struggle for material survival in capitalist society is hardly the only crucial lacuna in his account. Burawoy criticizes Przeworski's failure to consider the important role of "relations in production" and the "lived experience" they generate.¹⁶³ Stanley Aronowitz observes that Przeworski virtually ignores the role of culture in shaping working class struggles.¹⁶⁴ And Przeworski has relatively little to say about many important historical realities that have helped to shape working class struggles in this century: communism, Fascism, the world wars, the Cold War, the strengths and weaknesses of Western communist parties, nationalism, repression, and much else. Despite his professed concern for the totality of conditions within which working classes become organized as political forces, Przeworski fails to consider many of these conditions in his haste to establish that the distinctive structural features

of capitalist democracy preclude any real prospects for socialist transformation.

Przeworski's argument that workers' interests lead them to reasonably opt for "class compromises" instead of struggles for socialism discloses an extraordinary abdication of critical analysis in the name of "rational choice" theory. As we have observed, the historical failures of socialist movements in the advanced capitalist countries can hardly be taken as evidence against the Marxist and socialist premise that the working class has an objective or fundamental interest in socialist transformation. It may be ventured here that a more comprehensive and more rigorous historical account would reveal that the persistence of capitalism can be explained by its relations of power, to which Przeworski devotes too little attention, as well as the reach of its hegemony, which Przeworski too hastily explains as the product of workers' "rational choices." But the most striking problem with Przeworski's argument here is his abandonment of any critical conception of working class interests. Przeworski's depiction and analysis of the ostensible interests of real workers are seriously deficient, but an even graver difficulty arises with his more or less total eschewal of any conception of working class interests as "long run, general, and rational interests."¹⁶⁵ Again, despite his stated concern for the totality of conditions in which working class struggles develop, Przeworski egregiously relin-

quishes any critical attention to what Geras calls the "solid, objective basis" for socialist aspirations and struggles.

Contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars have little trouble agreeing with the proposition that the practices of social democratic parties and allied labor unions have significantly shaped--and limited--the expression of class consciousness, class identity, and class interests among workers.¹⁶⁶ But Przeworski's analysis here is just as limited and stunted as that of the postmarxists, for he, too, largely evades the "solid" grounds for the view that the working class majority in the advanced capitalist countries has a "long run, general, and rational" interest in abolishing the social relations of capitalist exploitation, oppression, and domination. Miliband's response to the postmarxists applies just as readily to Przeworski: there is nothing "wrong" with "the notion that the working class ought to be aware of its subordination and exploitation; that it has an interest in the creation of a society in which it would no longer be subject to them; and that it ought therefore to struggle towards that goal."¹⁶⁷

Remarkably, Przeworski comes closer than he realizes to acknowledging the strength of the Marxist and socialist premise that the working class has an objective or fundamental interest in socialism. Although he does not develop any sustained analysis of the forms of subordination and

unfreedom in the advanced capitalist societies, Przeworski at least fleetingly grants that capitalism is indeed characterized by exploitation and oppression.¹⁶⁸ Interestingly, he concedes that socialism may well be more efficient than capitalism in satisfying workers' material needs over the "long run."¹⁶⁹ He also grants that if "transcendental" interests such as freedom and democracy were to be considered, these might well be grounds for workers supporting socialist transformation.¹⁷⁰ On closer inspection, Przeworski's work hardly challenges the Marxist claim that working classes have a "long run, general, and rational interest" in socialism. Indeed, Przeworski's own critical remarks on the nature of capitalist society point to some of the primary reasons for affirming that the working class has a fundamental interest in socialism.

Przeworski's entire case depends on conjoining a profoundly shrunken and stunted conception of working class interests to his "narrow and a priori" definition of the working class. Przeworski's argument that the uncertainties of capitalism force individuals to conceive of their interests in immediate or almost immediate terms undoubtedly contains elements of both truth and error, but it cannot be taken to justify the abandonment of a more critical analysis of the "long run, general, and rational" interests of the working class. Przeworski seems to be unaware that the very inability of working classes to pursue these interests in capital-

ist society itself constitutes a compelling rationale for supporting radical social change and provides a rather different perspective on the costs of the transition to socialism.

Przeworski's distension of the fact that individuals generally seek the improvement of their material conditions into a virtually insurmountable obstacle to their mobilization for radical social change reveals more about the limits of "rational choice" theory than the possibilities of socialist transformation. Wood identifies one of the major problems with Przeworski's analysis of interests when she observes that the conception of the individual and his or her needs in "rational choice" theory is "simplistically economistic" and "blind to any motivating forces that cannot be reduced to the narrow terms of 'market rationality' (and) the calculation of 'utilities.'" ¹⁷¹ Przeworski's dismissal of any substantive commitment to freedom or democracy as "transcendental" and his refusal to admit that the working class may reasonably be said to have an interest in abolishing social relations and conditions of subordination and unfreedom are simply staggering. One would never know from reading Przeworski that working class struggles in the twentieth century have often been galvanized not only by the desire for improved material conditions, but also by the ideals of freedom, democracy, and equality. In addition, as Burawoy remarks, social movements for peace, civil rights, and

environmental protection all suggest that human interests encompass much more than is indicated by Przeworski's "narrow economic logic...."¹⁷² When the critical understanding that working class interests should be analyzed as "long term, general, and rational interests" is conjoined with a more rigorous critique of capitalist exploitation, oppression, and domination, it becomes clear that Przeworski's entire case is in jeopardy.

In the end, Przeworski's argument that class compromises promote working class interests turns out to be an elegant analytical restatement of social democratic parties' claims on their own behalf.¹⁷³ After all, the notion that working class interests are better served by cooperation with capital than by militant class struggle has long been a central tenet of social democracy.¹⁷⁴ Przeworski is hardly the first scholar to hold that social pacts help explain the limited successes of working class struggles for socialism. And it is certainly true, as Miliband acknowledges, that social democratic party and labor union leaders have been "very willing to enter into formal agreements with employers and the state...."¹⁷⁵ Some Marxists and socialists may well agree with Martin Carnoy that the notion of "class compromise" is a "useful concept" for studying working class politics in a few countries, e.g. Sweden and Austria.¹⁷⁶ But Przeworski's work cannot be taken to establish the usefulness or value of this concept for capitalist democracies in general, much

less that such "compromises" can be adequately understood as the product of workers' rational choices. As we have seen, Przeworski fails to develop the kind of concrete historical or sociological study that would be required to sustain such an argument. As Panitch and Burawoy observe, Przeworski's account of "class compromise" is abstract and ahistorical, eschewing any investigation of the actual strategies, practices, and policies of social democratic parties.¹⁷⁷

Przeworski's "rational choice" model of "class compromise" does not fit easily with the historical record or contemporary realities of capitalist democracy. In the first place, Przeworski's explanation of capitalist democracy as the product of "class compromise" rests on a historical account which is just as "selective" and "ahistorical" as Fukuyama's.¹⁷⁸ Przeworski does not demonstrate a very keen appreciation of the historical fact that the democratization of liberal capitalist societies has been a lengthy, complex, and conflict-ridden process. He appears unaware that the civic freedoms of capitalist democracy were achieved only through what Miliband calls "centuries of unremitting popular struggles."¹⁷⁹ Notwithstanding Przeworski's claims, the historical record suggests that capitalists did not choose to accept democracy, but were instead compelled to do so by working class and popular movements.¹⁸⁰

A second problem here involves Przeworski's depiction of social democratic parties as opting to abandon socialist

objectives in exchange for reforms under capitalism. Again, the historical record presents a significant difficulty for Przeworski's account. For many social democratic parties completely abdicated their commitments to socialism long before the achievement of these reforms. These parties' support for their respective national governments during the First World War, their cooperation with Right-wing forces against militant working class struggles in the inter-war period, and their disavowal of fundamental social transformation occurred prior to the attainment of the important but limited gains which Przeworski interprets as the product of "class compromise." Contra Przeworski, the abandonment of socialism by social democratic parties cannot be explained as the result of "class compromise." The historical record indicates instead that it was these parties' previous abandonment of socialism that led them to pursue much more limited reforms under capitalism.

A third problem here attends Przeworski's contention that "class compromises" express the "rational choices" of the workers in democratic capitalist societies. As Burawoy observes, workers have only rarely had opportunities to choose between capitalism and socialism. For that matter, workers are rarely involved in major distributive decisions.¹⁸¹ Burawoy calls into question Przeworski's portrayal of workers "forging class compromises as part of their daily life, as the basis of consent to capitalism."¹⁸² Burawoy asks of

Przeworski: "To whom is he referring? Whose daily life?"¹⁸³ Moreover, Przeworski's failure to consider the "social construction of choice" and the mystification of exploitation in capitalist society raises some doubts about his claim that workers' consent to capitalism is as fully rational as he suggests.¹⁸⁴

Whether the social pacts or accords reached by social democratic parties with capitalists should be viewed as "class compromises," corporatist arrangements, or class collaboration is a matter of considerable debate.¹⁸⁵ However, Przeworski's work makes less of a contribution to this discussion than he intends, not only because the depiction of these pacts as the products of workers' "rational choices" fails, but also because the characterization of these accords as generally beneficial to the working class falters under critical scrutiny. As we have seen, this latter conclusion is made possible only by embracing a drastically diminished conception of the working class and its interests. Przeworski cites but then largely disregards Gramsci's vital insight that the material concessions and arrangements made by a dominant class to help secure its hegemony "cannot touch the essential," that is, they cannot encroach on the fundamental social relations of class domination.¹⁸⁶ It is unfortunate that Przeworski neither addresses nor joins issue with the work of Marxist and socialist scholars who acknowledge that certain social democratic reforms have

produced some important gains for working classes but argue that ostensible "class compromises" have often proved quite deleterious to working class interests.

Miliband grants that in some cases, "notably that of Sweden," such arrangements have produced "a set of real gains of great value to the working class...."¹⁸⁷ However, he also points out that "This does not amount to the end of exploitation or domination."¹⁸⁸ And Miliband takes a more critical view of corporatist arrangements in most of the other advanced capitalist societies. He finds that the "basic purpose" of these arrangements has generally been "to reduce pressure from below, particularly in relation to wage demands, and to turn trade unions into more or less official agencies for the maintenance of industrial peace and economic stability."¹⁸⁹ In most of these countries, "corporatist policies have meant above all wage restraint and other sacrifices for the working class."¹⁹⁰ Miliband argues:

The history of corporatist experience since World War Two would seem to suggest that it is only in "Swedish" circumstances, which are not reproduced in most advanced capitalist countries, that the corporatist framework could be turned into something more than a device to curb labor demands and gains; and even this would not produce the emancipation of labor from class domination and exploitation.¹⁹¹

In contrast to Przeworski, Miliband concludes that these corporatist arrangements cannot generally be said to be in

the interests of working classes.

Przeworski's "selective" and "ahistorical" account of "class compromises" precludes any serious inquiry into the material and social consequences of the "wage restraint and other sacrifices" required of the working class. Przeworski does not see that, in a number of historical instances, social pacts have helped capitalist classes recover from severe economic and political crises, only to use their renewed power to attack working classes.¹⁹² His depiction of capitalist rationality obscures the important fact that it is in the interest of capitalists to seek to divide workers and to encourage competition among them, in order to secure their own goals.¹⁹³ Przeworski's analysis of "class compromise" neglects the persistence of what Miliband calls "class struggle from above," capitalist and state action aimed at weakening the working class, as a normal part of life in these societies.¹⁹⁴ And Przeworski's view of the state as a neutral, unbiased guarantor of social pacts reveals a stunning disregard of the predominant influence of the capitalist class in the state system of the advanced capitalist societies, and for the state's attempts to shape the way in which "class compromise" is carried out, to the benefit of the capitalists.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, Przeworski never considers the possibility that what begins as a broadly supported "class compromise" can, under the totality of conditions of capitalist society, degenerate into "state-induced collaboration

of the working class with capital."¹⁹⁶

Furthermore, Przeworski's account largely ignores the historical divisions and conflicts between social democratic party and labor union leaders who have tended to embrace corporatist arrangements, and those rank-and-file workers and Left activists who have often opposed them. If Przeworski had explored the historical record here in more detail, he might have discovered that it has generally been a small stratum of social democratic party and union leaders--not the majority of workers--which has found that it has a real interest in corporatist arrangements and which has made the crucial "choice" to willingly embrace them.¹⁹⁷ In any event, Przeworski's account is undermined by the record of challenges "from below" to party and union leaders' support for social pacts. Although these leaders have been able to constrain the demands and militancy of workers in many cases, they have failed in other instances. Many strikes and workplace actions have occurred "outside 'official' or regular trade union channels--indeed, in opposition to official union leaderships."¹⁹⁸ Occasionally, pressure "from below" has even forced social democratic party leaders to embrace formal commitments to far-reaching social change, although it has not been able to ensure that those official declarations become political reality. Przeworski's history of "electoral socialism", as we will reiterate in the final chapter, is seriously deficient in many respects.

Interestingly, in response to Burawoy's critique, Przeworski admits that his analysis of workers' interests and actions, as well as his claim that capitalist hegemony derives chiefly from "class compromises," cannot be sustained.¹⁹⁹ In brief, Burawoy contends that consent to capitalist property relations is organized not only--and not primarily--through political parties and labor unions, but through "regimes of production."²⁰⁰ Burawoy argues that production cannot be reduced to the labor process but must also be taken to include the production and reproduction of social relations, and the experience of those relations. Different "regimes of production," i.e. different kinds of labor control or industrial relations, produce different experiences of class among workers.²⁰¹ On Burawoy's view, "If classes emerge at all as actors, they do so under the combined influence of the economic, political, and ideological moments of production."²⁰² Burawoy does not dispute that parties and unions are important in shaping the expression of working class interests, but he rejects Przeworski's claim to identify and explain working class interests largely through an analysis of parties and unions. Burawoy concludes that Przeworski is unable to account for the real interests, preferences, and choices of workers, much less the "class compromises" he holds to be inevitable.²⁰³

Przeworski acknowledges that Burawoy's critique is both "valid and devastating."²⁰⁴ Przeworski grants that "relations

in production" help shape working class identities, interests, and struggles, and constitute constraints on the organization of workers by parties and unions. Even more important, Przeworski admits that his work cannot explain the interests and values of real workers in democratic capitalist societies.²⁰⁵ Przeworski concedes that it is a "reductionist" error to treat individual behavior as effects of party organization, and even allows that this error is "a mirror image of what we criticized."²⁰⁶ In conceding Burawoy's point on the importance of "relations in production" for the organization of consent to capitalism, Przeworski acknowledges that an explanation of capitalist hegemony or legitimacy must also take into account the role of local communities, the educational system, religion, and perhaps other social sites for the organization of consent.²⁰⁷ Przeworski's self-critical response to Burawoy does much more than raise questions about the relative importance of social pacts for the maintenance of capitalist hegemony. In effect, Przeworski is forced to abandon his original assertion that capitalism persists because it is in the interest of the working class.

Finally, it should be noted that the future of "class compromise" or corporatist arrangements may be much bleaker than Przeworski realizes. Although he acknowledges the resurgence of conservative political forces and their assault on the welfare state, he fails to recognize that the capi-

talists' unilateral abandonment of "the social democratic compromise" has already begun to produce severely harmful consequences among the working classes. As we have observed, capitalist efforts to shore up profits and growth amid the contemporary restructuring of the world economy are unquestionably posing an increasing threat to the material and social well-being of the vast majority of the population in these societies. Przeworski's expectation that capitalists and workers will continue to work out "compromise" solutions which advance workers' interests stunningly conjures away the historical reality of the present assault on the working class by capital, and simply evades the social significance of the fact that far less will be gained by workers in putative "class compromises" in the foreseeable future.

Przeworski is unable to see that the collapse of "the social democratic compromise" may well open up new conditions and opportunities for socialist struggles in the decades ahead. As Burawoy remarks, Przeworski's work may have dealt a "devastating blow" to the theory of social democracy, but "as a theory of the transition to socialism, it is inadequate."²⁰⁸ If, as Przeworski insists, "the social democratic compromise" was the solution to the last major crisis of advanced capitalism, then a more consistent application of his own logic suggests that the capitalists' abandonment of this solution may, over time, move the working class to consider the socialist alternative more seriously.

As Panitch explains,

The discourse that defined the politics of compromise went as follows: why insist on the old revolutionary means, when the ends of socialism can be secured without them?... After decades of searching for a bourgeoisie that would meet the requirements of a humane capitalism, that discourse now is threadbare: the bourgeoisie's continuing revolutionary part demonstrates that the ends cannot be achieved without the means. The case for trying to define and practice a consistent socialist politics, and for marshalling the nerve to go all the way through with it...is reinforced by the bourgeois revolution from above in our time. As Raymond Williams suggested, this is not because it can now be shown to be quicker or more exciting, and certainly not because capitalism is about to succumb to its own contradictions so that all socialists need to do is proclaim the fact, but because no other way is possible.²⁰⁹

In the end, Przeworski's obituary for the working class as a potential agency of socialist transformation is far from persuasive. As we have seen, Przeworski's argument that problems of working class formation unforeseen by Marx and the "very structure" of democratic capitalism doom socialist movements to failure is critically deficient in some fundamental respects. Przeworski's denial of the objective reality of classes, his emphasis on choice and neglect of coercion in the constitution of the working class, his conflation of the working class as a social group with organized working class social or political agencies, his "narrow and a priori" definition of the working class, his shrunken and

stunted conception of working class interests, and his profoundly flawed account of "class compromises" all point to very strong grounds for rejecting his obituary for the working class. And Przeworski's admission that his work does not adequately explain workers' interests and actions, or establish that capitalist hegemony is secured primarily through "class compromises," should be seen as delivering a fatal blow to his case as a whole.

It is hardly coincidental that both the postmarxists and Przeworski, despite some very different orientations and perspectives, move too easily and too carelessly from the repudiation of a crudely deterministic view of the working class as a socialist agency to the eschewal of any objective or fundamental working class interest in socialism. After all, these various obituaries for the working class have been developed in the historical context of the significant defeats of the Western Left in the 1970's and 1980's, a growing "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist countries, and a historically unprecedented global crisis of socialism. But as this chapter has attempted to show, the postmarxists and Przeworski fail to recognize that the vast majority of the population in these societies belong to the working class, that the working class as a whole is subjected to social conditions of subordination and unfreedom, and that the working class as a whole may reasonably be said to have an objective or fundamental

interest in abolishing the social relations of capitalist exploitation, oppression, and domination.

As we have seen, contemporary Marxists and socialists understand clearly that the socialist project is "at a low point," and realize that the increasingly "ruthless" class divisions and marked deterioration of material and social conditions for the majority of people in these societies will not automatically or inevitably produce new movements for socialism. But as this chapter has suggested, it is rather far-fetched to deny that there is, as Geras puts it, "a solid, objective basis--no more, but equally no less--for a unifying socialist politics."²¹⁰ And it hardly seems unreasonable to maintain that the exploitation and domination inherent in capitalist society and capitalism's inability to solve "the most important problems confronting humankind" are likely to lead to the renewal of socialist aspirations and struggles in the decades ahead. In sum, the future of socialism is not foreclosed by the failures of communism and social democracy, the "recomposition" of the working class, the restructuring of the global political economy, the present brutal escalation of "class struggle from above," or the specter of barbarism lurking just beyond. The future of socialism does, however, undoubtedly depend on the ability of the working class and its allies to resolve what Miliband describes as "the crisis of agencies" and to develop what Geras calls "a unifying socialist politics."²¹¹ It is to a

discussion of the new kinds of socialist agencies and politics which would be required to bring about the rebirth of socialism that we now turn.

Notes

1. Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology, (Glencoe, Illinois, 1960); Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics, (New York: Doubleday, 1960); Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Vol.1, Translated by Richard Howard and Helen Weaver, (New York: Doubleday, 1968), especially pp.207-210; and Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).
2. I borrow this last expression from David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p.117.
3. Andre Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism, Translated by Michael Sonescher, (Boston: South End Press, 1982); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics, (London: Verso, 1985); and Jurgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1,2, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, 1987), The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1987), and "The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies," in Jurgen Habermas on Society and Politics: A Reader, Edited by Steven Seidman, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).
4. Adam Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.3-4,27,43, 202.
5. I borrow this expression from Leo Panitch, The Crisis of Working Class Politics: Essays on Labor and the State, (London: Verso, 1986).
6. Richard Sennett describes these exasperated class divisions as "ruthless" in "Back to Class Warfare," New York Times, (December 27, 1994), p.A21. Ralph Miliband discusses "class struggle from above" in Divided Societies: Class Struggle in Contemporary Capitalism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), especially pp.115-131, 142-150,165,182,207.
7. The characterization of changes in the makeup of the working class as a process of "recomposition" is found in Miliband, Divided Societies, p.41.
8. Bell, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting, (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

9. Ibid., pp.212,284,297-298. My summary of Bell's argument follows that of Alex Callinicos in Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp.121-122.
10. See Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), especially pp.3-5,14.
11. Jurgen Habermas, "What Does Socialism Mean Today? The Revolutions of Recuperation and the Need for New Thinking," in After the Fall: The Failure of Communism and the Future of Socialism, Edited by Robin Blackburn, (London: Verso, 1991), p.32.
12. Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p.79.
13. Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, pp.1-13.
14. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p.81.
15. Ibid., pp.81-85; Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, Chapter 6; and Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.23-27,57-58,63-66.
16. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p.82.
17. Ibid. See also Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, pp.6-7,69.
18. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, pp.81-85.
19. Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, p.3.
20. See Jurgen Habermas, "The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies," pp.289-291; and Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, pp.6-7,14-15, and Chapter 3.
21. Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, pp.7-13, Chapter 6.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., especially pp.14-15, Chapters 1 and 3.
24. Habermas discusses the "exhaustion" of the "utopia of social labor" in "The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies," pp.284-299.

25. Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, especially Chapter 1.
26. Ibid.
27. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p.84.
28. Ibid., pp.84-87.
29. Ibid., p.86.
30. Ibid., p.83.
31. James Petras acknowledges that the socialist project is "at a low point" in "Socialism: The Obits Were Premature," Guardian, (January 29, 1992), p.12. The critical assessment of capitalism as unable to solve "the most important problems confronting humankind" appears in Ralph Miliband, "Fukuyama and the Socialist Alternative," New Left Review, 193, (May-June 1992), p.113.
32. This latter expression is found in Miliband, "Fukuyama and the Socialist Alternative," p.109.
33. Ellen Meiksins Wood, The Retreat from Class: A New 'True' Socialism, (London: Verso, 1986), especially Chapter 4.
34. Callinicos, Against Postmodernism, pp.121-127.
35. Ibid.
36. Sennett, "Back to Class Warfare," p.21.
37. Callinicos, Against Postmodernism, p.127.
38. Friedrich Engels, "The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Selected Works in One Volume, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1973), p.354.
39. Simon Mohun, "Labor Process," in The Dictionary of Marxist Thought, Edited by Tom Bottomore, et al., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.267.
40. Callinicos, Against Postmodernism, p.127.
41. Ibid.
42. Ernest Mandel, "Marx, the Present Crisis, and the Future of Labor," Socialist Register 1985/1986, Edited by Ralph Miliband et al., (London: Merlin Press, 1986), p.437,

cited in Miliband, Divided Societies, p.49.

43. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.49.

44. See, for example, Louis Uchitelle, "Job Extinction Evolving Into Fact of Life in U.S.," New York Times, (March 2, 1994), pp.A1,D6; and Bernard Sanders, "Whither American Democracy?", Los Angeles Times, (January 16, 1994).

45. Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Marxism Without Class Struggle?" Socialist Register 1983, Edited by Ralph Miliband and John Saville, (London: Merlin Press, 1983), pp.243-244.

46. Ibid., p.243.

47. Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, pp.94-104.

48. Miliband, Divided Societies, especially Chapter 2, and pp.209-210.

49. Compare with Ellen Meiksins Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" Socialist Register 1990, Edited by Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, (London: Merlin Press, 1990), especially pp.80-82.

50. Edward B. Chilcote and Ronald H. Chilcote, "The Crisis of Marxism: An Appraisal of New Directions," Rethinking Marxism, 5, (Summer 1992), pp.89-92.

51. Callinicos, Against Postmodernism, p.122.

52. Ibid., p.123.

53. Ibid., pp.121-127; and Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.41,48-49.

54. Callinicos, Against Postmodernism, pp.122-123.

55. Ibid.

56. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in The Marx-Engels Reader, Edited by Robert C. Tucker, Second Edition, (New York: Norton, 1978), pp.478-479,483. See also Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.41-42, Note 23.

57. Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.37-38; and Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.38-39.

58. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.38-39. Friedrich Engels identifies the "agricultural proletariat" as a "section of the working class" in "The Prussian Military Question," in Karl Marx, Karl Marx: Political Writings,

Vol.3, The First International and After, Edited by David Fernbach, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p.141.

59. This expression appears in Friedrich Engels, Note to "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works, Vol.6, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), p.482.
60. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.22-23,40-41; Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.37-42; and Callinicos, Against Postmodernism, p.127. It should be noted that Miliband's definition of the working class extends beyond the relations of production, though it is very similar to the definitions offered by Wood, Callinicos, and various other Marxist and socialist scholars. Miliband makes a strong case for including the spouses and partners of workers as part of the working class, emphasizing in particular the vital role of women in social reproduction and domestic labor. However, there are substantial grounds for distinguishing between these different forms of exploitation and oppression. See Lise Vogel, Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory, (New Brunswick; Rutgers University Press, 1983). Some scholars on the Left have found it more difficult to delineate the boundaries of the working class, and considerable discussion of these issues continues. See Erik Olin Wright, Classes, (London: Verso, 1985); and Erik Olin Wright, et al., The Debate on Classes, (London: Verso, 1989). For a critique of Wright's work from a perspective similar to that of Miliband, Wood, and Callinicos, see Peter F. Meiksins, "A Critique of Wright's Theory of Contradictory Class Locations," in The Debate on Classes, pp.173-183.
61. Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.51.
62. Callinicos, Against Postmodernism, p.127.
63. Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.38.
64. Ibid.; and Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.38-39,41.
65. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.23.
66. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p.81.
67. Callinicos, Against Postmodernism, p.127.
68. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.40-41.
69. Leo Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution: The Contemporary Meaning of Revolution in the West,"

- Socialist Register 1989, Edited by Ralph Miliband, Leo Panitch, and John Saville, (London: Merlin Press, 1989), p.20.
70. Ibid.; Callinicos, Against Postmarxism, p.127; and Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.22-23,40-41.
71. Ralph Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," in Socialist Register 1990, p.362.
72. See, for example, Miliband, Divided Societies, pp. 46-48.
73. Callinicos, Against Postmodernism, pp.124-127; Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.37-42; Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.22-23,40-41; and Norman Geras, Discourses of Extremity: Radical Ethics and Post-Marxist Extravagances, (London: Verso, 1990), p.76.
74. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.211.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p.40.
77. Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.61.
78. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.126-129,210-212.
79. This expression appears in Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," p.346.
80. See Chapter 1, Note 87.
81. Geras, Discourses of Extremity, p.76.
82. Richard Hyman, "Andre Gorz and His Disappearing Proletariat," Socialist Register 1983, pp.286-288.
83. Marx, Capital, Vol.1, (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p.769.
84. Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," pp.482-483.
85. See, for example, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
86. Alan Riding, "O.E.C.D. Suggests Ways to Fight Unemployment," New York Times, (June 8, 1994), p.D2.
87. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.40.

88. Ibid., pp.40,210-211.
89. Ibid., p.211.
90. Basil Hargrove, "The Future of Capitalism," Monthly Review, 46, (January 1995), p.9.
91. Ibid.
92. Geras, Discourses of Extremity, Chapters 2 and 3.
93. Wood, The Retreat from Class, especially Chapter 4.
94. Ibid., pp.59-63,74; Geras, Discourses of Extremity, pp.76-77.
95. Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.62.
96. Ibid., pp.14,61.
97. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.44.
98. Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.61.
99. Geras, Discourses of Extremity, p.76.
100. Ibid., p.77.
101. David Gordon, "Socialism: What's Left After the Collapse of the Soviet System?" Social Research, 60, (Fall 1993), p.472; and Miliband, Divided Societies, p.234.
102. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.50-51,216-217; and Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, pp.2,49-52.
103. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.210.
104. Ibid., p.234.
105. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy; Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
106. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.3-5.
107. Ibid., pp.32-42.
108. Ibid., p.1.
109. Ibid., pp.3-4,27,43,202.
110. Ibid., pp.23-27,55-57.

111. Ibid., pp.57-58,65-66,126-128.
112. Ibid., p.96.
113. Ibid., pp.96-97.
114. Ibid., p.95.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid., p.96.
117. Ibid., pp.95-97.
118. Ibid., pp.47,67-71.
119. Ibid., p.81.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid., p.51.
122. Ibid., pp.47,67-73,81.
123. Ibid., pp.47,67,71.
124. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, Edited and Translated by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (New York: International Publishers, 1971), especially pp.57-58,161; Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.134-137.
125. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.42-46, 143,145-163,174-197.
126. Ibid., pp.172-173.
127. Ibid., pp.144,172.
128. Ibid., pp.42-46,143,145-163,174-197.
129. Ibid., pp.4,145,207.
130. Ibid., especially pp.157,177-182.
131. Ibid., pp.139-140,145.
132. Ibid., pp.164-165.
133. Ibid., p.91.
134. Ibid., pp.157,177-182.

135. Ibid., pp.174-177.
136. Ibid., pp.45-46, 156, 176, 197-200.
137. Ibid., pp.176-177.
138. Ibid., pp.147, 194, 197.
139. Ibid., p.248.
140. Ibid., p.177.
141. Ibid., p.248.
142. Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Rational Choice Marxism: Is the Game Worth the Candle?" New Left Review, 177, (September-October 1989), p.87.
143. Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution," p.20; Callinicos, Against Postmarxism, p.127; Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.37-42; Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.22-23, 40-41.
144. Leo Panitch, Review of Paper Stones, by Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, American Journal of Sociology, 93, (September 1987), p.491.
145. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.47.
146. Wood, "Rational Choice Marxism," pp.52-53, 80-81.
147. Ibid., p.53. Przeworski does occasionally acknowledge the coercive dimensions of capitalist relations of production, e.g. Capitalism and Social Democracy, p.164. As we have seen, however, his focus lies elsewhere.
148. Wood, "Rational Choice Marxism," p.50.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid., pp.51-52.
151. Ibid., p.52.
152. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, especially pp.23-24, 104-105.
153. Edward P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), cited in Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.69-71.
154. G. A. Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p.73.

155. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.41.
156. Ibid.
157. Perry Anderson, Arguments Within English Marxism, (London: Verso, 1980), p.40, cited in Miliband, Divided Societies, p.42.
158. Michael Burawoy, "Marxism Without Micro-Foundations," Socialist Review, 89:2, (1989), p.81.
159. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.42.
160. Ibid.
161. Burawoy, "Marxism Without Micro-Foundations," p.80.
162. Ibid., pp.61,80,83-85.
163. Ibid., pp.67,83-85.
164. Stanley Aronowitz, The Crisis in Historical Materialism: Class, Politics, and Culture in Marxist Theory, Second Edition, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p.108.
165. C. Wright Mills, The Marxists, (New York, 1962), p.115.
166. Panitch, Review of Paper Stones, pp.491-493.
167. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.44.
168. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.164-165, 247-248.
169. Ibid., p.176.
170. Ibid., pp.172,247-248.
171. Wood, "Rational Choice Marxism," p.83.
172. Burawoy, "Marxism Without Micro-Foundations," p.79.
173. Ibid.
174. Ibid.; and Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.126-129.
175. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.126-127.
175. Martin Carnoy, The State and Political Theory, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.217.
177. Panitch, Review of Paper Stones, pp.491-493; Burawoy,

- "Marxism Without Micro-Foundations," pp.61-65,80-81.
- 178.I borrow these adjectives from Fred Halliday, "An Encounter with Fukuyama," New Left Review, 193, (May-June 1992), p.92.
- 179.Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.190.
- 180.See Miliband, "Fukuyama and the Socialist Alternative," p.110; and Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.149-150.
- 181.Burawoy, "Marxism Without Micro-Foundations," p.93.
- 182.Ibid., p.81.
- 183.Ibid.
- 184.Ibid., pp.77-78.
- 185.See, for example, Panitch, Review of Paper Stones, pp.491-493; and Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.126-129. See also Ernest Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, Edited by Jon Rothschild, (London: New Left Books, 1979), pp.63-64.
- 186.Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, pp.161,181-182, cited in Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, p.137.
- 187.Miliband, Divided Societies, p.128.
- 188.Ibid.
- 189.Ibid., p.126.
- 190.Ibid., p.128.
- 191.Ibid., p.129.
- 192.Carnoy, The State and Political Theory, p.245.
- 193.Michael A. Lebowitz, "Is 'Analytical Marxism' Marxism?" Science and Society, 52, (Summer 1988), p.198.
- 194.Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.131-134.
- 195.Carnoy, The State and Political Theory, pp.217,245.
- 196.Ibid., p.217.
- 197.Ernest Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, Translated by Jon Rothschild, (London: New Left Books, 1978),

- p.10; and Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.69-74,126-129, 221-223.
- 198.Ibid., p.70.
- 199.Burawoy, "Marxism Without Micro-Foundations," especially pp.66-77,80-85; and Adam Przeworski, "Class, Production, and Politics: A Reply to Burawoy," Socialist Review, 89:2, (1989), pp.87-111.
- 200.Burawoy, "Marxism Without Micro-Foundations," pp.66-77, 80-85.
- 201.Ibid., p.67.
- 202.Ibid., p.82.
- 203.Ibid., pp.83-85.
- 204.Przeworski, "Class, Production, and Politics," p.93.
- 205.Ibid., pp.93-96.
- 206.Ibid., p.96.
- 207.Ibid., p.97.
- 208.Burawoy, "Marxism Without Micro-Foundations," p.77.
- 209.Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution," pp.5-6.
- 210.Geras, Discourses of Extremity, p.76.
- 211.Miliband, Divided Societies, p.223.

Chapter 3. The Rebirth of Socialism

During the past two decades, even as the "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist countries and the broader global crisis of socialism have progressively deepened, a number of Marxist and socialist writers have devoted considerable attention to the paramount questions of how the "crisis of agencies" might be resolved and how a "unifying socialist politics" might be developed. As we observed in the first chapter, recent Marxist and socialist discussions in the advanced capitalist countries have generally sought to reclaim a radical conception of democracy as the heart of socialism and to rethink the kinds of agencies, politics, and strategies that would be necessary for socialist transformation. Often these scholars have drawn on the theoretical contributions of Antonio Gramsci because they find in his work a profoundly democratic conception of radical social change which remains, in many ways, quite relevant today. Notwithstanding the serious setbacks that socialism has suffered in recent years, the development of Marxist and socialist political thought has already yielded critical reappraisals and valuable insights that may well contribute to the rebirth of the socialist

project in the advanced capitalist countries.

This chapter draws on the work of Gramsci and contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars in exploring some of the political and ideological preconditions for the renewal and revitalization of socialist struggles in these societies. The chapter is chiefly concerned with how new working class movements for socialism could be formed, how they could forge new historic blocs or social alliances committed to socialism, and how working class or socialist hegemony could, over time, be developed in these societies. The first part of the chapter argues for the development of a new kind of socialist party and a new kind of working class movement for socialism informed by Gramsci's insights. Substantial attention is afforded here to the vital role of new socialist organizations and politics in the ideological and political transformation of the working class which is a sine qua non for socialist advance. The second part of the chapter argues, against the postmarxists, that working class movements could potentially win the support of the new social movements and create new historic blocs for socialist transformation. This section acknowledges that the working class or socialist hegemony would certainly be difficult to achieve, but argues that it is indeed possible, and considers how it might be brought about in the countries of advanced capitalism.

New Working Class Movements for Socialism

As Leo Panitch suggests, the traditional Left parties have "largely played themselves out by this point in twentieth century history," at least in the advanced capitalist countries.¹ Most communist parties have disintegrated, splintered, or embraced social democratic politics. While the fate of social democratic parties varies in different countries, their potential as agencies of radical social change has certainly been exhausted. Various Trotskyist groups continue to struggle for socialist objectives, but their support and potential remain limited, at least in part because of what Perry Anderson describes as "too close an imaginative adherence to the paradigm of the October Revolution...and too distant a theoretical concern with the contours of a capitalist democracy the Bolsheviks never had to confront."²

Although new kinds of socialist parties have begun to appear in the formerly socialist countries, Germany, and Italy, no similar developments can be reported in most of the advanced capitalist societies. However, the fate of the traditional Left parties need not be taken to mean that the rebirth of socialism is unlikely or impossible. And while this "crisis of agencies" may continue for some time, it need not be seen as insurmountable. In recent years, it has become increasingly clear to many Marxists and socialists

that the present "crisis of agencies" will only be resolved through the creation of a new kind of socialist party. As Miliband suggests, it is "reasonable to expect that a growing number of socialists, and new generations of socialists free from the weight of the past, will want to reject these (old) alternatives, and will find common ground, unity in diversity, common orientations and strategies."³ Panitch submits that "There is no reason why socialists in the West today cannot reconsider the strategic possibilities of a consistent socialist politics free of the old preoccupations with sectarian debates...."⁴

Of course, precisely what is involved in a "consistent socialist politics" continues to be the subject of discussion and debate among Marxist and socialist writers. But it may be reasonably argued that any viable new socialist party in the advanced capitalist countries must recognize the working class as the primary, though not exclusive, agency of socialist transformation, and embrace a socialist strategy which is both revolutionary and democratic.⁵ And it may be further argued that the intellectual resources of the Marxist and socialist traditions, far from being depleted, offer valuable insights and lessons for those who would be midwives to the rebirth of socialism.

As Panitch, Miliband, Raymond Williams, Anne Showstack Sassoon, and others have suggested, some of Gramsci's theoretical contributions remain especially important for any

prospective new socialist movements which are committed to the revolutionary and democratic transformation of society. Although Gramsci and the Italian Left faced very different conditions in the 1920's and 1930's than contemporary Marxists and socialists do today, it should be recalled that Gramsci considered his own epoch an "interregnum" between capitalist society and socialist society.⁶ For Gramsci, "the crisis of authority" in capitalist society develops when "the ruling class has lost its consensus," and "the great masses become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously...."⁷ Yet this "crisis of authority" cannot be seen as leading automatically or inevitably to successful struggles for socialism. Instead, "the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."⁸ Sixty years later, Gramsci's description of the "interregnum" still resonates. As Miliband remarks, "The 'interregnum' is still with us, and will endure for some time to come."⁹

As Sassoon and other scholars have emphasized, the concept of hegemony is at the center of Gramsci's theory of capitalist society and socialist transformation.¹⁰ One of Gramsci's most important insights was that the power of ruling classes rests not only on force or coercion, but also on the organization of consent and support among subordinate

classes and social groups. Although he was keenly aware of the coercive power of the state, Gramsci insisted that ruling classes must "lead" as well as "dominate."¹¹ On Gramsci's view, ruling classes seek to exercise "intellectual and moral leadership" in the society by winning acceptance for their conception of the world and the social order, as well as for the "system of meanings and values" embedded therein.¹² Eschewing any simplistic critique of "false consciousness," Gramsci found that ruling classes seek the support of "subaltern" groups by making compromises, concessions, and other arrangements which will meet some of their material interests without threatening the existing social relations of exploitation and domination. Gramsci thus argued that ruling classes are able to create alliances with subordinate social groups and form "historic blocs" which help legitimate and preserve their power.¹³ By doing so, ruling classes are able to promote the equation of their own class interests with the "general interest" of society.

Gramsci's view that capitalist rule in the "advanced" countries rested on hegemony as well as force significantly shaped his perspective on the development of working class movements for socialism. While Gramsci firmly supported the October Revolution in Russia, he held that military insurrection by a small number of revolutionary workers was neither possible nor desirable in the West. Believing that the Bolsheviks' "war of movement" could not be reproduced

in his own country, Gramsci argued instead for a "war of position," a comprehensive political struggle by revolutionary workers to defeat capitalist hegemony and develop an alternative hegemony.¹⁴ Gramsci held that

The massive structures of the modern democracies, both as State organizations, and as complexes of associations in civil society, constitute for the art of politics as it were the "trenches" and the permanent fortifications of the front in the war of position; they render merely "partial" the element of movement which before used to be "the whole" of war, etc.¹⁵

For Gramsci, the working class must be able to supplant the capitalists as the leading social force in civil society not only to make possible a successful "war of movement" at the appropriate time, but also to create the necessary foundations for the development of a new kind of society and a new state. In Gramsci's view, the working class must undergo a process of self-transformation into a collective revolutionary subject, forge enduring alliances with other "subaltern" groups in a new "historic bloc" for socialist transformation, and achieve hegemony in order to bring about revolutionary change.

Gramsci's commitment to the struggle for hegemony led him to develop several valuable insights concerning the self-transformation of the working class into a collective revolutionary subject and the creation of alliances with other

subordinate social groups. One of his most important contributions was his analysis of the role of the revolutionary party in organizing the working class, the new "historic bloc," and working class or socialist hegemony. Gramsci held that the workers' party must be "the Modern Prince" which plays the central role in bringing about the creation of the "collective will" for revolutionary change.¹⁶ Gramsci recognized that the party's ability to promote the development of working class power is dialectically related to its effectiveness as an intellectual, educational, and cultural force. On his view, the party must help workers come to develop a strong class identity, a radical conception of their class interests, and a unified collective commitment to the abolition of capitalism and the creation of socialism. Indeed, Gramsci insisted that every party member must be an "organic intellectual" who can provide leadership to the working class through "active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, 'permanent persuader,' and not just a simple orator...."¹⁷

Gramsci also emphasized the importance of workers' councils for the self-transformation of the working class. These radical workers' organizations based in factories and communities had not been theorized by Marx and Engels, but had emerged in the Russian Revolution of 1905 and had become a historically recurring form of workers' power.¹⁸ Lenin had conceived "the dictatorship of the proletariat" as "the

State of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies" in The State and Revolution, but had been forced to embrace "the dictatorship of the party" amid the ruin of civil war and foreign invasion.¹⁹ Gramsci revived and further developed the theory of workers' councils, placing them along with the party at the center of his own political framework.²⁰ Gramsci believed that the creation of workers' councils in factories and communities would help to raise workers' consciousness, foster solidarity and initiative, and promote the various kinds of political action, political education, and cultural development required for the transformation of the working class into a collective agency for socialist revolution. In addition, the proliferation of workers' councils would create a situation of "dual power" which could challenge capitalist production and the capitalist state.²¹ Workers' councils would be, in effect, the "Prime Mover" of the revolution "from below."²² They would also, on Gramsci's view, "prefigure" the primary organs of power in the new socialist state.²³

Gramsci's insights on the imperative need for the working class to win the allegiance of other "subaltern" groups and forge new historic blocs for socialist transformation are no less compelling. In response to what he considered a narrow "economism" among some Marxists, Gramsci emphasized that the working class must gain the enduring support of other social groups and make the socialist project a "national-popular"

one.²⁴ Drawing on his critical analysis of capitalist hegemony, Gramsci was able to provide some concrete and incisive suggestions on how such a new historic bloc might be developed. In the first place, the working class would have to persuade other social groups that socialist transformation will be beneficial to them. Significantly, Gramsci emphasized that the working class must be willing to make compromises, concessions, and other arrangements which will meet some of these groups' material interests. Even more importantly, he underscored the need for the working class to sacrifice its own narrow or "corporate" interest for the sake of popular unity in situations which "do not touch the essential."²⁵

Gramsci maintained that if the working class could develop such relationships with other "subaltern" groups, it could win not only their continuing allegiance in a new historic bloc, but also broader popular acceptance of socialism as conducive to the "general interest" of society. The hegemony or "intellectual and moral leadership" of the working class would progressively develop as the majority of the population come to share a new conception of the world and the social order, a new "system of meanings and values," and a new understanding of the "general interest." The working class would have won the "battle of ideas" and have succeeded in the creation of a "collective will" for radical social change. The political and cultural victory of the working

class in this "war of position" would make possible not only the successful seizure of state power, but also the truly democratic transformation of society.

Notwithstanding the very great changes that have occurred in the world since his death, Gramsci's work arguably continues to provide a relevant and illuminating conceptual framework for the development of new socialist movements in the advanced capitalist societies. As recent Marxist and socialist discussions have emphasized, Gramsci's analysis of hegemony is of paramount importance for those seeking the rebirth of socialism. It may be reasonably argued that his insights on the revolutionary party, workers' councils, and the self-transformation of the working class must be taken very seriously by new socialist movements. In addition, his insights on the creation of new historic blocs and the development of working class or socialist hegemony should be viewed as essential for retheorizing the ways in which working class movements can win the allegiance of other "subaltern" groups and the support of the majority of the population for radical social change.

Contemporary Marxists and socialists can learn a great deal from Gramsci on the nature, role, and primary imperatives of revolutionary and democratic parties. As Panitch writes, Marxists and socialists should be clear today that there can be no single "Modern Prince" which can bring about socialism. In Panitch's view, "The party cannot

be seen as the only institutional midwife in the revolutionary process."²⁶ Still, the unique and vital role of the party in promoting socialist objectives is acknowledged by scholars as diverse as Panitch and Przeworski. "The work that parties do in the formation of the identity of the working class," the former agrees, is "the critical variable in the development of socialism."²⁷ If new working class parties committed to revolutionary and democratic socialist transformation are to become anything more than miniscule "groupuscules," they will have to take to heart what Gramsci says about the role of the party as an intellectual, educational, and cultural force.²⁸ Especially today, amid the continuing global crisis of socialism and the "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist countries, Marxists and socialists must recognize the pressing need to develop the kind of party which can facilitate the self-transformation of the working class into a collective agency for radical social change. New socialist movements should understand that political education, cultural development, and political action must all play critical parts in the self-transformation of the working class.

Drawing on Gramsci's analysis, Panitch attributes considerable significance to the role of parties and movements in helping foster the development of social groups' identities and the expression of their interests. Panitch finds that parties and movements have a significant role "not just in

the representation of pre-given identities with 'objective' interests, but in the very formation of identities and in the articulation of interests of social groups."²⁹ Very much in the spirit of Gramsci, Panitch emphasizes the need for any prospective new socialist movement to promote the development of a shared or common class identity and a radical conception of class interests among workers. For Panitch, this means that "the first task of a socialist party ought to be the nourishment of an understanding and consciousness of the existence and potential of this working class majority."³⁰ In the advanced capitalist societies today the "nourishment" of such "an understanding and consciousness" would surely require concerted and consistent efforts to popularize the understanding that the working class includes not only industrial or manual workers, but all unpropertied persons who must sell their labor power in order to make a living, and who are exploited or economically oppressed. The development of a shared or common working class identity would also certainly require similar efforts to popularize the understanding that the working class includes not only presently employed workers, but also the millions of other workers who are unemployed or who have part-time jobs. Furthermore, the widespread development of a shared or common working class identity would undoubtedly require unrelenting struggles against sexism, racism, and national oppression in the ranks of the working class. And considerable work would

need to be done by new socialist movements to demonstrate in practice that the promotion of a strong common working class identity need not "efface" or subvert "other identities--of gender, or race, or ethnicity...."³¹

As Panitch suggests, the formation of "a working class majority in terms of collective socio-political identity" will required protracted, diverse struggles by the socialist party and other working class organizations to articulate both the immediate and long-term interests of the working class.³² Of paramount importance is the socialist movement's ability to help create and develop a working class majority which conceives its interests as fundamentally opposed to those of capital and which supports socialist transformation as a "movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority."³³ The political and ideological struggles which must be waged by the socialist party to persuade the majority of workers that their long-term interests lie in socialism would have to confront some familiar obstacles. New socialist movements would have to directly challenge and effectively overcome the narrow, stunted conception of working class interests promoted by social democratic parties and their allies in union leaderships. Moreover, many serious divisions in the working class--sectoral, occupational, gender, racial, national, religious, regional, etc.--must be overcome in order for the majority of workers to embrace a radical redefinition of working

class interests and forge a "collective will" for fundamental social transformation. Such a radical redefinition of working class interests would have to acknowledge the uniqueness and specificity of other "subaltern" groups' interests, as well as the varying "degree of subordination" among different sections of the working class.³⁴ But as Miliband points out, while some of the obstacles to working class unity are "formidable," they need not prove insurmountable for socialist movements. Miliband reminds us that "Again and again, large groups of workers have displayed solidarity in struggle" and contends that the potential exists for powerful new forms of working class solidarity and struggle in the decades ahead.³⁵

As the work of Gramsci and more recent Marxist and socialist scholars makes clear, the development of "a working class majority in terms of collective socio-political identity" is inconceivable without an increasingly powerful and popular assault on the central tenets of capitalist ideology. Although the strength of capitalist hegemony has arguably declined in the advanced capitalist countries in the last few decades, the challenges for new socialist movements remain enormous. As Williams explains, "the system of meanings and values which a capitalist society has generated has to be defeated in general and in detail by the most sustained kinds of intellectual and educational work."³⁶ New socialist movements must successfully persuade the majority

of workers and the population as a whole that the major "meanings and values" in capitalist discourse are substantively impoverished and ideologically suspect. Through political struggle and cultural development, workers must come to reject the predominant "meanings and values" associated with the capitalist conceptions of property, labor, equality, democracy, and freedom. Increasingly effective challenges to "bourgeois individualism," sexism, racism, and national chauvinism must also be considered vital.

Only by confronting and "defeating" the "system of meanings and values which a capitalist society has generated" can new socialist movements hope to promote workers' acceptance of new socialist "meanings and values." Of course, Marxists and socialists committed to democratic socialist transformation need to eschew any vestiges of the orthodox view that total or complete agreement on all political questions among all workers is a desirable or practical objective. But the development of significant challenges to capital and the state by new socialist movements would surely require that the majority of workers come to embrace and support a "core" of socialist precepts and norms. Through political, ideological, and cultural struggles, the preponderant part of the working class would need to develop shared and steadfast commitments to the abolition of class exploitation, wage labor, and all forms of domination; the creation of diverse forms of social ownership, democratic

planning, and self-management; the creation of a new kind of state which can play a leading role in socialist transformation and yet be subordinated to society; and a revolutionary and democratic strategy for achieving this kind of fundamental social change.

The development of "a working class majority in terms of collective socio-political identity," the radical reconceptualization of working class interests, the "defeat" of capitalist "meanings and values" of capitalist society among workers, and the progressive embrace of socialist precepts and norms by workers would certainly require a great deal of political education by the socialist party and other workers' organizations. As Miliband acknowledges, phrases like "political education" and "political training" may be "highly suspect" on the Left today, and "not surprisingly since they evoke the kind of frozen catechisms that long passed for socialist education in Communist and other Marxist organizations; and...because they are thought to have an 'elitist' ring...."³⁷ Still, Miliband hastens to emphasize:

Yet, socialist education need not have these connotations, and can be a true process of cooperative learning, in which the questioning of everything is not only accepted but understood to be essential to that process. This also answers the charge of "elitism": for what is or should be involved in socialist education, properly understood, is not a one-way process of communication but on the contrary a dialogue in which teachers and

taught enlighten and stimulate each other in a constant exchange of ideas.³⁸

The various kinds of political education needed by new socialist movements would certainly have to include "schools of socialism" which could, as Miliband writes, "send out into the world activists better equipped to counter the propaganda which help dominant classes to maintain themselves in power, and to present a persuasive case for socialism."³⁹ The Gramscian emphasis on the role of "organic intellectuals" as "constructors," "organizers," and "permanent persuaders" echoes in Panitch's contention that socialists must be increasingly able to provide "socialist leadership in their communities in relation to multifarious forms of subordination, deprivation, and struggle."⁴⁰ As Panitch insists, "This is not a matter of imposing a rigid set of socialist maxims on every struggle; it is a matter of developing the capacity to organize in a manner that relates socialist understanding and commitment to the problems and struggles of everyday life; and to engage in political discourse in a manner that is educative and that recalls and challenges the terms of capitalist hegemony."⁴¹

At the same time, much of the intellectual and cultural transformation of the working class must be fostered by political participation and political action. The view that the working class can transform itself politically and ideologically through various forms of struggle against capital and

the state is prominent in the works of classical Marxism, from "The Manifesto of the Communist Party" to The State and Revolution to the Prison Notebooks. In what Miliband calls our present "sceptical age," it may well be that the real strength of capitalist hegemony lies less in the power of its primary ideological tenets than in its success in persuading the majority of the population that no alternative is possible and that "any alternative would be catastrophically worse...."⁴² In marked contrast, as Miliband observes, "the socialist project is based on the premise that 'ordinary people' are capable of ruling themselves and of ensuring the viability of a cooperative, humane, and rational social order."⁴³ New forms of socialist and working class praxis must convince "ordinary people" that this radical premise is a sound one. Diverse new forms of working class political participation and political action would have to demonstrate to the majority of the workers and the population that they are potentially capable of "ruling themselves" and creating a "cooperative, humane, and rational social order." In this sense, the most vital political education required for socialist advance is the workers' own intellectual and practical recognition, in the course of political participation and political action, of their collective potential for bringing about revolutionary and democratic socialist transformation.

New socialist parties and movements must help workers

realize this collective potential by nurturing and fostering deeply and consistently democratic forms of socialist politics and practice. As more than one analyst has pointed out, socialist politics and practice must "prefigure" the radical democracy which will be developed in socialist society.⁴⁴

The urgency of this imperative lies not only in the need for new socialist parties and movements to demonstrate that they truly conceive radical democracy as the heart of the socialist project, but also in the need for the majority of workers to realize that radical democratic politics and practices can work. Socialist advance requires that the working class demonstrate the viability of radical democracy--to itself and to the population as a whole--through the concrete historical experience of the new socialist party, other workers' organizations, and their effective and democratic exercise of political power in the protracted struggles for socialist transformation.

In the first place, the new socialist party must be a profoundly democratic organization--in terms of social composition, decision-making, and political unity. As far as social composition is concerned, what this means, among other things, is that the membership and leadership of the party must be predominantly working class. A principled insistence on "the primacy of labor" in social composition certainly need not be taken to exclude the desirability of members from other class backgrounds. And it should be

emphasized that the diversity of the working class must be represented in the party. Fully one-half of the membership and leadership of new socialist parties would need to be women, and the membership and leadership would need to reflect the racial and national diversity of the working class and the population as a whole.

Especially in light of the fate of the orthodox communist parties, it seems clear that new socialist parties must develop a radical new conception of "internal" democracy. As Panitch notes, such parties would need to have a "highly politicized, critical, and initiatory mass party membership" as well as an "openness in party structures to relations with and input from non-party members."⁴⁵ Direct democratic participation by the party rank-and-file in decision-making and the development of policy, as well as direct democratic elections of party leaders and effective democratic accountability would be imperative. At the same time, the freedom of minorities and individuals to dissent and to advocate alternative courses of action within the party would also have to be protected. To be sure, socialist advance is inconceivable without a certain kind of political unity and discipline within the party and the movement as a whole. But unity and solidarity on the most fundamental questions of socialist transformation need not and should not preclude various kinds of pluralism and diversity within the party and the movement. New socialist parties should follow

Gramsci in recognizing the need for the achievement of this unity through scrupulously democratic means, which alone can ground the legitimacy of democratic "discipline."⁴⁶

Panitch's reminder that the party cannot be seen as the only "institutional midwife" in the process of socialist transformation points to the crucial need for workers to create a broad range of other kinds of organizations. These workers' organizations would be essential not only for advancing various struggles for immediate reforms and an increasingly class-wide struggle for socialist objectives, but also for demonstrating to workers that they can indeed develop the organizational and political means for their own emancipation from capitalist exploitation and domination. As Williams emphasizes, socialist transformation and workers' self-management cannot be delivered by the party alone or even a "tight party government."⁴⁷ Instead, revolutionary and democratic change must be also be sought--and fought for--by a vast array of working class and popular organizations at the "grass roots" and in "intermediate" institutions.⁴⁸ In Williams' view, "The condition of socialist democracy is that it is built from direct social relations into all necessary indirect and extended relations...."⁴⁹ Surely a great deal of the political participation and political action which helps to transform the working class into a collective agency for radical social change would have to occur in local and "intermediate" struggles.

The place of labor unions in the struggle for socialism has been the subject of debate and controversy among Marxists and socialists for many decades. That new movements for socialism would need to win support among labor union members and even many union leaders seems clear enough. The question that divides many analysts on the Left, however, is the precise role that unions should--or could--play in the process of socialist transformation. Quite often, various writers' differences on this question have been directly related to their differences on the question of workers' councils and their role in the struggle for socialism. Some Marxists and socialists have simply embraced either labor unions or workers' councils, and then proceeded to neglect or denigrate the other. But the socialist commitment to the creation of workers' councils as a precondition for radical social change need not be taken to deny the importance of socialist struggles within labor unions. As Panitch explains, "While admitting the structural limitations of even militant trade unionism, we must also perceive that it is the soil in which movements for autonomous rank-and-file organizations and mass revolutionary parties can take root."⁵⁰

Of course, labor unions should not be seen as the only "soil" in which socialist movements can "take root." The creation of "a working class majority in terms of collective socio-political identity" is inconceivable without

diverse and pluralistic forms of workers' organizations which can fight for the immediate needs and interests of their particular constituents while coming to recognize the need for unified working class political action against capital and the state. In the contemporary advanced capitalist societies, a multitude of different kinds of organizations would have to be developed to give voice to workers' demands and to facilitate the kinds of political participation and political action which could help transform the working class into a collective agency of socialist transformation. These working class agencies would need to include organizations of unemployed people, organizations of part-time workers, working class women's organizations, organizations of racially or nationally oppressed workers, organizations of older or retired workers, and many more. As Williams and others suggest, the importance of such struggles for the self-transformation of the working class can hardly be overstated.

But, apart from the socialist party, perhaps the most important form of working class organization required for socialist transformation is the workers' council. The historical experience of workers' councils in diverse contexts arguably demonstrates their unique efficacy in raising workers' consciousness, fostering solidarity and initiative, and promoting the kinds of political action, political education, and cultural development which help transform the

working class into a collective agency of socialist transformation.⁵¹ Moreover, as the next two chapters suggest, there are some very strong grounds for believing, as Gramsci did, that the development of workers' councils in both workplaces and localities is a sine qua non for revolutionary and democratic socialist transformation. As these two chapters will indicate, the theory of workers' councils which is developed by later Trotskyist writers has much to be said on its behalf. Even if, as the next two chapters contend, a contemporary revolutionary and democratic strategy for the advanced capitalist societies must abandon the view of both Gramsci and the later Trotsky that the new socialist state should consist exclusively of a system of workers' councils, these unique organs of workers' power may still well be seen as "prefiguring" one of the primary "repositories of popular authority" in socialist society.

Finally, the development and exercise of various forms of political power by the socialist party, workers' councils, and other workers' organizations must demonstrate to the working class that it does have the potential to bring about the creation of a new society. As Gramsci saw, the intellectual and moral transformation of the working class in the course of protracted class struggles must lead to both a radical reconceptualization of democracy and revolutionary new forms of democratic praxis.⁵² As the next two chapters argue, the "conquest" of state power would require not only

that socialist parties and movements be able to win "the battle of democracy" and elect parliamentary majorities pledged to radical change, but also that they be able to develop the forms of direct, extra-parliamentary, even extra-constitutional mass action that can help break the power of capital, help "smash" the capitalist state, and help create "a new state."⁵³ The demands and challenges presented by this revolutionary and democratic strategy for socialist transformation would seem obvious enough. Socialist parties and movements would have to be able to compete and triumph in various forms of electoral politics, develop both a presence and substantial power within existing representative institutions and other branches of government, and eventually win electoral mandates for socialist transformation. Socialists who are elected or appointed to offices within the existing state must be able to effectively and responsibly use their authority to prepare the ground for the abolition of capital and the capitalist state. They would have to remain directly and effectively accountable to the socialist party and the working class, which in turn would have to remain steadfast in their vigilance against any tendencies among parliamentary deputies or government officials toward "parliamentarism," opportunism, bureaucracy, or corruption.

Moreover, socialist parties and movements would have to be able to organize and facilitate a broad range of extra-

parliamentary and even extra-constitutional actions involving many millions of people in direct confrontation with the capitalist class and the capitalist state. The progressive "expropriation of the expropriators," the creation of new organs of state power, and the defense of the socialist movement against counter-revolutionary violence and sabotage would require not only that many millions of people be deeply and profoundly committed to socialist transformation, but also that they be willing and able to act collectively in the face of very grave dangers and risks. The effective and responsible coordination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, extra-constitutional action in a revolutionary and democratic transition to socialism is unthinkable without the majority of workers developing, in the course of protracted class struggles, the conviction that "ordinary" people can indeed create and sustain a new kind of society.

Today, amid the continuing global crisis of socialism and "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist countries, it may seem to many analysts that any such scenario involving new working class movements for socialism and powerful new challenges to capitalism is unlikely or impossible. As Miliband acknowledges, there is no way to "prove" or demonstrate socialist possibilities except "in practice."⁵⁴ But as suggested in the first two chapters, the mounting contradictions and problems of capitalism are likely to move people in the decades ahead to consider new "vi-

sions of an alternative society" and "strategies to realize them...."⁵⁵ And as we have seen here, the Marxist tradition and contemporary socialist political thought provide some significant theoretical insights and intellectual resources for the renewal of the socialist project. The prospectus for the formation of new socialist movements presented here articulates some of the most important political and ideological features of a new socialist praxis in the advanced capitalist societies. Even "a moment of serious historical imagination" may suffice to suggest that the development of this kind of new socialist movement could well lead to the rebirth of socialism.⁵⁶

Toward a New Historic Bloc and Socialist Hegemony

Of course, even if new socialist parties and movements could win the support of the preponderant part of the working class, some other critical questions remain to be answered. Could these new working class movements for socialism win the allegiance of other "subaltern" social groups, develop new historic blocs for radical social change, and eventually achieve working class or socialist hegemony? The issues and problems of working class alliances with other social groups have changed significantly since Gramsci wrote. Today it may be reasonably argued that while new socialist movements would certainly seek support from some

sections of the middle class, their most important prospective allies are other non-class "subaltern" social groups such as women and racially or nationally oppressed people. In recent years contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars have devoted considerable attention to the prospects for developing alliances between working class movements for socialism and the constituencies represented by the new social movements. At the same time, various postmarxist writers have dismissed the possibility of social alliances or new historic blocs which are led by the working class, and rejected the desirability or viability of working class or socialist hegemony. The remainder of this chapter addresses some of the major claims advanced by the postmarxists and draws on the work of Gramsci and contemporary Marxist and socialist writers in arguing that the creation of new historic blocs and socialist hegemony is possible, and in articulating some of the political and ideological conditions for their development.

As we saw in the last chapter, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's dismissal of the working class as an agency of socialist transformation may be critically challenged on many grounds. But their corollary argument against "the primacy of labor" in popular struggles for radical social change also warrants critical interrogation and effective rebuttal. For postmarxists such as Laclau and Mouffe, the emergence of the new social movements in the advanced capitalist coun-

tries during the last few decades presents an enormous problem for socialist theory and practice.⁵⁷ Laclau and Mouffe find the use of this label "unsatisfactory" but use it to refer to "a whole series of positive new phenomena" including "the rise of the new feminism, the protest movements of ethnic, national, and sexual minorities...anti-institutional ecology struggles waged by marginalized layers of the population, the anti-nuclear movement," and much more.⁵⁸ In their judgment, the fact that virtually all of the significant social movements in the last three decades have originated outside established class organizations suggests not only some very deep problems within those organizations, but also even more profound difficulties with the Marxist and socialist theoretical "privileging" of the working class as the "primary" agency of radical social change.⁵⁹

Laclau and Mouffe submit that the Marxist and socialist emphasis on the working class is inherently marred by "classism," "economism," and "class reductionism." For Laclau and Mouffe, "classism" involves "the idea that the working class represents the privileged agent in which the fundamental impulse of social change resides."⁶⁰ In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, they go well beyond rejecting the Marxist and socialist claim that the structural position of the working class within capitalist society constitutes an objective basis for class interests, collective agency, and political action. They argue here more generally against the

Marxist and proposition that social agency is dialectically related to objective social relations and social structures.⁶¹ Because they insist on the "plurality and indeterminacy of the social," they not only repudiate any possibilities for "totalizing" knowledge of society, but also insist that "society in general" disappears as a valid object of study or "framework of political analysis."⁶² Along with "society in general" there also disappears the "possibility of establishing a general theory of politics on the basis of topographic categories...."⁶³ In the place of a "general" theory of society and politics, Laclau and Mouffe develop a theory of discourse in which the articulation of social interests is largely divorced from social relations, social structures, and social positions. On this view, the Marxist and socialist contention that the working class is the "primary" agency of radical social change must be abandoned as metaphysical.

Laclau and Mouffe's critique of "economism" and "class reductionism" is closely related to their attack on "classism." By "economism," Laclau and Mouffe mean "the idea that from a successful economic strategy there necessarily follows a continuity of political effects which can be clearly specified."⁶⁴ Laclau and Mouffe write:

The classic conception of socialism supposed that the disappearance of private ownership over the means of production would set up a chain of effects which, over a whole histor-

ical epoch, would lead to the extinction of all forms of subordination. Today we know that this is not so.⁶⁵

Laclau and Mouffe argue not only that the socialization of production by the working class has failed to bring about the eradication of other "forms of subordination," but also that the Marxist and socialist emphasis on class has prevented adequate theorization of them and impeded appropriate emancipatory praxis. The charge of "class reductionism" points to the tendency on the part of some Marxists and socialists to "reduce" other "forms of subordination" to instances of class exploitation.⁶⁶ In Laclau and Mouffe's view, the Marxist and socialist commitment to "the primacy of labor" inevitably precludes the recognition of the uniqueness and specificity of these other "forms of subordination."⁶⁷

As another analyst notes, the postmarxist view of contemporary society relies heavily on the postmodernist celebration of "an increasing fragmentation, a diversification of social relations and experiences, a plurality of lifestyles, a multiplication of personal identities."⁶⁸ Laclau and Mouffe hold that contemporary society is characterized by a "plurality of subjects" confronting diverse "forms of subordination," developing unique identities and objectives, and creating their own movements and struggles.⁶⁹ Other "subaltern" social groups cannot rely on the working

class to liberate them. They must "speak for themselves, in their own voice," determine their own needs and interests, and be the "primary" agencies of their own emancipation.⁷⁰ For Laclau and Mouffe, then, the "plurality of subjects" and the diversity of distinct social struggles for freedom, democracy, and equality in the advanced capitalist societies make it impossible for the working class to be considered the "primary" or leading agency of fundamental social transformation.

From the postmarxist perspective, it is no longer possible to imagine, much less support the hegemony or "intellectual and moral leadership" of the working class in popular struggles for radical social change. Stanley Aronowitz allows that new historic blocs may develop in the advanced capitalist societies but submits that these would be movements for "general emancipation" with different social groups "on the cutting edge" in various countries.⁷¹ He asserts that "in this context," Gramsci's theory of hegemony "retains its power," but he removes the heart of Gramsci's theory by insisting that the working class could not exercise hegemony over the social groups constituting the new historic bloc.⁷² In Aronowitz's view, "the multiple, local, autonomous struggles for liberation occurring throughout the post-modern world would make all incarnations of master discourses absolutely illegitimate."⁷³ Moreover, the need for new historic blocs to recognize the "permanence of

difference" and the political autonomy of its constituent groups would make any sort of hegemony or "leadership" unacceptable.⁷⁴

These themes are echoed in the work of Laclau and Mouffe. They find that Gramsci developed an impressive but flawed conceptual framework for "the democratic practice of hegemony," and they criticize his association of hegemony with classes as invoking an "ultimate ontological foundation" which is "essentialist" and "determinist."⁷⁵ Laclau and Mouffe attempt to rectify this problem by removing this framework from Gramsci's materialist analysis of history and society. They relocate some conceptual elements from Gramsci's work in their own theory of discourse, severing any connections between the theory of hegemony and class. On Laclau and Mouffe's view, the "plurality and indeterminacy of the social" means that there can be no "primary" or leading social group, no "totalizing" hegemony--only "hegemonic articulations" by pluralistic voices in radical discourses.⁷⁶ For Laclau and Mouffe, hegemony is a "relational" concept, and can only be achieved through discourse. Because they hold, for example, that there are no "necessary links between anti-sexism and anti-capitalism," they assert that "a unity between the two can only be the result of a hegemonic articulation."⁷⁷ Like Aronowitz, Laclau and Mouffe maintain that contemporary Marxists and socialists are gravely mistaken to think that new working class movements

for socialism could ever lead new historic blocs and develop working class or socialist hegemony.

The postmarxist dismissal of the potential of the working class to lead a new historic bloc and develop socialist hegemony has been strongly and cogently criticized by several Marxist and socialist scholars in recent years. Panitch, Miliband, Wood, Williams, and other writers recognize the significance of the new social movements and acknowledge that a "plurality of subjects" are engaged in distinct social struggles against different forms of domination. But these scholars argue that problems of "economism" or "class reductionism" are not intrinsic to Marxism or socialism, and they sharply challenge the postmarxist view that the new social movements should be seen as the major social forces in any new project of radical social change. Recent Marxist and socialist writers develop a strong case for the "primacy of labor" in the struggle for socialist transformation, defending the materialist social analysis in which it is grounded against the postmarxists' discourse theory, and articulating how the "primacy of labor" and contemporary pluralism may be reconciled. These recent Marxist and socialist discussions contain some very valuable insights concerning the prospects and possibilities of working class-led social alliances for socialist transformation.

Most contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars follow Miliband in recognizing that the new social movements, par-

ticularly movements against sexism, racism, and national oppression, "have made significant advances in recent decades, and they may reasonably hope to make more in the years to come."⁷⁸ These social movements are seen as playing a unique and vital role in the organization and mobilization of various emancipatory struggles. Moreover, it is acknowledged that Marxists and socialists have much to learn from these movements. Recent socialist political theory has developed a much greater appreciation for the multiplicity of forms of domination, the "plurality of subjects," and the diversity of social struggles in the advanced capitalist societies. And as Miliband attests, "There can surely be no question that (the) new social movements are the bearers of many ideas and practices which must form part of any emancipatory project worthy of the name...."⁷⁹

Contemporary Marxist and socialist writers generally concede that socialist theory and practice has suffered from "economism" and "class reductionism" in the past, but argue that these problems are neither inevitable nor inherent. As Miliband remarks, "the entirely legitimate emphasis which Marxists have placed on the importance of the economic 'infra-structure' and the mode of production" has often resulted "in a marked 'economism' in Marxist thought."⁸⁰ But Miliband insists that "Such a deformation is not inherent in the mode of analysis itself...handled with all due care, it does constitute a uniquely valuable approach to the inter-

pretation of social reality."⁸¹ Similarly, many contemporary Marxist and socialist scholars concede that "class reductionism" has sometimes impaired the critical understanding of sexism, racism, and national oppression in the past. But as John Bellamy Foster maintains, Marxism is not "monist" and does not inherently prevent the adequate theorization of other forms of domination.⁸² Many of these writers appear to take very seriously David Harvey's admonition that Marxists and socialists must pay considerably more attention to gender and race.⁸³ And Ellen Meiksins Wood emphasizes that the imperative of recognizing the uniqueness and specificity of other forms of domination need not be taken as justification for a "retreat from class."⁸⁴

Recent Marxist and socialist discussions sharply challenge the postmarxist view that the emergence of the new social movements signals the "dissolution" of the working class as the "primary" agency of socialist transformation, and their corollary view that these new social movements should be recognized as the major social forces capable of promoting radical social change. Contemporary Marxist and socialist writers develop more searching and critical analyses of the new social movements, noting some of their important problems and limitations as well as their achievements and potentials. It is often noted that, notwithstanding impressive accomplishments and advances, the new social movements cannot be said to have made significant progress

toward the comprehensive eradication of sexism, racism, or national oppression.⁸⁵ In fact, many of the gains achieved by women and people of color are increasingly threatened by the Right in a number of advanced capitalist countries.⁸⁶ Some of the most important organizations associated with these social movements appear to be in decline, their impact on political life in these societies greatly reduced in recent years.⁸⁷

One reason for these unfortunate developments arguably lies in the inability of the various new social movements to gain the steadfast support of the working class and the majority of the population. Although the continuing ideological reach of sexism, racism, and national chauvinism among many workers must figure prominently in any critical understanding of this failure, an honest and responsible analysis must also point to some grave weaknesses among the new social movements themselves and the postmarxist writers who see in them a replacement for the working class as the "primary" agency of radical social change. It has long been observed that the constituencies represented by the new social movements are deeply divided by class and political orientation.⁸⁸ It is often pointed out that the vast majority of women and people of color are also members of the working class, but that the leadership and membership of the predominant organizations in these respective struggles have tended to be self-consciously middle class.⁸⁹ It may be

reasonably argued that at least part of the reason for the inability of the new social movements to "extend their social base" is their failure to adequately address the reality of class both among their own constituencies and the general population.⁹⁰

Although the postmarxists are right to emphasize the uniqueness and specificity of non-class forms of domination, their attempt to "de-center" radical thought and practice leads, as we saw in the last chapter, to a grave neglect of class, class exploitation, political economy, and capitalist power. As Harvey observes, while the New Left and the new social movements have surely contributed to a broader and deeper understanding of domination in contemporary society, their rejection of class analysis and historical materialism has not served their constituencies well.⁹¹ As Wood observes, it is ironic that the postmarxists, who are ostensibly concerned with articulating new understandings of power, tend to ignore or neglect the power relations of capitalism.⁹² Many recent Marxist and socialist discussions emphasize that the emancipatory theory and practice of the new social movements will be incomplete and inadequate as long as it evades or eschews the commitment to struggles against class exploitation and alliances with working class organizations.

Although the complex relations between class exploitation and sexism, racism, and national oppression cannot be ade-

quately explored here, it must be noted that quite a number of Marxists and socialists working in the new social movements argue for the centrality of class in their respective struggles. They do so in part because the distinctive forms of exploitation of labor of women and racially or nationally oppressed people explains a great deal of the domination and oppression they face.⁹³ But they also underscore the importance of the fact that sexism, racism, and national oppression are experienced very differently according to class location.⁹⁴ Brenner contends that "The fate of feminism as an actual movement, then, is tied to the fate of trade unionism and other forms of collective resistance to corporate capital."⁹⁵ In her view,

Feminism, as a mass reform struggle with radicalizing potential, cannot be renewed on the basis of its old middle-class constituencies but depends on the rebuilding of working class self-organization...Without the capacity, in practice, to take on the limits set by the demands of capital accumulation in a period of increasing international competition, feminism will continue to be vitiated of its radical potential, capitulating to the right, and unable to mobilize broad layers of women.⁹⁶

And Foster concludes more generally that the power of the new social movements "to reshape society" will be "critically dependent on the extent to which they can connect their struggles to that of the 'old social movement' of organized labor--albeit in ways that will radically trans-

form the latter."⁹⁷

Recent Marxist and socialist discussions thus call into question the postmarxist depiction of the new social movements as agencies of radical social change in contemporary society. As Miliband points out, the demands and objectives of these movements have usually not been radical in the sense of calling for fundamental social change.⁹⁸ Wood maintains that the postmarxist conception of radical change has always been "vague and indeterminate."⁹⁹ Although Laclau and Mouffe originally insisted that they were advocating a new kind of socialism, conceived as radical democracy, they have abandoned any claim to being socialists in the last several years, and the radical dimension of their democratic project has become increasingly difficult to ascertain. This is perhaps unsurprising, for as the new social movements have declined in recent years, many of their organizations and leaders have come to accept and work within existing power structures, and the "politics of identity" has tended toward a kind of liberal reformism in which "identity" groups simply become "interest" groups.¹⁰⁰

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the radical potential of the new social movements is inextricably linked to their ability to confront the question of class and class exploitation. For, as Miliband points out, "even if all the aims of feminist, anti-racist, ethnic, national, and other movements could be realized, society would nevertheless

remain fundamentally divided on class lines."¹⁰¹ And yet to the extent that the new social movements can, in the years ahead, come to support the eradication of class exploitation and the abolition of classes, they must also recognize that they cannot possibly play the central role in such a project. As recent Marxist and socialist writers emphasize, such a truly radical challenge to capitalism could only be mounted by the working class, and it is for this reason that it remains necessary to acknowledge the "primacy of labor" in any conceivable process of socialist transformation.¹⁰²

Laclau and Mouffe's repudiation of the central role of the working class in bringing about fundamental social change may be presented as a critique of "classism," but in fact it constitutes an ambitious if unsuccessful challenge to the centrality of class in the advanced capitalist societies. As Ellen Meiksins Wood and Norman Geras have emphasized in sharply critical accounts of this postmarxist thesis, Laclau and Mouffe's abandonment of "society in general" as a valid object of study or framework for political analysis, and their embrace of postmodernist discourse theory can hardly be taken as the conceptual grundrisse for a new, more radical kind of social theory.¹⁰³ As we saw in the last chapter, the postmarxists are gravely mistaken when they claim that the working class is declining in size and significance, and that it cannot be said to have an objective interest in, or potential capacity for socialist

transformation. Some of the profound problems with Laclau and Mouffe's broader rejection of "totalizing" social theory, their own discourse theory, and their "retreat from class" will be briefly considered here.

The postmodernist claim that "totalizing" knowledge tends to lead to totalitarianism or, at least, the "tyranny" of concepts was explored and criticized in the first chapter. It may be reiterated here that "totalizing" theory need not be seen as inherently teleological, metaphysical, or incapable of comprehending particularity or plurality. Laclau and Mouffe's analysis of "the plurality and indeterminacy of the social" undoubtedly contains both important insights and serious difficulties, but in any event it provides no substantive grounds for the complete rejection of "totalizing" social theory. As a wide variety of scholars have argued, "large-scale theoretical interpretations" of social reality and "unified representations of the world" are absolutely essential to emancipatory theory and practice.¹⁰⁴ It is worth noting in this regard that Laclau and Mouffe's insistence on "the plurality and indeterminacy of the social" is itself more of a "totalizing" claim about "society in general" than they care to admit. And it is worth noticing that there is some serious tension between their eschewal of "large-scale" theory and the "large-scale" account of working class decline which was criticized in the last chapter.

Signally, Laclau and Mouffe abandon much more than a

"totalizing" perspective on "society in general" and hopes for a "general theory of politics." Their work denies "the centrality of production relations and exploitation in the constitution of human social life" and discards the "materialist analysis of social and historical processes."¹⁰⁵ Even more strikingly, as both Wood and Geras point out, Laclau and Mouffe arguably forsake history and social theory in toto when they abdicate any theoretical interest in the objective social structures and social relations which condition the interests and agency of different social groups.¹⁰⁶ As Brenner observes, although there is an important sense in which we should understand that "needs and interests are socially and historically constructed," Laclau and Mouffe err grievously in abandoning any concern with concrete social structures and social relations.¹⁰⁷ After all, Brenner insists, "Worldviews are carried by groups who by their social location and experience...are more or less open to one set of ideas or another."¹⁰⁸

While Laclau and Mouffe are right to maintain that the objective or structural position of the working class or other social groups does not automatically or inevitably produce social agency and political action, they commit a major logical fallacy when they move from this premise to the conclusion that there are no necessary connections between the social location and the interests and capacities of various social groups. Wood offers a trenchant critique

of this conclusion:

What it effectively means is that, where there is no simple, absolute, mechanical, unilinear, and non-contradictory determination, there is no determinacy, no relationship, no causality at all. There are no historical conditions, connections, limits, possibilities. There are only arbitrary juxtapositions, "conjunctures," and contingencies. If anything holds the discrete and isolated fragments of reality together, it is only the logic of discourse.¹⁰⁹

As Wood writes, "careful consideration" of Laclau and Mouffe's position reveals "a remarkable conception of historical and social process, or, more precisely, the absence of any such conception at all."¹¹⁰

The postmodernist discourse theory which Laclau and Mouffe embrace is arguably much more metaphysical and philosophically objectionable than the historical investigations and social theory of contemporary Marxists and socialists. What begins as a putative critique of metaphysical elements in Marxism turns out to be much vulnerable in this respect than its intended target. As Wood contends, "In short, the Laclau-Mouffe argument is that there are no such things as material interests, but only discursively constructed ideas about them."¹¹¹ In Wood's view, their argument "entails not only the dissolution of social reality into discourse but a denial of history and the logic of historical process."¹¹² Wood criticizes as intellectually and politically irrespon-

sible what she sees as the postmarxist conclusion that "in fact there is no social basis for any kind of politics. Discourse is all."¹¹³

Moreover, Laclau and Mouffe's own discourse on "radical" democracy may be seen as plagued with philosophical problems of its own. As noted above, their conception of "radical" democracy has always been "vague and indeterminate," and has suffered from significant conceptual slippage in recent years. It should also be noticed that Laclau and Mouffe advance their own little "metanarrative" here. They assert that the first French Revolution made possible "the invention of democratic culture" and inaugurated a "Democratic Revolution" which, over two centuries, has progressively contributed to the development of the discursive conditions for democratic discourse. Their own work is intended as a contribution to the continuing advance of democratic discourse and hence "radical" democracy.¹¹⁴ As Wood sharply points out, the idea of a "Democratic Revolution" has been of "limited value" to historians, in part because it must be defined so broadly as to become "virtually meaningless."¹¹⁵ Even more importantly, Wood finds that Laclau and Mouffe altogether uncritically conflate the ideas of liberal democracy with the concept of democracy per se, and totally fail to understand the deep and profound "break" that would be required between contemporary liberal democracy and any truly radical democracy.¹¹⁶ As Wood concludes, Laclau and

Mouffe's abandonment of history and social theory and their immersion in the realm of discourse prevents them from recognizing that any such radical transformation would in fact require a direct and frontal assault on capitalism, and that the "primary" agency of this unique and distinctive social project would necessarily be the working class.¹¹⁷

While fully acknowledging the multiplicity, plurality, and diversity of contemporary social movements and social struggles, contemporary Marxist and socialist writers defend the "primacy of labor" in any conceivable process of radical, i.e. anti-capitalist, social change. For these scholars, the "primacy of labor" does not mean that working class struggles against capitalism are the only vital social struggles against domination and oppression. It does not mean that working class struggles are the most prominent or successful social struggles at every historical juncture. And it does not mean that workers' demands and claims have a greater moral status than those of other dominated or oppressed social groups.¹¹⁸ Instead, these writers argue simply and persuasively that the working class must be seen as the "primary" social group with the interest in, and capacity for, socialist transformation. Insisting on the imperative need for a "materialist analysis of social and historical processes," these scholars contend that the working class must be at the "core" of any viable movement for socialism.¹¹⁹

Wood provides a succinct and powerful recapitulation of the Marxist view of the "primacy of labor" in social struggles against capitalism. She writes:

The proposition that the working class is potentially the revolutionary class is not some metaphysical abstraction, but an extension of these materialist principles, suggesting that, given the centrality of production and exploitation in human social life, certain other propositions follow: 1) the working class is the social group with the most direct objective interest in bringing about the transition to socialism; 2) the working class, as the direct object of the most fundamental and determinative--though certainly not the only--form of oppression, and the one class whose interests do not rest on the oppression of other classes, can create the conditions for liberating all human beings in the struggle to liberate itself; 3) given the fundamental and ultimately unresolvable opposition between exploiting and exploited classes which lies at the heart of the structure of oppression, class struggle must be the principal motor of this emancipatory transformation; and 4) the working class is the one social force that has a strategic social power sufficient to permit its development into a revolutionary force.¹²⁰

As Wood underscores, the working class is "at the heart of capitalism": the exploitation of workers' labor power is the source of capital and is constitutive of capitalism as a system of power and a way of life. Moreover, its unique social location or objective position endows the working class, at least potentially, with a "unique capacity to destroy capitalism."¹²¹ As far as the future of capitalism is concerned, Miliband writes, "organized labor does have a

greater potential strength, cohesion, and capacity to act as a transformative force than any other force in society."¹²² As Miliband concludes, "without labor movements organized as political forces, no fundamental challenge to the existing social order can ever be mounted."¹²³

Contemporary Marxist and socialist writers reject the postmarxist claim that this commitment to the "primacy of labor" is metaphysical, arbitrary, or "undemocratic." Echoing Wood's contention that this focus on the working class is "not some metaphysical abstraction," but "an extension of...materialist principles," Miliband reiterates that the recognition of the "primacy of labor" does not "accord some kind of arbitrarily 'privileged' place to labor movements, out of metaphysical belief in the 'mission' of the working class."¹²⁴ In Miliband's judgment, the centrality of the working class in mounting a "fundamental challenge to the existing social order" should come as no surprise to those who understand its "primary" role in the constitution of capitalist society. Geras also rebuts the postmarxist charge of "arbitrary favoritism" toward the working class, insisting that an understanding of the working class as "central, crucial, to any possible socialist future" is both emancipatory and democratic.¹²⁵ As Geras explains, the idea "that those on the receiving end of a given form of oppression or injustice might be the primary agents of its liquidation" is "the opposite of undemocratic."¹²⁶ Geras points

out that few postmarxists would venture to deny that women "are the primary constituency in the battle against women's oppression," or that Black people in South Africa have a "privileged" role in the struggle against apartheid.¹²⁷ Geras castigates the postmarxists for failing to recognize that this principle holds as much for the working class as it does for other dominated or oppressed social groups. If it is true, as Geras insists, that "genuine social liberations are not delivered by someone else," then it appears difficult to deny the conclusion, first articulated by Marx and Engels, that the abolition of class exploitation and class domination must be largely achieved through the efforts of the working class itself.¹²⁸

As we have seen, the postmarxist argument against the "primacy of labor" in new historic blocs for radical social change involves a significant "retreat from class," the veritable abandonment of historical analysis and social theory in favor of discourse theory, and a vague and conceptually slippery notion of "radical" change. Because the postmarxists submerge and virtually disregard the centrality of class exploitation in capitalist society, their notions of "general emancipation" and radical democracy remain as impoverished as they are indeterminate. If, however, the abolition of class exploitation and class domination is understood as an indispensable condition for "general emancipation" or radical democracy, then it is necessary to

develop a more historically and socially grounded analysis of these new historic blocs and their relationship to the working class.

Neither "the permanence of difference" nor the "plurality" of the "social" need be seen as grounds for disparaging the potential of the working class to lead other "subaltern" groups in new struggles for socialist transformation. Wood challenges the postmarxist conception of pluralism which, divorced from historical and social analysis, eschews any connection between class and hegemony. In Wood's view, "theories which do not differentiate--and, yes, 'privilege,' if that means ascribing causal or explanatory priorities--among various social institutions and 'identities' cannot deal critically with capitalism at all."¹²⁹ Wood argues that a truly adequate analysis of "the plurality of subjects" and the diversity of social movements indeed points to a special, leading role for the working class in any social alliance which supports socialist transformation. Wood explains:

By all means let us have diversity, difference, and pluralism; but not this kind of undifferentiated and unstructured pluralism. What we need is a pluralism which does indeed acknowledge diversity and difference--and that means not just plurality or multiplicity. It means a pluralism which also recognizes historical realities, which does not deny the systemic unity of capitalism, which can tell the difference between the constitutive relations of capitalism and other inequalities and oppressions with different

relations to capitalism, a different place in the systemic logic of capitalism, and therefore a different role in our struggles against it.¹³⁰

On this view, it must be clearly understood that although movements for socialism are not the only emancipatory movements in contemporary society, they are unquestionably ones which must be led by the "direct objects" of capitalist exploitation and domination--the working class.

It is worth recalling in this context that the postmarxists praise Gramsci's theory of hegemony even as they repudiate his insight that the hegemonic social groups in class societies are inevitably classes. But if Gramsci's focus on the centrality of class is understood as the reasonable product of a "materialist analysis of social and historical processes," and not as some "ultimate ontological foundation" marred by "essentialism" and "determinism," then Gramsci arguably has more to teach us about the prospects and possibilities of working class hegemony than the post-marxists. A socialist pluralism which "recognizes historical realities" could surely learn a great deal from Gramsci's analysis of the "primacy" of class, as well as his more general concern with the dialectical relationship between social structures or relations and social agency, and his insights on the development of working class or socialist hegemony. Viewed from this perspective, Gramsci's theory retains much more of its "power" than Aronowitz realizes and

provides a conceptual framework for "the democratic practice of hegemony" which is much more relevant than Laclau and Mouffe allow.

Gramsci understood clearly that the forging of alliances between working class movements for socialism and other "subaltern" groups, far from being automatic or inevitable, would require the most arduous political, intellectual, and cultural work. Marxists and socialists must indeed be clear that, as Brenner puts it, "a revolutionary socialist bloc is a political creation."¹³¹ But the work of Gramsci and more recent writers reveals that the development of hegemony cannot be conceived simply as a product of discourse, divorced from "social and historical processes." Although the post-marxists are right to point out that "hegemonic articulations" are "relational" and develop within discourses, their abandonment of history and social theory prevents them from seeing that the interests and agency of various social groups are conditioned by objective social structures and social relations--and are interrelated in various, complex ways. For example, Laclau and Mouffe may be right to point out that the development of political unity between women's movements and socialist movements must be the result of a "hegemonic articulation," but they are mistaken when they deny the existence of any real historical or social connections between capitalism and women's oppression which might serve as the objective or social basis for such an

alliance. In contrast, an adequate historical analysis and social theorization of class exploitation and other crucial forms of domination provides solid grounds for believing that there are objective or social bases for alliances between working class movements and the new social movements.

Contemporary Marxist and socialist discussions present two distinct ways of theorizing the objective or social bases for such alliances. The first approach, articulated by Wood and Geras, holds that the new social movements may not come to see socialist transformation as necessary for the realization of their own aspirations, but argues that even if socialism is "relatively distinct from other emancipatory goals," other social groups and movements may support it in solidarity with the working class.¹³² Wood submits that while socialism is "not likely to become the collective project of other social groups in the way it can for the working class," its commitment to "general emancipation" and radical democracy would surely attract the support of other groups and constituencies.¹³³ Geras follows Wood in observing that the particular aims and demands of movements against sexism, racism, and national oppression--at least as presently articulated--would not require socialist transformation.¹³⁴ But Geras underscores the potential for "a contemporary universalism" which "may find its basis in the reciprocal recognition amongst different emancipatory struggles

of what they share, as struggles against injustice or arbitrary power."¹³⁵ Geras writes that "There is still good enough reason for movements in support of these several goals to accept and press the validity of each other's specific claims."¹³⁶ After all, he concludes, "any battle against one grave systemic injustice diminishes itself by ignoring other equally grave injustices, or by making light of them."¹³⁷ On this view, the mutual recognition of the "primary" role of various social groups in their particular emancipatory struggles could lead other "subaltern" groups to acknowledge the special role of the working class in the movement to abolish class exploitation and class domination.

The second approach, articulated by Miliband, Brenner, and many socialist-feminists, conceives an even stronger objective or social basis for new historic blocs committed to socialist transformation. As we noted earlier, many Marxists and socialists working in the new social movements emphasize the centrality of class in their respective struggles, pointing to the distinctive forms of exploitation faced by women and people of color, as well as the impact of class location on the experience of sexism, racism, or national oppression. These writers also acknowledge that socialism is "relatively distinct from other emancipatory goals," but insist that the complex social interrelations between class exploitation and other forms of domination provide strong

grounds for believing that socialist transformation is indeed a precondition for the achievement of these "other emancipatory goals." Brenner's insistence that the fate of feminism is "tied" to that of working class struggles against capitalism, and Foster's contention that the potential of the new social movements generally is "critically dependent" on their "connection" with the working class both derive from the kind of historical and social analysis which illuminates the very real "links" between class exploitation and other forms of domination.

This perspective recognizes that patriarchy and ethnic chauvinism long predate capitalism but maintains that forms of domination such as sexism, racism, and national oppression in contemporary society must be understood as integrally related to, and sustained by, capitalist social relations. As Miliband reiterates, much of the domination and oppression of women and people of color is rooted in the "super-exploitation" of their labor.¹³⁸ Lise Vogel speaks for many socialist-feminists when she argues that it is not the "sex division of labor or the family per se" but the "responsibility for the domestic labor necessary to capitalist social reproduction" that "materially underpins the perpetuation of women's oppression and inequality in capitalist society."¹³⁹ And Miliband adds that while many aspects of oppression and discrimination cannot be "traced back" to economic pressures, they should be understood with reference

to the "traditional ideological prejudices and positions" which are "nurtured" and "reinforced" by the alienation, competition, and anxiety prevalent in capitalist society.¹⁴⁰ As Miliband concludes, "actually existing capitalist societies are incapable of curing the evils which concern new social movements...the necessary--but not sufficient--condition for the cure or drastic alleviation of these evils is the creation of societies very different in their social structure, dynamic, organization, and ethos."¹⁴¹ On this view, then, movements against sexism, racism, and national oppression may well come to support socialist transformation because they consider it a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for their own emancipation.

Although the many complex issues involved in the interrelationships of class exploitation and other forms of domination cannot be explored in detail here, there are some obvious grounds for believing that this latter perspective is more appropriate and more promising for new socialist movements in the advanced capitalist societies. Wood and Geras appear to assume that sexism or racism might, in fact, be remediable within capitalist society. They also appear to assume that the aims and objectives of new social movements will continue to be non-radical, i.e. capable of being satisfied by reforms. But the work of Miliband, Brenner, and many socialist-feminists suggests that these assumptions are unwarranted, and that more careful consideration of the

interrelationships between class exploitation and other forms of domination reveals strong objective or social grounds for believing that socialism is indeed a prerequisite for the eradication of sexism, racism, and national oppression. In practice, whether new social movements embrace the socialist project on grounds of solidarity or as a vital prerequisite for achieving their own aims and objectives would arguably depend, in large part, on the extent to which socialist workers are able to develop a leading role within these movements and win support for a radical reconceptualization of emancipatory interests.

Gramsci's insights on the development of working class or socialist hegemony remain strikingly relevant for prospective new socialist movements in what Miliband calls "our sceptical age." For Gramsci not only underscores the centrality of class and the social bases for alliances with other "subaltern" groups, but also provides some very valuable counsel on how the working class could develop hegemony. As we have seen, Gramsci emphasized that the ability of socialist workers to win support among other "subaltern" groups for socialist transformation would depend on concrete, consistent, and principled efforts to promote the particular interests of these other social groups. Gramsci's critical understanding that hegemony has a "material" or social basis led him to argue that other "subaltern" groups' embrace of socialist ideas and the "intellectual and moral

leadership" of the working class would require that the latter make material compromises, concessions, and arrangements to advance the aims and objectives of these other groups.

Contemporary Marxists and socialists may follow Gramsci in holding that these compromises, concessions, and material arrangements with other "subaltern" groups should not "touch the essential": they must be compatible with the socialist objective of abolishing class exploitation and, eventually, classes. But it is imperative for Marxists and socialists to recognize that the working class must be prepared to make some real sacrifices of their "corporate" interests for the sake of these other social groups. As we have seen, new working class movements for socialism would have to demonstrate, in practice, that they are deeply and profoundly committed to the emancipatory objectives of the new social movements. New socialist parties and workers' organizations would need to manifest this commitment not only by embracing the expressed aims and goals of these movements, but also by recognizing the "primary" role of women and people of color in articulating, "in their own voices," the conditions and imperatives of their own emancipation. Moreover, as noted earlier, women and people of color would have to be fully represented in the leadership and membership of the socialist party and other workers' organizations. While the serious problems and difficulties of developing working class-

led social alliances for socialist transformation should not be understated, the theoretical contributions of Gramsci and contemporary Marxist and socialist writers illuminate how a politics of working class hegemony might be successfully developed.

As recent Marxist and socialist discussions make clear, the postmarxists err grievously in depicting the development of working class leadership or hegemony in a social alliance pledged to radical change as "illegitimate" or dangerous. The leading role of the working class in such an alliance would not presuppose or permit what Aronowitz calls the "incarnation of a master discourse." Contemporary Marxists and socialists recognize that no movement "simply subsumes the others" and that no movement "is master or mistress of them all."¹⁴² Similarly, the "totalizing hegemony" feared by Laclau and Mouffe would not entail total agreement on all issues or total political unity in all conjunctures, much less any notion of "total control" of these alliances by the working class. As Miliband emphasizes, the "primacy of labor" in struggles for socialism does not entail the "absorption" or "devaluation" or "domination" of other emancipatory movements.¹⁴³ And as Panitch stresses, the development of a socialist politics aimed at creating a "working class majority in terms of collective socio-political identity" need not be seen as threatening to "efface" other identities "of gender, of race, of ethnic-

ity...."¹⁴⁴

The work of Gramsci and contemporary Marxist and socialist writers suggests that the development of working class leadership or hegemony in a new historic bloc committed to fundamental social transformation should instead be viewed as a deeply and profoundly democratic process. The postmarxist assertion that recognition of the political autonomy of these other social groups precludes working class hegemony clearly derives from the conflation of "leadership" and domination. In fact, what we might call the relative political autonomy of these groups is presupposed by a contemporary theory of hegemony. The objective of working class struggles for hegemony would be to win--through political education, cultural development, political action, and, yes, discourse--the voluntary, authentic, and democratic support of these groups, as well as the general population, for fundamental social change. The progressive development of working class hegemony would involve the ability of socialist parties and other working class organizations to persuade other "subaltern" groups that socialist transformation is essential for "general emancipation" and radical democracy, as well as conducive to their own particular interests. The "intellectual and moral leadership" of the working class would be achieved through concrete historical and social struggles in which the socialist party and other workers' organizations progressively achieve popular acceptance

of a new conception of society and a new "system of meanings and values," bring together diverse constituencies in the formation of the "collective will to change," and demonstrate through their "prefigurative" praxis that "ordinary" people can indeed work together successfully to create a society without exploitation or domination. The "democratic practice of hegemony" could make it possible for socialism to become, as Miliband puts it, "the common sense of the epoch." ¹⁴⁵

The development of working class or socialist hegemony in the advanced capitalist societies would be, on any serious reckoning, a protracted and arduous process. As Williams contends, the intellectual, educational, and cultural work necessary to defeat the "system of meanings and values which a capitalist society has generated" must be viewed as a "long revolution."¹⁴⁶ And such a "long revolution" must be considered indispensable for any revolutionary and democratic change in the advanced capitalist countries. Of course, any kind of revolution may presently seem impossible or unlikely to many analysts in these societies. But the development of new working class movements and new historic blocs committed to socialist transformation in the decades ahead is far more plausible than these writers allow. This chapter has articulated some of the major political and ideological features of new socialist movements which would seek to bring about the "organization of workers as a class," and

argued that these movements may well be able to forge new historic blocs with the constituencies represented by the new social movements. The achievement of working class or socialist hegemony, as Gramsci understood, would make it possible for the working class and the majority of the population to directly challenge the power of capital and the capitalist state. It is with the central problems of socialist strategy and the transition to socialism that the next two chapters will be concerned.

Notes

1. Leo Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labor and the State, (London: Verso, 1986), p.50.
2. Perry Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism, (London: Verso, 1983), p.79.
3. Ralph Miliband, Divided Societies: Class Struggle in Contemporary Capitalism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.223.
4. Leo Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution: The Contemporary Meaning of Revolution in the West," Socialist Register 1989, Edited by Ralph Miliband, Leo Panitch, and John Saville, (London: Merlin Press, 1989), p.11.
5. The argument for a revolutionary and democratic strategy for socialist transformation is developed in Chapter 5.
6. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, Edited and Translated by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp.275-276.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p.276.
9. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.212.
10. Anne Showstack Sassoon, Gramsci's Politics, Second Edition, (London: Hutchinson, 1987), especially Part III.
11. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, pp.56-58,132-133,161,181-182, 237-239,418.
12. Ibid. The phrase "system of meanings and values" appears in Raymond Williams, Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism, Edited by Robin Gable, (London: Verso, 1989), pp.xxi, 76.
13. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, pp.56-58,132-133,161,181-182, 237-239,418.
14. Ibid., pp.237-239.
15. Ibid., p.243.
16. Ibid., especially pp.129-133.

17. Ibid., p.10.
18. Ernest Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, Edited by Jon Rothschild, (London: New Left Books, 1979), especially Chapter 1.
19. V. I. Lenin, The State and Revolution, in The Lenin Anthology, Edited by Robert C. Tucker, (New York: Norton, 1975), p.380. See also Neil Harding, Lenin's Political Thought, Vol.2, Theory and Practice in the Socialist Revolution, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), especially Chapters 8-14.
20. Antonio Gramsci, Political Writings, 1910-1921, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), pp.100,173-177,261-267,295, 305; Sassoon, Gramsci's Politics, pp.34-49.
21. Sassoon, Gramsci's Politics, pp.34-49.
22. J. V. Femia, "Antonio Gramsci," in The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought, Edited by David Miller, et al., (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p.179.
23. Ibid.; and Gramsci, Political Writings, 1910-1920, pp.100,177.
24. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, pp.132-133.
25. Ibid., pp.161,181-182.
26. Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.240.
27. Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution," p.16; Adam Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), especially pp.100-102.
28. I borrow this expression from Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis. p.222.
29. Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution," p.13.
30. Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.52.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in The Marx-Engels Reader, Edited by Robert C. Tucker, Second Edition, (New York: Norton, 1978), p.482.

34. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.40.
35. Ibid., p.48.
36. Williams, Resources of Hope, pp.xxi,76.
37. Ralph Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," Socialist Register 1990, Edited by Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, (London: Merlin Press, 1990), p.364.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution," p.22.
41. Ibid.
42. Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," p.346. Ralph Miliband's characterization of our epoch is contained in the title of his last book, Socialism for a Sceptical Age, (London: Verso, 1995).
43. Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," p.350.
44. Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.240.
45. Ibid.
46. Antonio Gramsci, Quaderni del carcere, Vols.1-4, (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), p.1706, cited in Sassoon, Gramsci's Politics, pp.168-170.
47. Williams, Resources of Hope, p.272.
48. Ibid., p.273.
49. Ibid.
50. Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, pp.223-224.
51. Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, Chapter 1.
52. Sassoon, Gramsci's Politics, p.153.
53. Marx and Engels argue that "the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy." See "Manifesto of the Communist Party," p.490. The expression "a new state" is found in Ernest Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, Translated by Jon Rothschild, (London: New Left Books, 1978), p.162.

54. Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," p.350.
55. Alex Callinicos, The Revenge of History: Marxism and the East European Revolutions, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p.135.
56. James Petras describes the socialist project as "at a low point" in "Socialism: The Obits Were Premature," Guardian, (January 29, 1992), p.12. I borrow the expression "a moment of serious historical imagination" from E. P. Thompson's "An Open Letter to Lesjek Kolakowski," Socialist Register 1973, Edited by Ralph Miliband and John Saville, (London: Merlin Press, 1974), pp.99-100, Note 69.
57. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics, (London: Verso, 1985), pp.1-5.
58. Ibid., pp.1,159.
59. Ibid., pp.1-5,177.
60. Ibid., p.177.
61. Ibid., especially Chapters 2 and 3.
62. Ibid., p.180.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., p.177.
65. Ibid., p.178.
66. Ibid., Chapters 2 and 3. Ernesto Laclau popularized the term "class reductionism" in his Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, (London: New Left Books, 1979).
67. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Chapters 2 and 3.
68. Ellen Meiksins Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" Socialist Register 1990, p.75.
69. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p.181.
70. The expression, "speak for themselves, in their own voice" appears in David Harvey, The Condition of Post-modernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.48.

71. Stanley Aronowitz, The Crisis in Historical Materialism: Class, Politics, and Culture in Marxist Theory, Second Edition, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp.166-168.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., cited in Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, p.47.
74. Ibid., p.168.
75. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, p.69.
76. Ibid., pp.178-181.
77. Ibid., p.178.
78. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.109.
79. Ibid., p.110.
80. Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.9.
81. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.2.
82. John Bellamy Foster, "Liberal Practicality and the U.S. Left," Socialist Register 1990, p.284.
83. Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, pp.354-355.
84. Ellen Meiksins Wood, The Retreat from Class: A New 'True' Socialism, (London: Verso, 1986), pp.198-200, and "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" pp.66-67.
85. Johanna Brenner, "Feminism's Revolutionary Promise: Finding Hope in Hard Times," Socialist Register 1989, especially pp.245-254.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, pp.116-118, 353-355.

92. Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" p.78. See also Edward B. Chilcote and Ronald H. Chilcote, "The Crisis of Marxism: An Appraisal of New Directions," Rethinking Marxism, 5, (Summer 1992), p.92.
93. Brenner, "Feminism's Revolutionary Potential," pp.248-254; Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.99,105,111.
94. Brenner, "Feminism's Revolutionary Promise," pp.248-254; Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.103-105.
95. Brenner, "Feminism's Revolutionary Promise," p.254.
96. Ibid., pp.253-254.
97. Foster, "Liberal Practicality and the U.S. Left," p.283.
98. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.100-109.
99. Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.69-70.
100. Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" p.78; Brenner, "Feminism's Revolutionary Promise," p.247.
101. Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," p.361.
102. Ibid., pp.360-362, and Divided Societies, pp.109-110, 114.
103. Wood, The Retreat from Class, especially Chapter 4; and Norman Geras, Discourses of Extremity: Radical Ethics and Post-Marxist Extravagances, (London: Verso, 1990), especially Chapters 2 and 3.
104. Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, pp.46,52,117, 354-355; See also Marsha A. Hewitt, "Illusions of Freedom: The Regressive Implications of Postmodernism," Socialist Register 1993, Edited by Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, (London: Merlin Press, 1993), pp. 78-91; and Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, "Social Criticism Without Philosophy: An Encounter Between Feminism and Postmodernism," in Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism, Edited by Andrew Ross, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp.83-104.
105. Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.4-5,61.
106. Ibid., Chapter 4; Geras, Discourses of Extremity, Chapters 2 and 3.
107. Brenner, "Feminism's Revolutionary Promise," p.247.
108. Ibid.

109. Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.62.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid., p.61.
112. Ibid., p.62.
113. Ibid., p.74.
114. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, especially Chapter 4.
115. Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.66.
116. Ibid., pp.66-70.
117. Ibid., pp.60-64.
118. Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" p.77.
119. Ibid., pp.76-80, and The Retreat from Class, pp.14-15, 60-64, 170-200. See Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.109-114, and "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," pp.360-363.
120. Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.14-15.
121. Ibid., pp.189-191.
122. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.110.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid.
125. Norman Geras, "Seven Types of Obloquy: Travesties of Marxism," Socialist Register 1990, pp.29-31.
126. Ibid., p.31.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.; Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," pp.480-482.
129. Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" p.79.
130. Ibid., pp.79-80.
131. Ibid.
132. This expression appears in Geras, "Seven Types of Obloquy," p.30.

- 133.Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.173-174.
- 134.Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" p.76;
Geras, "Seven Types of Obloquy," p.31.
- 135.Geras, "Seven Types of Obloquy," p.30.
- 136.Ibid.
- 137.Ibid.
- 138.Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.99,105,111.
- 139.Lise Vogel, Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward
A Unitary Theory, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University
Press, 1983), p.170.
- 140.Miliband, Divided Societies, p.111.
- 141.Ibid., p.109.
- 142.Geras, "Seven Types of Obloquy," p.30.
- 143.Miliband, Divided Societies, p.110.
- 144.Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.52.
- 145.Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," p.363.
- 146.Williams, Resources of Hope, pp.xxi,76.

Chapter 4. Radical Reformism

As Robert Heilbroner observes, socialism may be "organizationally feasible over a considerable range of formats," but "The difficulty with respect to all of them...is how to make the transition from the existing state of affairs to the desired end point."¹ In the last chapter we argued for the development of new socialist movements which could foster "the organization of workers as a class," forge new historic blocs with other "subaltern" groups, and eventually achieve hegemony as a precondition for socialist transformation. But the revolutionary orientation of this prospectus, it must be acknowledged, is hardly the only strategic perspective within the Marxist and broader socialist traditions. During the course of the twentieth century, two distinct approaches to socialist strategy and the transition to socialism have been articulated by activists and writers committed to radical social change. As Ralph Miliband points out, in addition to the revolutionary perspective, what may be called a reformist or radical reformist perspective has also been developed.²

Although Marx and Engels had welcomed the democratic republic as the form of capitalist society most amenable to

working class struggles for socialism and had emphasized the imperative of winning "the battle of democracy," their commitment to "smashing" the capitalist state and creating a new state embodying "the dictatorship of the proletariat" established the theoretical basis for the development of the revolutionary perspective by Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Gramsci, and their successors.³ However, with the development of mass social democratic parties in Germany and other European countries there arose an alternative conception of the transition to socialism. This perspective, articulated most capably by Kautsky and Left social democracy before the First World War, eschewed not only violent insurrection but also any notion of "smashing" the state and creating an entirely new one, much less any "dictatorship of the proletariat." On this view, the achievement of parliamentary power by socialist parties would enable them to use existing political institutions to bring about socialist transformation.⁴

These essential differences on socialist strategy and politics contributed significantly to the historic division and conflict between communist and social democratic parties. But as Miliband emphasizes, one of the most important if largely unacknowledged historical facts about working class struggles for socialism in this century is that neither communist nor social democratic parties have generally followed the respective strategies to which they have been

formally pledged. After all, as Miliband notes, beginning in the Popular Front period of the 1930's, Western communist parties came to accept the constitutional and electoral processes in their own countries as the appropriate means for achieving political power and commencing socialist transformation.⁵ And as we remarked in the second chapter, social democratic parties largely abandoned any commitment to radical social change during the inter-war years.⁶ During the next few decades, any substantial self-criticism or development of these theoretical perspectives was largely evaded by these parties.

But in the 1970's, the prospect of a "historic breakthrough" for the Left in southern Europe led many Marxist and socialist writers to turn their attention again to the question of socialist strategy and the transition to socialism.⁷ The most prominent political development on the Left during this decade was the advent of Eurocommunism, a "movement of strategic and theoretical change" whose repudiation of revolutionary objectives constituted a formal "De-Bolshevization" of communist parties in Spain, France, Italy, and several other Western countries.⁸ By the early 1980's, it was clear that Eurocommunism marked more of an end to an era than the beginning of a new one, and a decade later most of these parties had disintegrated, splintered, or embraced social democratic politics. However, as Perry Anderson writes, Eurocommunism "did, for all its limita-

tions, put practical questions of a transition to socialism in conditions of advanced capitalism on the agenda of Marxist theory."⁹ One result was the development of new arguments on behalf of a radical reformist strategy by Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband.¹⁰ Another result was the renewal of the case for socialist revolution by Ernest Mandel and other Trotskyist writers.¹¹

This chapter examines and evaluates the arguments of Poulantzas and Miliband on behalf of radical reformism as a strategy for socialist transformation in the advanced capitalist countries. As Miliband observes, this strategic perspective rejects the "total transformation" of existing political institutions and envisions a major role in socialist transformation for "the main political institutions--notably parliament--inherited from bourgeois democracy."¹² The first part of this chapter explores Poulantzas's case for a "democratic road to socialism."¹³ The second part of this chapter considers Miliband's case for "'reformist' struggles within a revolutionary project."¹⁴ The chapter agrees with these scholars that socialist parties and movements must win electoral mandates for socialism, that radically democratized representative assemblies are integral to socialist democracy, and that the civic freedoms of bourgeois democracy should be protected and expanded in the transition to socialism. The chapter argues, however, that these writers are profoundly mistaken in holding that this

transition could be achieved "more or less within constitutional bounds," and in abandoning altogether the Marxist notions of "smashing" the capitalist state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹⁵

Drawing on the vital insights of Marx and Engels and the revolutionary tradition in Marxism, the chapter suggests that any successful process of socialist transformation would require what may reasonably be described as a revolution. Far from an endorsement of a military "insurrection" by a small number of people, this argument simply maintains that the transition to socialism is inconceivable without the abolition of the capitalist state and the creation of a new state, and that attainment of these strategic objectives would require not only electoral mandates and parliamentary power, but also direct, extra-parliamentary, and extra-constitutional mass action. The contours of a democratic socialist revolution in the countries of advanced capitalism will be explored in the next chapter.

The Democratic Road to Socialism

As Ellen Meiksins Wood observes, the course of Poulantzas's "political and theoretical evolution traces the trajectory of a major trend in the European Left, reflecting the political odyssey of a whole generation."¹⁶ Poulantzas was, for many years, a Marxist-Leninist and a member of the

communist party in Greece, though he was often critical of actually existing socialism and the Western communist parties. At certain points in his career, his writings even took on a distinctly Maoist flavor. But Poulantzas's views evolved significantly during the 1970's, and he eventually abandoned any commitment to a revolutionary strategy for socialism. Most of his last book, State, Power, Socialism, is concerned with presenting his revised theory of class struggle and the state in advanced capitalist society. Poulantzas's analysis here of the state as "the condensation of a particular class relationship of forces" informs his new views on socialist strategy. In the latter part of this book, Poulantzas joins the Eurocommunists in arguing for a socialism of "the third way," a humane and democratic socialism which would avoid the failures and tragedies associated with both orthodox communism and traditional social democracy.¹⁷ Borrowing the language of some Italian Eurocommunists, Poulantzas now advocates a "democratic road to socialism."¹⁸ He develops here a critique of Leninism and at least some guiding principles for what has been since been described as a "Left Eurocommunist" perspective on the transition to socialism.¹⁹

Poulantzas takes issue with other Marxists and socialists who contend that the renewal of socialist aspirations and movements depends largely on struggles to foster the development of "direct, rank-and-file democracy" in the form of

workers' councils or self-management bodies.²⁰ In fact, Poulantzas criticizes what he takes to be Leninism's original exclusive focus on the soviets or workers' councils and the imperatives of direct democracy.²¹ For Poulantzas, it was the Bolsheviks' commitment to the "sweeping substitution of rank-and-file democracy for representative democracy" that "principally accounted" for the rise of the authoritarian Soviet state.²² Poulantzas finds that "the seeds of statism (were) contained in the original workers' councils experience."²³ Indeed, he concludes that the "seeds of Stalinism were well and truly present in Lenin...."²⁴

Poulantzas acknowledges that many of the grievous mistakes and misadventures of Soviet socialism came about as the result of the gradual shift of political power from the soviets to the communist party, the formation of a party-state elite, the restriction of political freedoms, and the ascendancy of Stalin. But Poulantzas insists that the central problem here was the "sweeping replacement of formal, representative democracy by the real, direct democracy of workers' councils."²⁵ In his view, Lenin and the Bolsheviks failed to appreciate the importance of representative political institutions, political pluralism, and individual rights for the development of socialist democracy. Poulantzas cites Luxemburg's critique of Leninism along the same lines. In The Russian Revolution, Luxemburg writes:

In place of the representative bodies created by general, popular elections, Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the soviets as the only true representation of the laboring masses. But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element.²⁶

Poulantzas follows Luxemburg in arguing that these representative institutions and political freedoms are essential for the development of socialist democracy.²⁷

Poulantzas's commitment to the "real permanence and continuity" of the representative institutions and political rights achieved by the popular masses in capitalist society leads him to reject the classical Marxist notions of "smashing" the capitalist state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat." In Poulantzas's view, Marx wrote of "smashing" the state for "indicative purposes" only, and "the dictatorship of the proletariat" was no more than a "signpost" or "an applied strategy."²⁸ Under Lenin and his successors, Poulantzas submits, these expressions have come to be associated with the elimination of representative democracy and political freedoms, and the rise of authoritarian socialism. Contemporary Marxists and socialists can no longer talk of "smashing" or "destroying" the state: the institutions of representative democracy simply cannot be dispensed with.

Poulantzas supports the Eurocommunists' abandonment of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" because democratic socialism must be distinguished from dictatorship of any kind. Such a formulation, contends Poulantzas, only obscures the theoretical and practical problems of democratic socialist transformation.²⁹

Although Poulantzas supports the development of various forms of self-management, he emphasizes that these centers of direct democracy must not try to create a situation of "dual power." In a significant departure not only from Leninism, but also Trotskyism and other currents of revolutionary Marxism, Poulantzas argues that these organs of workers' and popular power must not try to constitute themselves as a new state-in-the-making, one which will rise on the ruins of the old one.³⁰ Poulantzas argues that this "dual power" strategy, which conceives the popular masses "outside" the state struggling to destroy it and replace it with the new workers' state, is neither necessary nor appropriate in the advanced capitalist societies. His own revised view of democratic socialist transformation is intended as an alternative to such strategies.³¹

For Poulantzas, the state in capitalist society cannot be seen simply as an instrument or tool used by the bourgeoisie to promote its own class interests. In a now famous passage, Poulantzas writes:

The State is neither a thing-instrument that may be taken away, nor a fortress that may be penetrated by means of a wooden horse, nor yet a safe that may be cracked by burglary; it is the heart of the exercise of political power.³²

The achievement of representative democracy and political freedoms, "a conquest of the popular masses," demonstrates that while the state may be dominated by the capitalist class, it is also shaped by, and subject to, struggles and pressures from below. Poulantzas believes that the state itself must be considered a vital sphere, indeed the most important terrain of class struggle.³³

Accordingly, Poulantzas holds that rather than assaulting the state from "outside" as the "dual power" strategy entails, the capture of state power by socialists should be achieved through a decisive shift in the "relationship of forces within the state apparatuses."³⁴ By this, Poulantzas means that socialist forces must not only secure electoral majorities which give it effective control of parliaments and other legislative bodies, but also develop "centers of resistance" within the state bureaucracy and the repressive state apparatuses.³⁵ Poulantzas anticipates that, over a long period of time, the growth of mass popular movements for socialism can produce these electoral victories and help these "centers of resistance" develop into significant political opposition. Eventually, there will be "a stage of real breaks," the climax of which "is reached when the relation-

ship of forces on the strategic terrain of the state swings over to the side of the popular masses."³⁶ Thus, a combination of "internal" struggles and "external" struggles will bring about the shift in the "relationship of forces" which constitutes the conquest of state power.³⁷

In Poulantzas's judgment, "the democratic road to socialism" must combine transformed institutions of representative democracy with new forms of direct democracy and self-management. As Poulantzas explains,

The essential problem of the democratic road to socialism, of democratic socialism, must be posed in a different way: how is it possible radically to transform the State in such a manner that the extension and deepening of political freedoms and the institutions of representative democracy (which were also a conquest of the popular masses) are combined with the unfurling of forms of direct democracy and the mushrooming of self-management bodies?³⁸

Poulantzas suggests, then, that the working class and its allies must capture state power through electoral and constitutional means. They would then commence the democratic transition to socialism through "two articulated processes": the substantial transformation of the existing representative institutions, and the development of direct democracy and self-management.³⁹

Poulantzas does not say much about how, exactly, the representative institutions of the capitalist state would be

transformed in the transition to socialism. He suggests that the state would be democratized, and that popular participation "in the sphere of the state" would increase.⁴⁰ But precisely what this means is never elaborated. Similarly, Poulantzas provides only a limited account of the development of direct democracy and self-management. Although he argues for the expansion of organs of direct democracy and self-management, he furnishes few details on their social and political role and powers.

Acknowledging this absence of particulars in his own account, Poulantzas explains that the "forms of articulation" of representative democracy and direct democracy constitutes one of the major problems for any democratic socialist theory and practice.⁴¹ Poulantzas is aware that many serious questions and difficulties attend the delineation and distribution of various forms of power among representative and self-management bodies.

The new problems arise as soon as it is no longer a question of suppressing the one in favor of the other...How is it possible to avoid being drawn into mere parallelism or juxtaposition, whereby each follows its own specific course? In what fields, concerning what decisions, and at what points in time should representative assemblies have precedence over the centers of direct democracy: parliament over factory committees, town councils over citizens' committees--or vice versa?⁴²

Recalling the disastrous conflict between a Left government

and popular organizations of the Left in Portugal in the mid-1970's, Poulantzas emphasizes the importance of working out answers to such questions and resolving potential conflicts before they lead to a situation of "dual power."⁴³

Not surprisingly, Poulantzas identifies the second major problem facing any "democratic road to socialism" as "the reaction of the enemy."⁴⁴ Poulantzas observes that the bourgeoisie and its allies might well "brutally intervene" to "cut short" the experience of democratic socialism.⁴⁵ Moreover, he concedes that this longer, more gradual process of socialist transformation he advocates allows "greater possibilities" for such violence or sabotage than does the older "dual power" strategy.⁴⁶ Poulantzas argues that "It is possible to confront this danger through active reliance on a broad, popular movement."⁴⁷ Such a mass movement, "founded on broad popular alliances," would depend on not only the working class, but also the middle class, and what are often described as the new social movements.⁴⁸ However, this "broad popular movement" is not "sufficient" by itself; it "must be linked to sweeping transformations of the state."⁴⁹

Poulantzas's vision of democratic socialist transformation in his last book has much to commend it. Poulantzas demonstrates here a much greater respect for, and commitment to, the democratic rights achieved by the popular masses in capitalist society than he had in his earlier writings. His argument that representative political institutions, poli-

tical pluralism, and individual rights cannot be dismissed as a hollow "emanation" of "bourgeois dictatorship," but must be recognized as "a conquest of the popular masses," to be "extended" and "deepened" by socialism, may not have been original but it has been enormously influential.⁵⁰ Panitch observes that Poulantzas helped to revive Marxist political theory in the late 1970's with his "trenchant critique of the utopian notions of direct democracy, and in his insistence on thinking through the place and meaning of representative institutions in socialist democracy."⁵¹ One need not agree with all of the particulars in Poulantzas's critique of the revolutionary Marxist tradition in order to concur with the overall thrust of his argument for the radical democratization, instead of the total abolition, of representative political institutions.

Poulantzas's insistence on analyzing the state in advanced capitalist society as a terrain of class struggle compares favorably with the view of some revolutionary socialists that electoral struggles and parliamentary participation are dangerous illusions. Again, one need not embrace Poulantzas's strategic vision in toto, in order to agree that at least some parts of the state are, indeed, spheres or fields of class conflict. Poulantzas's suggestion that the socialist movement must seek electoral victories at every level of government, as part of the overall struggle for socialism, is hard to contest. As Norman Geras writes,

"Simply bypassing the democratic institutions that exist is not...a serious hypothesis."⁵² Thus, Poulantzas's conclusion that "the democratic road to socialism" requires political struggles within the state, as well as popular struggles without, seems reasonable enough.

Moreover, Poulantzas's argument for combining substantially transformed representative democracy and the "unfurling" of forms of direct democracy and self-management makes an enduring contribution to contemporary Marxist and socialist political thought by elucidating one of the central challenges--and problems--of socialist transformation. In so doing, Poulantzas helps to retrieve and further develop some valuable critical insights concerning the socialist state that were originally advanced by some of the Austro-Marxists. As Bob Jessop reminds us, "It was Max Adler and Otto Bauer, after all, who first proposed the need to combine parliamentary and council forms of democracy."⁵³ Like these theorists, Poulantzas understands that both are essential for the development of socialist democracy. Furthermore, Poulantzas's recognition of the importance of the "forms of articulation" of transformed representative democracy and direct democracy as a vital question for Marxists and socialists is to be welcomed. His own conception of those "forms of articulation" may be open to serious objection, but his articulation of this problematic is not. At the very least, Poulantzas may be credited with incisive-

ly identifying some of the major "dilemmas of democratic socialism" even if he could not offer answers or solutions to them.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, a number of significant problems severely undermine Poulantzas's attempt to articulate the conceptual grundrisse for socialist transformation in the advanced capitalist countries. The urgent imperative of theorizing and practically realizing a "democratic road to socialism" is not in question. But Poulantzas's own conception of this "democratic road" should be critically interrogated on several grounds, and in the end it may reasonably be argued that while Poulantzas has some important things to say about the development of socialist democracy, his analysis of the capitalist state and his view of the "sweeping" transformation of the state in the transition to socialism are incomplete and inadequate. Ironically, in State, Power, Socialism, Poulantzas abandons not only his previous views on socialist revolution, but also any critical concern with the vital insights of Marx and his successors on this question. Poulantzas is unable to see that while the radical democratization of representative assemblies and the expansion of civic freedoms are indeed integral to socialist democracy, these historic developments--as well as the other fundamental changes associated with socialism--could only be brought about through a process which amounts to the abolition of the capitalist state and the creation of a new state.

The virtual absence of any critical attention to the classical Marxist view that the socialist state must be a workers' state is striking in Poulantzas's last work. But a generally diminished concern with class in general and the working class in particular is evident throughout his discussion of socialist strategy. Whether Poulantzas should be considered a "forerunner" of the "retreat from class" which has become prominent in the postmarxist literature cannot be addressed here.⁵⁵ However, it is true that Poulantzas is rather vague about precisely who is going to bring about "the democratic road to socialism." A close reading of Poulantzas's account reveals that he does not speak much of the working class per se and instead usually refers to the "popular masses." As the last chapter indicated, there can be no doubt that new working class movements for socialism would need to achieve broad popular support from the majority of the population, and in this sense it is true that the "popular masses" must be actively engaged in the struggle for radical social change. But Poulantzas's use of the term is based on other, and more questionable, assumptions.

For as both Jessop and Ellen Meiksins Wood recall, Poulantzas's extremely narrow definition of the working class as encompassing only productive laborers renders it a numerical minority of the population, badly in need of partners for a "popular alliance."⁵⁶ Thus, Poulantzas appears to conceive of the "popular masses" as an alliance between the

working class and the petty bourgeoisie.⁵⁷ Wood notes that Poulantzas's position had come to closely resemble that of the Eurocommunists, for whom the focus of strategy had shifted from "creating a united working class" to constructing "popular alliances" between the working class and the middle class.⁵⁸ In embracing a strategy that Jessop describes as "pluriclassiste" and "pluripartiste," however, Poulantzas effectively loses sight of the imperative need for the "organization of workers as a class" and how a socialist movement which is first and foremost a working class movement would be concerned to undertake a far more "sweeping" transformation of the state than he envisages.⁵⁹

Poulantzas's diminished interest in the working class as the primary social agency of radical social change may explain some of the peculiar features of his critique of workers' councils and his juxtaposition of representative democracy and direct democracy. In the first place, Poulantzas's account of the ostensible origins of "authoritarian statism" in "the original workers' councils experience" is hardly persuasive. What Poulantzas calls "representative democracy" cannot reasonably be said to have existed in Russia before the October Revolution, and the original Leninist vision of a "republic of soviets"--had it been realized--would have produced the first real democracy of any sort in that country. A much stronger case can be made for the proposition that it was the later Leninist commitment to "the dictator-

ship of the party" which laid the "seeds" of authoritarianism, if not of Stalinism.⁶⁰ And a fair-minded reading of the historical record indicates that the concentration and monopolization of political power in the hands of the party-state bureaucracy was not the inevitable result of a strategy centering on workers' councils, but instead the product of catastrophic conditions of civil war, foreign invasion, the decimation of the working class, famine, and millions of deaths.⁶¹

Most contemporary Marxists and socialists can certainly agree that the development of this party-state bureaucracy in Russia proved to be disastrous for democracy, political pluralism, and individual rights. But Poulantzas largely ignores the historical fact that this development was made possible through the destruction of workers' councils. Moreover, while Luxemburg's injunction against "the repression of political life" resonates as powerfully as ever, Poulantzas does not explore the significance of the fact that she later changed her mind on the Bolsheviks' dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, and that she paid with her life for coming to believe that state power must pass to workers' councils in Germany.⁶² More generally, Poulantzas avoids any recognition of the commitment to democratic representation, political pluralism, and individual rights among advocates of workers' councils since that time--from the Workers' Opposition in the Bolshevik Party and Gramsci to the

"council communists" and contemporary Trotskyists.⁶³

Although Poulantzas clearly supports the development of self-management bodies and other organs of direct democracy, it is revealing that he conceives of transformed representative assemblies as the heart of the socialist state. As Jessop observes, Poulantzas's fear of potential conflict between parliaments and organs of workers' power led him to believe that the former should exercise state power and the latter should not.⁶⁴ Poulantzas apparently believes that while conciliar forms of power should be created in workplaces and communities, no central organ of self-management such as a congress of workers' councils should constitute part of the primary apparatus of the socialist state.⁶⁵ However, Poulantzas's dismissal of the need for such an institutional embodiment of workers' power cannot be justified solely on the basis of the recognition that democratized representative assemblies are indispensable.

Indeed, Poulantzas simply ignores the rather considerable theoretical literature in the Marxist and socialist traditions which suggests that a democratically co-ordinated system of workers' councils and a central body of representatives elected from these councils are essential for the "organization of workers as a class," the mobilization of popular challenges to the power of capital and the capitalist state, and the development of workers' power in socialist society.⁶⁶ Although it is clear enough today that trans-

formed representative assemblies must constitute a central part of the socialist state, Poulantzas's articulation of combining representative democracy and direct democracy fails to address the compelling need for establishing a central congress of workers' councils and self-management bodies as another primary "repository of popular authority."⁶⁷ His anticipation of inevitable conflict between democratized representative assemblies and organs of workers' power is not grounded in any sustained argument and does not consider the strategic possibilities which would be opened up through the development of new socialist parties and movements committed to both forms of democracy.

This failure by Poulantzas may be understood as the result of his commitment to maintaining the unity and continuity of the existing state even as it undergoes significant transformation in the transition to socialism.⁶⁸ As Mandel and other critics have underscored, the theoretical and practical difficulties with this position are enormous.⁶⁹ It is especially noteworthy that Poulantzas summarily dismisses the Marxist notion of "smashing" the capitalist state as merely "indicative" and "the dictatorship of the proletariat" as only a "signpost." For Poulantzas, in effect, now refuses to acknowledge the fact that these are some of the central conceptual elements in Marxist political thought, and the possibility that these concepts, however distorted in communist practice, may still have something to teach us

about the transition to socialism.

It is, of course, certainly true that these concepts have come to be associated with the authoritarianism, bureaucracy, and repression which have characterized actually existing socialist countries. However, as many Marxist and socialist scholars have emphasized, the content of these notions in the theory of Marx and Engels is profoundly and radically democratic.⁷⁰ As we will see in the second part of this chapter, although both of these central concepts are problematic, this by no means entails the conclusion that they may simply be discarded without further discussion. It will suffice to observe here that the "smashing" or abolition of the capitalist state should not be reduced to, or equated with the destruction of democratic representation, political pluralism, or individual rights. For Marx and Engels, this expression conveyed the critical understanding that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purpose," but must instead take it apart in order to create a new workers' state.⁷¹ Similarly, "the dictatorship of the proletariat" should not be equated with authoritarian rule by a party-state bureaucracy. As we will see, this state would be a "dictatorship" only in the sense that the working class would employ state power, including force, against the capitalist class in order to bring about socialist transformation.⁷²

The ease with which Poulantzas eschews any sustained critical discussion of these main conceptual elements of Marxist political thought and their possible relevance today is somewhat surprising in light of his own intellectual and political background.⁷³ And Poulantzas's argument that socialist transformation could be achieved without breaking the unity and continuity of the existing state suffers greatly from the absence of any such discussion. As we noted earlier, Poulantzas's deepened appreciation of the value of capitalist democracy is surely salutary. However, his overall analysis of the capitalist state and its capacity for radical transformation by socialists is critically deficient in a number of respects.

Much of what Poulantzas has to say about the capitalist state is reasonable and insightful. His finding that the capitalist state is shaped by, and subject to, struggles and pressures from below is well taken. He is certainly right to observe that electoral processes and parliamentary representation provide certain opportunities for working class struggles to find political expression. And, as we have observed, it is undoubtedly true that new working class movements for socialism would need to win parliamentary power and electoral mandates as a prelude to socialist transformation. However, Poulantzas's broader depiction of the state as the most important contemporary terrain of class struggle and his strategic focus on shifting the "relationship of

forces within the state apparatuses" are open to devastating criticism.

One problem here arises from Poulantzas's concentration on existing representative institutions at the expense of a more comprehensive and more critical analysis of the capitalist state as a whole. Poulantzas's account significantly understates the degree to which some of the institutions in what Miliband calls "the state system" are not only resistant to such struggles and pressures from below, but also empowered to act against them.⁷⁴ Poulantzas affords too little attention to the markedly undemocratic power and "bourgeois predominance" in "the appointive institutions of the state system": the state administration, the judicial system, the police, and the military.⁷⁵ On closer inspection, it would seem that what we may call the bureaucracy and the repressive apparatuses of the state hardly fit Poulantzas's description as arenas of class struggle. Even if the state may be analyzed as "the condensation of a particular class relationship of forces," Poulantzas's assessment of those relations of forces, and their implications for the transformation of the state is far off the mark.⁷⁶

Poulantzas acknowledges that even socialist electoral victories and accession to parliamentary power are insufficient to achieve the decisive shift in the "relationship of forces within the state apparatuses" on which the transition to socialism ostensibly depends. And Poulantzas is not un-

aware of the difficulties and dangers of a strategy whose success eventually depends in large part on "centers of resistance" within the bureaucracy and the repressive apparatuses. But his inability to fully think through what Wood calls the "insurmountable class barriers" to such a strategy and his broader failure to adequately theorize working class empowerment in the transition to socialism prove fatal to his case. In Wood's judgment, not only are Poulantzas's prescriptions here marred by a "complete vagueness," but his strategy is more generally imperiled by his misplaced optimism "about the possibilities of transforming the capitalist state into an agent of socialism with a minimal degree of class struggle."⁷⁷

However, a closer reading of Poulantzas suggests that he was quite pessimistic about the viability of his strategy, and that his own deep reservations point to compelling problems which this strategy could not adequately address. Poulantzas himself admits that his strategy may not be able to succeed in overcoming bureaucratic resistance and opposition to the transformation of the state, or in defending the socialist movement against sabotage and violence from the Right. In interviews and discussions shortly before his death, Poulantzas allows that the "dominated classes" hold, at best, "marginal positions" and not real control or power in the state bureaucracy and repressive apparatuses.⁷⁸ Furthermore, he grants that the capitalist class could reverse

shifts in the balance of power within the state, and could "move" real centers of power.⁷⁹ Although he calls for massive popular pressure in support of the "sweeping" transformation of the state, he appears far from confident about its effectiveness.

Signally, Poulantzas also never concretely answers the question of what the socialist movement would do in the event that the capitalists and their allies "brutally intervene" with military force to abort the transition to socialism. Especially in light of his acknowledgement that his strategy permits "greater possibilities" for Right-wing sabotage and violence than its revolutionary counterpart, the invocation of "active reliance on a broad popular movement" is simply not enough. As Jessop notes, Poulantzas is "remarkably silent" about the possible need for the socialist government and popular movement to deploy armed forces in such a situation.⁸⁰ Perhaps Poulantzas's inability to see how these problems could be overcome explains his growing pessimism concerning the prospects for his strategy.⁸¹

As both Mandel and Wood emphasize, Poulantzas's conception of a "democratic road to socialism" suffers greatly from his inability to recognize that the political empowerment of the working class would require the breaking of the bureaucracy and the repressive apparatuses of the capitalist state.⁸² Poulantzas's repudiation of "smashing" the capitalist state leaves him without theoretical resources for ar-

articulating how the new forms of democratic power associated with socialism could be established or defended in the face of mounting "class struggle from above."⁶³ The difficulties with Poulantzas's strategic focus on shifting "the relationship of forces within the state apparatuses" are compounded by his failure to understand that the state is neither the only, nor the most important, terrain of class struggle in any conceivable transition to socialism.

Although Poulantzas urges the development of forms of self-management and direct democracy, his account is largely devoid of any recognition that working class struggles against capital in workplaces and communities would confront fierce resistance from the capitalist class--and any recognition that workers' progress in this vital terrain of class conflict would require the democratic coordination of workers' councils and the creation of a central body of elected representatives from these councils.⁶⁴ Poulantzas's eschewal of any form of "dual power" strategy as a threat to existing representative institutions fails to take into account that such a strategic orientation would be necessary for the truly radical democratization of existing representative assemblies, as well as for the creation of new central organs of workers' power. Only a diminished focus on the class content of socialist transformation enables Poulantzas to imagine that the socialization of the economy and the subordination of the state to society could be brought about

without the abolition of the capitalist state and the creation of a new state. In his haste to abandon "the dictatorship of the proletariat," Poulantzas loses sight of the simple but significant truth that the process of socialist transformation is inconceivable without the conquest of political power, including the power to employ legitimate violence, by the working class.⁸⁵

In the end, Poulantzas's conception of the "forms of articulation" of representative democracy and direct democracy proves to be insufficient for the theorization of the fundamental changes in the state which would be required during the transition to socialism. Poulantzas's strategy not only fails to comprehend the urgent imperative of breaking the unity and continuity of the capitalist state, but also neglects the vital need for the institutionalization of working class power in what must inevitably be a new state. This strategy also generally evades the centrality of extra-parliamentary and even extra-constitutional direct action by workers in any viable mass movement to take capital away from the capitalists and state power away from the capitalist state. Wood's conclusion that Poulantzas had come to embrace a political perspective akin to social democracy may appear too harsh, for unlike contemporary social democrats, he arguably remained committed to the objective of radical social change.⁸⁶ But Poulantzas's vision of the "democratic road to socialism" certainly belongs to the radical reform-

ist tradition which had been developed by Kautsky and Left social democracy in Germany, by the Austro-Marxists, and by other writers. It is regrettable that, in his last work, Poulantzas was unable to conjoin his greater appreciation for existing representative institutions and civic freedoms with a more capable analysis of the capitalist state and a more critical understanding of working class empowerment. Notwithstanding his considerable contributions to Marxist and socialist political thought, Poulantzas was unable to see that the fundamental strategic challenge which will confront new socialist movements is the achievement of democratic and revolutionary social transformation.

Radical Reform and Revolutionary Change

Although Poulantzas died shortly after the publication of State, Power, Socialism, many of the issues with which he was concerned have been further investigated by Miliband. As Panitch recalls, the appearance of Miliband's Marxism and Politics, along with Poulantzas's last book, helped to make "a new start" in Western Marxist political theory.⁸⁷ Like Poulantzas, Miliband has been concerned with the theoretical articulation of a strategy for socialist transformation which would be appropriate for the countries of advanced capitalism. Over the course of fifteen years, Miliband has developed a critical re-examination of the political thought

of Marx and Engels, as well as the different kinds of politics in the Marxist and broader socialist traditions. The results of this sustained inquiry have led Miliband to reject the revolutionary approach to socialist transformation and to argue for a "strong" version of the reformist or radical reformist strategy for the transition to socialism.⁸⁸

Miliband's Marxism and Politics explores the question, "What are the politics of Marxism?"⁸⁹ In Miliband's view, the answer to this question is not nearly as self-evident as proclaimed by the representatives of the various political traditions on the Left. At least part of the reason for this, according to Miliband, lies in the fact that there is only a limited "theoretical exploration of politics" in the work of Marx, Engels, and most of their successors.⁹⁰ Miliband finds that their treatment of politics is "mostly unsystematic and fragmentary...."⁹¹ In the "absence of systematic political theorization," Miliband holds that a Marxist politics must be "constructed or reconstructed...."⁹² Yet he observes that the further development of Marxist and socialist political thought has been largely neglected by the Left, in part because of the legacy of Stalinism and in part because of the tendency toward a "marked economism" which underestimates the importance of politics.⁹³ This neglect of political theory has had disastrous consequences for the Left, Miliband submits, one of which has been the woefully

inadequate theorization of contemporary socialist strategy by various Marxist and socialist parties. Marxism and Politics is intended as a contribution to the development of Marxist political thought and to the articulation of a viable strategy for socialist transformation in the advanced capitalist societies.

In the latter part of this book, Miliband notes that throughout this century there has been a great deal of debate and disagreement among Marxists and socialists about the appropriate strategy for "overthrowing" capitalism.⁹⁴ Miliband identifies the revolutionary and reformist or radical reformist strategies as representing "two very different paths of advance."⁹⁵ He emphasizes that the radical reformism of Kautsky and Left social democracy in Germany before the First World War was indeed a strategy for fundamental social change, which must be carefully distinguished from the much more limited commitment to reforms within capitalist society which would later come to characterize social democracy.⁹⁶ Moreover, he points out that this was the predominant perspective within the international socialist movement until Lenin was able "to place insurrectionary politics on the agenda after 1914."⁹⁷

Miliband acknowledges that the labels "revolutionary" and "reformist" may be "rather misleading."⁹⁸ He suggests that the respective strategies might be more accurately described as "constitutionalist" and "insurrectionary," although he

allows that there are problems with this classification as well.⁹⁹ In addition, he submits, it would not be accurate or helpful to distinguish these alternatives as "peaceful" and "violent."¹⁰⁰ For Miliband, the "crucial theoretical difference" between the reformist strategy and the revolutionary strategy lies in their respective positions on the questions of "smashing" the capitalist state and creating a "dictatorship of the proletariat."¹⁰¹ The reformist strategy "envisages the carrying through of a socialist transformation by way of the main political institutions--notably parliament--inherited from bourgeois democracy, even though these might be to a greater or lesser extent reformed in more democratic directions...."¹⁰² In contrast, the revolutionary strategy "envisages the total transformation of the existing political institutions (i.e. the 'smashing' of the state)" and their replacement by "an altogether different type of state embodying and expressing the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'...."¹⁰³

Miliband is very critical of both communist and social democratic parties and develops elsewhere an impressive historical analysis of their major failures and shortcomings.¹⁰⁴ His account includes, as we remarked earlier, the critical observation that neither communists nor social democrats actually pursued these respective strategies for very long. But in the last part of Marxism and Politics Miliband focuses on identifying the real differences between these stra-

tegic perspectives, and on carefully re-evaluating the central issues and problems of socialist transformation. Miliband ventures here that the "terms of the contraposition" between the reformist and the revolutionary strategies may be mistaken, and allows that neither "model" or "scenario" may represent "realistic perspectives and projections."¹⁰⁵ Still, his reassessment of Marxist theory in the context of contemporary advanced capitalism leads him to advocate a "strong" form of radical reformism.¹⁰⁶

Unlike Poulantzas, Miliband acknowledges that Marx and Engels attached a great deal of importance to the notions of "smashing" the capitalist state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat." Miliband observes that Marx and Lenin alike considered the "smashing" of the capitalist state to be "the first and absolutely essential task of a genuinely revolutionary movement and party."¹⁰⁷ Marx wrote in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte that previous revolutions had "perfected this machine instead of smashing it."¹⁰⁸ Two decades later, as the Paris Commune arose, Marx saw "our heroic Party comrades" trying to "smash" the "bureaucratic-military machine" and supported their efforts to achieve this objective.¹⁰⁹ Marx declared in The Civil War in France, as we noted in the first part of the chapter, that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes."¹¹⁰ Instead, as Lenin would later put it, there must be a "gigantic replacement of

certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type."¹¹¹

Miliband further observes that for Marx and Engels, as for Lenin, the capitalist state would be replaced by "the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹¹² In contrast to Poulantzas, Miliband finds that Marx "attached supreme importance" to this concept, and he cites Marx's famous declaration in the "Critique of the Gotha Program":

between capitalist and communist society lies a period of revolutionary transformation from one to the other. There is a corresponding period of transition in the political sphere and in this period the state can only take the form of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.¹¹³

Miliband holds that this crucial notion was "never defined in any detail."¹¹⁴ But he points out that Engels described the Paris Commune as "the dictatorship of the proletariat," and that Marx's views were probably quite similar.¹¹⁵ In Miliband's view, Marx's description of the Commune's political organization was likely to be a "close approximation" to the main features of "the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹¹⁶ Marx and Engels's "dictatorship of the proletariat" is thus seen by Miliband as a form of radical democratic political power. And Miliband emphasizes that, for Marx and Engels, "that power is exercised almost directly, and only mediated by representative institutions strictly subordinat-

ed to the people."¹¹⁷

However, Miliband joins Poulantzas in rejecting the notions of "smashing" the capitalist state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat" as fundamental objectives of contemporary socialist strategy in the advanced capitalist countries.¹¹⁸ Three distinct lines of analysis are developed by Miliband as grounds for abandoning a revolutionary strategic orientation. In the first place, much like Poulantzas, Miliband finds that the history of communist revolutions demonstrates some onerous consequences of "smashing" the existing state. Miliband notes that the "smashing" of capitalist states in the twentieth century has invariably led to the rise of authoritarian regimes which resort to "the suppression of all opposition" and "the stifling of all civic freedoms."¹¹⁹ Miliband rejects the monopolization of power by a single party or party-state bureaucracy, as well as the denigration of representative institutions, political pluralism, and individual rights characteristic of most socialist states. In his view, such regimes "must be taken to represent a disastrous regression, in political terms, from bourgeois democracy, whatever the economic and social achievements of which they may be capable."¹²⁰

Second, Miliband submits that a revolutionary strategy centering on an "insurrectionary" seizure of power and a "total transformation" of existing political institutions is unlikely to ever win significant popular support in the ad-

vanced capitalist societies.¹²¹ In Miliband's judgment, it is "undoubtedly futile to expect any large measure of popular support for programs whose central premise is that a clean sweep must be made of everything to do with the existing social and political order, so that it may be replaced by a totally new social order whose shape and character tend to be only very loosely and vaguely sketched out."¹²² In the advanced capitalist societies, fundamental social change cannot be taken to mean the "total negation of all that has gone before."¹²³ Instead, it must be "conceived as a development of what already exists, in economic, social, and political terms" and a "radical, qualitative improvement upon it."¹²⁴

Miliband emphasizes in particular that the majority of people in the working classes of the advanced capitalist societies strongly support "legality, constitutionalism, electoralism, and representative institutions of the parliamentary type...."¹²⁵ Insisting that the democratic forms and civic freedoms which do exist in these societies must be "extended" and "enlarged" as essential constituents of socialist democracy, Miliband holds that the "total negation" of existing political institutions cannot be accepted as a socialist objective.¹²⁶ Any viable movement for socialist transformation will have to seek power through these institutions, and any effort to do otherwise is doomed to failure. Miliband also stresses that working class support for

revolutionary political action is unlikely to develop even in the event of economic crisis or political catastrophe.¹²⁷

Third and perhaps most importantly, Miliband argues that the revolutionary strategy cannot possibly produce the intended results. He writes:

it is by now clear (or should be) that the "smashing" of the existing bourgeois state does not open the way for the achievement of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."¹²⁸

In Miliband's view, the process of socialist transformation requires a "new articulation of power" that is a far cry from the direct popular power associated by Marx and Engels with "the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹²⁹ On the ruins of the old state must arise another "state proper" because a "state proper" is "an absolutely imperative necessity in organizing the process of transition from a capitalist society to a socialist one."¹³⁰ Moreover, this would need to be a state "possessed of very considerable power...."¹³¹ Thus, the "smashing" of the capitalist state cannot bring about "the dictatorship of the proletariat" if this latter concept is understood as popular power that is "exercised almost directly" and "only mediated by representative institutions strictly subordinated to the people."¹³² Miliband rejects "the dictatorship of the proletariat" not only because it is virtually impossible to achieve, but also because he finds that this notion "disposes much too easily, and therefore

does not dispose at all, of the inevitable tension that exists between the requirement of direction on the one hand, and of democracy on the other, particularly in a revolutionary situation."¹³³

Although he concludes that the revolutionary strategy may not have much of a future in the advanced capitalist societies, Miliband argues that this is not the last word on the prospects for socialist transformation. Miliband contends that "the question is, then, whether transformative programs involving 'reformist' struggles within a revolutionary project are certain to be rejected...by the constituencies whose support is a condition of advance."¹³⁴ As we noted in the introduction, Miliband recognizes that the conditions for radical social change do not presently exist in these societies, and he allows that they may not exist for some time to come. But he believes it is "quite realistic" to think that this may change over the next few decades.¹³⁵ Miliband considers it possible for mass popular movements for socialism to develop in these societies.¹³⁶ The primary social agency supporting these new socialist movements would be the working class, which Miliband defines much more broadly than Poulantzas. But these movements would seek the broadest possible public support, including the backing and cooperation of movements opposed to sexism and racism, as well as sections of the middle class. Miliband clearly holds that these new socialist movements must win the support of the majority

of people.¹³⁷ And this can only be accomplished through the development of a "strong" radical reformism.

Miliband's "strong" version of radical reformism aims at the fundamental or radical transformation of capitalist society but envisions a major role in this process for existing representative institutions, as well as for popular struggles "outside" the terrain of the state. Like the classical tradition of radical reformism, Miliband's strategy is also a "politics of conflict," but one which is "conducted within the limits of constitutionalism defined by bourgeois democracy...."¹³⁸ Miliband emphasizes the imperative need for socialist movements to seek and attain electoral successes at every level of government, and to win electoral mandates for socialist transformation.¹³⁹ But this strategy is not narrowly electoral by any means. It includes workplace actions, strikes, demonstrations, marches, and other kinds of popular struggles "within the given constitutional framework."¹⁴⁰

After winning an electoral majority and control of parliament, a socialist party or coalition would proceed to introduce "far-reaching anti-capitalist measures" including "fairly drastic measures of nationalization, imperative economic coordination and planning, major advances in labor legislation, social welfare, education, housing, transport, and the environment...."¹⁴¹ Like Poulantzas, Miliband suggests that a democratic transition to socialism will require

both significant changes in the existing state and the development of new forms of democratic or popular power "outside" the state, but his own conception of these radical changes leads him to support a qualified form of "dual power." In Miliband's view,

That process of transition both includes and requires radical changes in the structures, modes of operation, and personnel of the existing state, as well as the creation of a network of organs of popular participation amounting to "dual power."¹⁴²

The socialist government will have to rely upon not only its leading cadres, the socialist party or coalition, the labor unions, and allied political forces, but also on this "flexible and complex network of organs of popular participation throughout civil society...."¹⁴³ When Miliband writes that these "organs of popular participation" would create a situation of "dual power," he does not envision them seeking to challenge or replace the organs of government. Instead, they would act as "a defensive-offensive and generally supportive element" which could "complement" the efforts of the socialist government.¹⁴⁴ A new "partnership" between a transformed government of the Left and the popular organizations "outside" the state will be required for the development of socialism.¹⁴⁵

Miliband submits that the successful realization of this strategy could produce "a vast extension of democratic par-

ticipation in all areas of civil life" which would amount to "a very considerable transformation of the character of the state and of existing bourgeois democratic forms."¹⁴⁶ The adoption and implementation of radical reforms, requiring "profound changes in traditional structures," is seen as leading to what can only be described as a "fundamental transformation of the social order."¹⁴⁷ Thus, without "smashing" the capitalist state or trying to create "the dictatorship of the proletariat," the socialist movement would acknowledge the truth of Marx's proposition that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purpose."¹⁴⁸ Miliband holds that this strategy offers the best prospects for the development of a socialist "mixed economy," the "drastic diminution in the vast inequalities of every sort," and the creation of a "partnership" between state power and popular power.¹⁴⁹ It is on this basis, Miliband argues, that the working class and its allies could begin to build what Marx described as "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."¹⁵⁰

Miliband acknowledges the serious difficulties to be faced by any socialist government and movement committed to radical social change. Like Poulantzas, Miliband recognizes that socialist electoral victories and accession to parliamentary power would be met by fierce resistance from officials in the state bureaucracy, the judiciary, the military,

and the police.¹⁵¹ And Miliband understands that the capitalist class would seek to destabilize the new government and thwart its program of reforms in a climate of increasingly "acute polarization."¹⁵² There may well be, Miliband writes, a "prolonged period" of "economic, administrative, and professional forms of disruption and dislocation" promoted by conservative forces.¹⁵³ While these "forms of disruption and dislocation" might not be violent or illegal, they would nonetheless constitute a "class war" against the socialist government and movement.¹⁵⁴ Still, Miliband disagrees with the traditional Marxist and socialist view that a "pre-emptive coup" or conservative violence against socialist forces is virtually inevitable.¹⁵⁵ Miliband contends that such violence from the Right may be "rather unlikely" because other means are available for obstructing the process of socialist transformation, and because the costs of failure would be high.¹⁵⁶

Although there would be great pressure on the government to reduce or postpone its radical agenda, Miliband submits that rapid advance is necessary, for the choice is probably "radicalization or retreat."¹⁵⁷ He foresees the need for class struggle "inside the state system at all levels" and believes that conservative forces will be "deeply influenced" by not only the level of popular support for the government, but also by the "determination, intelligence, and good sense" of the socialist movement.¹⁵⁸ This popular

support, Miliband maintains, is the Left's only "major resource" and it must be "mobilized" through the new "organs of popular participation."¹⁵⁹ In the end, the socialist movement's prospects for success depend, in large part, on the unity and determination of the government and the "caliber, resilience, integrity, and clarity of purpose" of the activists who constitute the "forward elements of popular power."¹⁶⁰ Miliband expresses the hope that the mounting class struggle can be kept "within more or less constitutional bounds" and violent "class war" avoided.¹⁶¹ He allows that "Such a strategy is full of uncertainties and pitfalls, of dangers and dilemmas; and it may in the end turn out to be unworkable."¹⁶² But his aversion to the revolutionary alternative leads him to endorse this "strong" version of radical reformism as the only possible means of achieving socialist transformation in the countries of advanced capitalism.

Miliband's contributions to the retheorization of socialist strategy in the advanced capitalist countries have been hailed by many scholars on the Left.¹⁶³ Indeed, Miliband has developed perhaps the most comprehensive and rigorous case for radical reformism to appear in recent decades. Andre Gorz argued for a radical or revolutionary reformism more than two decades ago but, as we saw in the second chapter, later abandoned his interest in socialism.¹⁶⁴ Mihailo Markovic also analyzed the differences between revolutionary reformism and pragmatic reformism but never undertook a

broad systematic reassessment of socialist strategy.¹⁶⁵ And, as we have observed, Poulantzas's untimely death prevented him from elaborating his own vision of "the democratic road to socialism." It is Miliband's sustained work over more than fifteen years that is largely responsible for the retrieval of the radical reformist tradition as a vital intellectual resource for contemporary socialists. Miliband's perspective on radical reform and revolutionary change offers a distinctive strategic alternative not only to orthodox communism and Eurocommunism, but also to contemporary Trotskyism.

One of the most attractive features of Miliband's work is its deeply and profoundly democratic conception of socialist transformation. Although Miliband is harshly critical of the limited and inadequate forms of democracy in the advanced capitalist societies, he develops a compelling argument for preserving and expanding those forms as part of socialist democracy. It is Miliband, more than any other writer in the last two decades, who has decisively made clear that Marxists and socialists cannot and should not seek to simply "bypass" existing representative institutions in the struggle to bring about socialism. At the same time, like Poulantzas, Miliband recognizes the importance of developing new forms of democratic participation and popular power. Miliband's analysis here has the merit of acknowledging the need for the democratic coordination of these "organs of

popular participation," not only in order to support a new socialist government but also to make possible the broader democratization of society.

Miliband's work also forcefully establishes that Marxists and socialists should consider the state as a problem in socialist society.¹⁶⁶ He incisively identifies the inevitable tension between the power of a necessarily "strong" state and the imperatives of radical democracy as one of the central dilemmas which must be addressed in any transition to socialism. Miliband argues persuasively that "there is nothing pleasing" in the prospect of replacing a "strong" capitalist state with a "strong" socialist state."¹⁶⁷ After all, as Miliband explains, Marxists and socialists support the reappropriation of state powers and prerogatives by society, and the subordination of the state to society.¹⁶⁸ Yet Miliband is able to point toward the prospective resolution of this problem by articulating the objective of a new kind of "partnership" between state power and popular power in the transition to socialism.¹⁶⁹ It is undoubtedly true that the success of any attempt at socialist transformation would depend in large part upon such a "partnership," although divergent conceptions of the socialist state and popular power entail different understandings of such a relationship.

Miliband's immense contributions to Marxist and socialist political thought are hardly diminished by a critical anal-

ysis of the grave difficulties which attend his strategy for the transition to socialism. Although a comprehensive critique of Miliband's vision of socialism lies beyond the scope of this chapter, it should be noted that his endorsement of a substantial private sector in a socialist "mixed economy" is not easily reconciled with his strong condemnation of exploitative social relations. There are certainly some significant tensions between his support for a "multitude" of "small-scale" private enterprises in a socialist society and his call for the abolition of wage labor.¹⁷⁰ But these tensions remained unexplored in the work Miliband published before his death. If, in fact, he came to doubt that wage labor can be totally eradicated, it should be emphasized that such a conclusion is not universally shared on the Left. A commitment to the gradual but comprehensive abolition of wage labor can be justified on grounds of principle and practicality, and cannot be dismissed as a matter of ideological "purity."¹⁷¹ Moreover, as David Laibman remarks, it is difficult to imagine a mass popular social movement for a "mixed economy."¹⁷²

Significantly, some of the same crucial problems with Poulantzas's "democratic road to socialism" are also found in Miliband's "strong" version of radical reformism. Miliband's view that both electoral and popular socialist struggles must be maintained "within the given constitutional framework" is open to the same kinds of objections which

Wood and Mandel raise against Poulantzas. These objections are by no means misplaced, for Miliband too fails to afford sufficient attention to the compelling theoretical and practical grounds for believing that socialist transformation would require the abolition of the capitalist state and the creation of a new state. Miliband certainly establishes, as we have observed, that "smashing" the capitalist state cannot be taken by contemporary Marxists and socialists to mean that existing representative assemblies can simply be "bypassed" or abolished. And Miliband is surely right to reject "the dictatorship of the proletariat" if this notion can mean only authoritarian rule by a party-state bureaucracy or a near-direct democracy which issues immediately from the breaking of the old state. However, the severe problems with Miliband's "constitutionalist" strategy and his inability to articulate precisely how they might be overcome lead us back to the question of revolution. And another look at Marx and Engels's views on "smashing" the state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat" suggests that the founders of modern communism still have something to teach us about any conceivable transition to socialism.

Although Miliband argues persuasively that socialist parties and movements must be able to win parliamentary power and then use this power to help bring about socialist transformation, these premises cannot be taken to justify an exclusively "constitutionalist" strategy for socialist

transformation. For, like Poulantzas, Miliband is unable to make plausible the achievement of fundamental social change without a revolutionary rupture in the unity and continuity of the existing state. At least in the work published before his death, Miliband does not really face up to the fact that the constitutions or fundamental laws of countries such as the United States explicitly place capitalist property relations and rights beyond the reach of democratic majorities. While Miliband acknowledges that an elected socialist government would face fierce resistance from the capitalist class and its allies in the state, he glosses over the fact that these determined opponents of socialism could--and would--invoke constitutional protection for their power to resist fundamental social transformation. Like Poulantzas, Miliband does not realize that the commitment to keeping working class struggles "more or less within constitutional bounds" could render even socialist movements with broad popular support incapable of attaining and holding state power.

On closer inspection, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Miliband also fails to fully think through what Wood calls the "insurmountable class barriers" to an exclusively "constitutionalist" strategy. Although Miliband's discussion of the conservative opposition which would confront any attempt at socialist transformation is considerable and nuanced, it cannot be said to provide a very satis-

factory answer to the question of how this opposition could be effectively overcome. Signally, like Poulantzas, Miliband is unable to explain exactly how an elected Left government and its supporters could surmount the resistance to its program and legislative efforts by pro-capitalist officials who predominate in the other institutions within the "state system." Both Miliband's "far-reaching anti-capitalist measures" and "radical changes in the structures, modes of operation, and personnel of the existing state" presuppose precisely the consolidation of effective state power which is at issue here.

Miliband's scenario for class struggle "inside the state system at all levels," like that of Poulantzas, unfortunately does not spell out how this process could culminate in a socialist victory. Miliband's view that conservative forces will be "deeply influenced" not only by the level of popular support for socialism, but also by the "determination, intelligence, and good sense" of the socialist movement is far from self-evident and may be no more than wishful thinking. His view that the success of the socialist project depends, in large part, on the unity and the determination of the government and the "caliber" of the leading activists in popular organizations is undoubtedly true as far as it goes. But this can hardly be taken as a sufficient answer to the question of how reactionary forces within the state bureaucracy, the judicial system, the police, and the military

could actually be defeated "within the given constitutional framework."

Miliband's recourse, like that of Poulantzas, is to urge that popular power be brought to bear on these reactionary forces. But here too the invocation of mass democratic pressure is attractive yet inadequate. For if these forces refuse, as is likely, to abandon their positions and their power, Miliband's strategy is left without resources for breaking their resistance. Ironically, although Miliband's "constitutionalist" approach is informed by an unstinting commitment to democracy, it arguably deprives the working class and its allies of the ability to effectively overcome the anti-democratic structures and officials which are an intrinsic part of the existing state. While Miliband is certainly right to argue that socialist strategy cannot be centered on an old-fashioned "insurrection," his own sweeping rejection of mass extra-constitutional direct action by the working class and its allies appears premature.

The difficulties with an exclusively "constitutionalist" strategy deepen when the broader implications of what Miliband describes as a mounting "class war" are explored in further detail. In fact, Miliband not only expects but is also willing to accept a "prolonged period" of "economic, administrative, and professional forms of disruption and dislocation" which are not violent and are constitutionally protected. The problems with this position are staggering,

for such a period of sustained and dangerous economic and political disruption could well prove fatal to the socialist movement and the prospects for fundamental social change. It is one thing to suggest that respect for political pluralism and civic freedoms entails protection of the individual rights of even the most conservative citizens. But it is quite another thing to suggest, in the name of "constitutionalism," that a new socialist state must accept capital strikes, capital flight, enterprise closings, employers lockouts, or other such forms of resistance by capital. And it is yet another to suggest that millions of workers and other citizens should remain respectful of capitalists' property rights and power even as these are used to imperil not only the future of socialism, but also the immediate material and social well-being of the population as a whole.

Miliband's hope that the economic, political, and social crises provoked by the resistance of capital and its allies can be surmounted through this radical reformist strategy rests on very shaky grounds. The socialist government is unlikely to be able to consolidate effective state power, including the power to employ legitimate violence, and unlikely to be able to realize its program for radical reforms. And a protracted period of "disruption and dislocation" by the capitalists and conservative forces within the state could prevent the implementation of "far-reaching anti-capitalist measures," much less the radical democratic

empowerment of the working class. Again, there appears to be a serious impasse which arises from the commitment to solely constitutional forms of struggle. And again, it is clear that Miliband's eschewal of extra-constitutional direct action forecloses one important kind of democratic political action which could help take capital away from the capitalists and state power away from its allies.

But perhaps the greatest prospective threat confronting any attempt at socialist transformation is the danger of Right-wing violence, and it is here that Miliband's analysis may be weakest. Miliband may be right to suggest that a "pre-emptive coup" against an elected Left government should not be seen as inevitable. But this by no means entails his more sweeping conclusion that counter-revolutionary violence is "rather unlikely." It is certainly conceivable that capitalist classes might forego a "pre-emptive coup" against a new Left government in the hope of successfully destabilizing it through constitutional means. Yet Miliband seriously understates the likelihood of Right-wing violence in the event that the socialist government and program survive these attempts at destabilization. For faced with the imminent prospect of socialist transformation, the capitalist class may find that it no longer has any other alternative precisely because its wealth and power--indeed, its existence as a class--are at stake.

Miliband's own historical analysis of the rise of Fascism

points to what he describes as the "propensity to authoritarianism of traditional elites in bourgeois-democratic regimes."¹⁷³ And Miliband acknowledges that the experience of the Popular Unity government in Chile is "significant," though not "conclusive."¹⁷⁴ Thus, it is all the more striking that Miliband does not consider Right-wing violence to be likely. It is also disturbing that, like Poulantzas, he is unable to concretely indicate how the socialist government and the broader socialist movement could prevent or overcome such violence. Miliband's recognition that the socialist government would need sufficient power to "defend itself against its enemies" is not, as we have seen, accompanied by an adequate explanation of how such power could be attained or consolidated.¹⁷⁵ And here too Miliband's rejection of mass extra-constitutional direct action against these "enemies" deprives the socialist movement and the working class of a potentially invaluable means of surmounting this very real and very substantial danger.

Although Miliband is not nearly as pessimistic as Poulantzas, his admission that this radical reformist strategy "may in the end turn out to be unworkable" weighs more heavily against such an approach than he realizes. As we have seen, Miliband fails to recognize what is arguably an imperative need for extra-constitutional action to help achieve the consolidation of state power, to overcome the economic and social "disruption and dislocation" organized

by the capitalist class, and to defeat any conservative attempt to use violence against the socialist movement and the working class. And these difficulties suggest that Miliband's articulation of the forms of political power which would be required for the transition to socialism is not altogether adequate. Miliband's hesitation before the "total transformation" of existing political institutions prevents him from fully comprehending the scope and significance of the changes in the state which would be required for any successful transition to socialism.

Miliband's endorsement of both parliamentary and popular forms of power, like that of the Austro-Marxists and Poulantzas, is evocative. Yet Miliband's articulation of these forms also reveals a diminished interest in viewing the socialist state as a workers' state. As we observed with regard to Poulantzas, although transformed representative assemblies would undoubtedly have a central role to play in socialist democracy, this hardly obviates the need for the institutionalization of working class power through the development of a system of workers' councils and the creation of a congress of these councils as another major "repository of popular authority." Miliband's dismissal of workers' councils is much too hasty. While he is right to maintain that such a system of workers' councils should not be the only organs of political power, he is mistaken in rejecting a primary role for them, alongside radically

democratized assemblies. Miliband's reluctance to consider investing state power in both democratic assemblies and workers' congresses forecloses one promising approach to both the conquest of state power and the broader process of socialist transformation. But the need for such an alternative strategic perspective and conception of the socialist state emerges quite clearly from the critical recognition that Miliband cannot be said to have laid to rest the notions of "smashing" the capitalist state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Although Miliband's reticence to embrace a revolutionary strategy for socialism may be understandable in light of the historical experience of the twentieth century, it is nonetheless unfortunate. For like Poulantzas, Miliband is unable to see that socialist transformation could only be brought about by a process which amounts to the abolition of the existing state and the creation of a new state. As Mandel and Wood emphasize with regard to Poulantzas--and as the profound problems of Miliband's own strategy reveal--a rupture in the unity and continuity of the capitalist state system would undoubtedly be necessary, not only in order to break the power of the bureaucracy and the repressive apparatuses, and to make possible the development of the new forms of workers' power which will distinguish socialist democracy. The imperative need for the working class to engage in both constitutional and extra-constitutional

struggles to establish and consolidate its new state power, including the capacity to employ legitimate violence, should be forthrightly acknowledged, and the "forms of articulation" required for these struggles should be placed at the center of critical discussion and debate among Marxists and socialists. And here the political thought of Marx and Engels, however "unsystematic and fragmentary," contains some invaluable insights on socialist transformation which Miliband abandons at considerable expense to his own case.

While Miliband's argument for radical reformism, unlike that of Poulantzas, has the merit of directly addressing the major conceptual constituents of Marx and Engels's political thought, his reassessment of their views on "smashing" the state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat" is much more problematic than he realizes. Indeed, while Miliband's conclusion that "smashing" the state cannot lead to "the dictatorship of the proletariat" follows easily from his statement of the premises, there is a great deal more to these concepts and the relationship between them in the work of Marx and Engels than Miliband's account allows. Miliband does not fully convey the meaning which they attached to these central concepts and does not afford sufficient critical attention to the possibility that these concepts, re-theorized in the context of advanced capitalism, may well point to strategic objectives which would be indispensable in any conceivable transition to socialism.

On closer examination, it would appear that this notion of "smashing" the capitalist state in Marx and Engels's work involves much more than a simplistic endorsement of "insurrection" or a vague call for "total transformation." Miliband himself allows that, although Marx and Engels remained committed throughout their lives to a revolutionary strategy, they did recognize the importance of winning "the battle of democracy" and engaging in constitutional and electoral struggles.¹⁷⁶ While Marx and Engels certainly never developed a detailed strategy for the transition to socialism, Miliband acknowledges that they understood, at least in their later years, that more than an "insurrection" would be required in order for the working class to win state power.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, while it is indisputable that Marx and Engels supported the more or less "total transformation" of existing political institutions, it is equally clear that they did not intend the "total negation" of democratic representation, political pluralism, or civic freedoms. What Marx and Engels emphasized instead is that the socialization of the economy, the subordination of the state to society, and the development of working class power could not be brought about through existing political institutions, but would require the creation of new institutions.

Miliband's repudiation of "smashing" the capitalist state follows, as we have seen, not only from his rejection of "insurrection" or "total transformation," but also from his

conviction that this cannot possibly lead to near-direct democracy of the kind which fleetingly existed in the Paris Commune. But even if it is true that Marx and Engels were overly optimistic about the development of decentralized radical democracy, this can hardly be taken as grounds for dismissing the imperative of abolishing the capitalist state and creating a new state. The imperative of radically transforming, not abolishing, representative assemblies requires that we rethink what it means to "smash" the capitalist state. But it is by no means clear that this notion should be abandoned. As we have observed, the contemporary advanced capitalist states continue to have what Marx called a "bureaucratic-military machine" at their core, and the inability of Miliband to articulate how these organs of authoritarian power could be overcome through constitutional means brings us back to Marx's insight that this "bureaucratic-military machine" must be "smashed."¹⁷⁸ For the sweeping democratization of existing representative assemblies, as well as the institutionalization of new forms of workers' power and popular power, could only be accomplished through breaking the independent executive and bureaucratic power of the capitalist state, and dismantling or destroying its repressive apparatuses. Viewed as a whole, these radical changes in the structure, functions, and role of the state would surely produce what should be recognized as "a new state, a new class power."¹⁷⁹

Similarly grave difficulties attend Miliband's conclusion that the "smashing" of the state should be eschewed because a "state proper," not the "almost direct" popular power associated with "the dictatorship of the proletariat," is "an absolutely imperative necessity" in the transition to socialism. Strikingly, Miliband fails to recognize that Marx and Engels were quite clear about the fact that the new workers' state would be a "state proper" with considerable power, although it would be unique in having as its long-term aim its own dissolution. The major problem here is that Miliband's description of Marx and Engels's views on "the dictatorship of the proletariat" as "almost direct" popular power is partial and incomplete. Miliband may understate the role of centralized authority, representation, delegation, and democratic accountability in their views. But even more significant is Miliband's failure to address the crux of the argument developed by Marx and Engels on behalf of "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Miliband's discussion of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" in their writings centers almost exclusively on the images of popular power and radical democracy associated with the Paris Commune. While this focus is salutary in many respects, it leads to a one-sided account which largely neglects the heart of their argument. Some of Marx and Engels's other remarks on "the dictatorship of the proletariat" focus less on the images of popular power and radical democ-

racy and more on the imperative need for the working class to successfully attain and consolidate state power, and to use this power against the capitalist class and its allies as needed in the process of socialist transformation.

Although Marx and Engels's praise for the Commune included pronouncements that it was no longer a state in the usual sense, some of their other discussions of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" make precisely the opposite point. In a passage which Miliband cites but does not explore in much detail, Marx clearly recognized that the state cannot be instantly abolished; "the dictatorship of the proletariat" is the "form" of the state during the "revolutionary transformation" from capitalist to communist society.¹⁸⁰ Marx and Engels argued emphatically against Bakunin that this process of fundamental social change could not be achieved through any attempted abolition of the state altogether, but would undoubtedly require a new workers' state which could only "wither away" when "the social conditions which gave birth to it have been destroyed."¹⁸¹ In their judgment, the working class would need to "give to the state a revolutionary and transitory form" in order to "satisfy their miserable profane daily needs and to crush the resistance of the bourgeois class...."¹⁸²

This latter declaration by Marx points to a crucial dimension of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" which is largely overlooked by Miliband. For Marx and Engels strongly

emphasized that the workers' state would also be a "revolutionary dictatorship" and a form of the "authoritarian political state...."¹⁸³ In his "Conspectus of Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy," Marx answered Bakunin's question, "What does it mean for the proletariat to be 'organized as the ruling class'?"

It means that the proletariat, instead of fighting against the economically privileged classes in each individual instance, has acquired sufficient power and organization to use the general means of coercion against them....¹⁸⁴

And Marx spells out precisely what he means by this:

...so long as other classes continue to exist, the capitalist class in particular, the proletariat fights it (for with the coming of the proletariat to power, its enemies will not yet have disappeared, the old organization of society will not yet have disappeared), it must use measures of force, hence governmental measures....¹⁸⁵

As these passages make clear, "the dictatorship of the proletariat" is understood by Marx and Engels not only as radical democracy, but also as class dictatorship.

As a number of scholars have observed, there are undoubtedly considerable tensions between the authoritarian and coercive features of class dictatorship and the radical democratic images of the Paris Commune.¹⁸⁶ It should be readily

acknowledged that Marx and Engels failed to address these tensions, and that this problem remains an important one for contemporary Marxists engaged in the critical re-examination of "the dictatorship of the proletariat." Nonetheless, this acknowledgement can hardly be taken as sufficient grounds for abandoning the vital insights developed in Marx and Engels' s case for a revolutionary workers' state. As we noted earlier, Miliband holds that the notion of proletarian dictatorship "disposes much too easily, and therefore does not dispose at all" of the tension between "direction" and "democracy" in the transition to socialism.¹⁸⁷ But perhaps Miliband's total dismissal of this notion should be characterized in a similar way. For Miliband "disposes much too easily, and therefore does not dispose at all" of Marx and Engels's critical understanding that the working class must be able to use "the general means of coercion" against the capitalist class in order to achieve the socialization of the economy, the subordination of the state to society, and the development of working class power.

While Marx and Engels may not have satisfactorily resolved the tensions between radical democracy and class dictatorship in their work, this critical understanding remains essential for the theorization of socialist transformation. For any successful transition to socialism would arguably require that the working class employ "the general means of coercion" to enforce its "despotic" actions

against capital, to establish and protect its new forms of radical democracy, and to defend itself against Right-wing sabotage and violence. While "the dictatorship of the proletariat" may not make for an effective political slogan, there are solid grounds for believing it to be an essential precondition and constituent of socialist democracy. As John Ehrenberg explains, "the theory is a democratic one...it rests at the heart of the socialist project, and...it cannot be easily abandoned even as its concrete meaning must be reassessed."¹⁸⁸

Notwithstanding the impressive theoretical contributions made by Poulantzas and Miliband, the substantial problems in their reassessment of Marx and the insurmountable difficulties in the radical reformist strategy make it necessary to take up again the question of revolution. As we have remarked, a contemporary revolutionary strategy for socialist transformation need not and should not center on a military "insurrection" by a small number of people, or any attempt to simply "bypass" existing representative assemblies. Still less need such a strategy be associated with the "total negation" of democratic representation, political pluralism, or civic freedoms. Instead, this strategic orientation is simply grounded in the critical recognition that the transition to socialism is unthinkable without the abolition of the capitalist state and the creation of "a new state, a new class power"--and that attainment of these strategic objec-

tives would require not only electoral and constitutional struggles, but also extra-constitutional mass direct action. In the end, as Marx and Engels understood more clearly than Poulantzas or Miliband, the commitment to fundamental social change entails a fundamental rupture with the existing state.

Although the critique of radical reformism which has been developed here points to the imperative need for a revolutionary strategy for socialist transformation, it should be reiterated that the meaning of revolution must be carefully and critically reassessed in the context of advanced capitalism. And any such reconceptualization of revolution must surely be informed by the insights and concerns of theorists such as Poulantzas and Miliband. As we will see in the next chapter, Ernest Mandel develops a strong case for the revolutionary perspective, but his own strategy for socialist transformation suffers from insufficient critical attention to some of the issues raised by the radical reformists. It is to the evaluation of Mandel's vision of socialist revolution, and to the articulation of an alternative revolutionary and democratic strategy for the transition to socialism, that we now turn.

Notes

1. Robert Heilbroner, "History's Lessons," Social Research, 59, (Winter 1992), p.698.
2. Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), Chapter 6, and Divided Societies: Class Struggle in Contemporary Capitalism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), Chapter 7.
3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels hold that the working class must "win the battle of democracy" in their "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in The Marx-Engels Reader, Edited by Robert C. Tucker, Second Edition, (New York: Norton, 1978), p.490. Some of their views on "smashing" the state are found in Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p.122; Karl Marx, Letter to Kugelmann, (April 12, 1871), in Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin, The Civil War in France: The Paris Commune, (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p.86; and Karl Marx, The Civil War in France, p.54. Some of their views on "the dictatorship of the proletariat" are found in Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," in The Marx-Engels Reader, p.538; and Friedrich Engels, Introduction to The Civil War in France, by Karl Marx, in The Marx-Engels Reader, p.629.
4. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, pp.157-165.
5. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.85-89.
6. Adam Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.32-42.
7. Perry Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism. (London: Verso, 1983), p.75.
8. George Ross, "Eurocommunism," in A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, Edited by Tom Bottomore, et al., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.154.
9. Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism, p.78.
10. See Nicos Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, Translated by Patrick Camiller, (London: Verso, 1980), especially Part Five. See also Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Chapter 6, and Divided Societies, Chapter 7.
11. See Ernest Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, Translated by Jon Rothschild, (London: New Left Books,

- 1978), and Revolutionary Marxism Today, (London: New Left Books, 1979). See also Alex Callinicos, The Revenge of History: Marxism and the East European Revolutions, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).
12. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.178.
13. Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, p.265.
14. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.220.
15. The expression, "more or less within constitutional bounds" appears in Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.186.
16. Ellen Meiksins Wood, The Retreat from Class: A New 'True' Socialism, (London: Verso, 1986), p.25.
17. Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, Part Five.
18. Ibid., pp.256,265.
19. Bob Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p.297.
20. Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, p.251.
21. Ibid., pp.251-252,255-256.
22. Ibid., p.252.
23. Ibid., pp.255-256.
24. Ibid., p.251.
25. Ibid., p.252.
26. Rosa Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution, in The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism? (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), p.71, cited in Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, p.253.
27. Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, pp.253-255,261-265.
28. Ibid., pp.256,261.
29. Ibid., p.256.
30. Ibid., pp.256-260.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., pp.257-258.

33. Ibid., pp.136,256-260.
34. Ibid., p.258.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p.259.
37. Ibid., p.260.
38. Ibid., p.256.
39. Ibid., pp.263-264.
40. Ibid., pp.257,261.
41. Ibid., p.264.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., pp.264-265.
44. Ibid., p.263.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., pp.263-264.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., pp.252-253,256. See Miliband's similar formulation in Marxism and Politics, pp.189-190.
51. Leo Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labor and the State, (London: Verso, 1986), p.47.
52. Norman Geras, Discourses of Extremity: Radical Ethics and Post-Marxist Extravagances, (London: Verso, 1990), p.54.
53. Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas, p.298.
54. I borrow this phrase from Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas, p.310.
55. Wood, The Retreat from Class, Chapter 3.
56. Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas, p.305; and Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.36-43.

57. Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, pp.263-264
58. Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.42.
59. Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas, p.296.
60. See Neil Harding, Lenin's Political Thought, Vol.2, Theory and Practice in the Socialist Revolution, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).
61. Ibid. Poulantzas's claim that Leninism contained the "seeds of Stalinism" is also debatable. Miliband suggests that "The argument turns on the meaning which is given to Stalinism." If this expression simply means "a further centralization of power" and its repressive or arbitrary use, then "the continuity is indeed established." However, Miliband submits that "Stalinism had characteristics and dimensions which were lacking under Leninism, and which turned it into a regime much more accurately seen as marking a definite break with anything that had gone before." See Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.144.
62. Luxemburg, "What Does the Spartacus Union Want?" Die Rote Fahne, (December 14, 1918), cited in Miliband, Marxism and Politics, pp.177-178. Curiously, Poulantzas mentions her fate but does not analyze the development of her views at all. See State, Power, Socialism, p.253.
63. See, for example, Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.162-163, 213.
64. Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas, pp.300-301.
65. Ibid.
66. As we noted in the last chapter, Gramsci and the later Trotsky both emphasized the role of workers' councils in their respective theories of socialist transformation. As we will observe in the next chapter, the most prominent contemporary defense of workers' councils has been developed by Mandel. See especially his Revolutionary Marxism Today, Chapter 1.
67. I borrow this expression from Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.239.
68. Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, especially pp.260-261.
69. See Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, especially Chapter 9, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, especially Chapter 1. See also Wood, The Retreat from Class, Chapter 3.

70. This conclusion is reached by both Mandel and Miliband, although they strongly disagree about the relevance of these concepts and strategic objectives for contemporary socialist movements in the advanced capitalist countries. See Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.178-182, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.27-29; and Miliband, Marxism and Politics, pp.138-140, 179-180.
71. Marx, The Civil War in France, cited in Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.139.
72. Again, see Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," p.538; and Engels, Introduction to The Civil War in France, p.629. For a helpful overview of Marx and Engels's views, see John Ehrenberg, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat: Marxism's Theory of Socialist Democracy, (New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, 1992).
73. I borrow this expression, too, from Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.232.
74. This expression appears in Ralph Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society: An Analysis of the Western System of Power, (New York: Basic Books, 1969), especially Chapter 3.
75. Ibid., p.60.
76. See Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.174-178; and Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.44-45.
77. Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.45.
78. Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas, pp.307-308.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., p.304.
81. Ibid., pp.289, 307-310.
82. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.174-178; and Wood, The Retreat from Class, pp.44-45.
83. This expression, as we have noted before, appears in Miliband's Divided Societies, especially Chapter 5.
84. See Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.174-178, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, Chapter 1.
85. Ibid.
86. Wood, The Retreat from Class, p.44-45.

87. Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.47.
88. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.189. Miliband's strategy is outlined in Chapter 6 of this work and in Chapter 7 of Divided Societies.
89. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.1.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid., p.2.
93. Ibid., pp.3-11.
94. Ibid., p.154.
95. Ibid., p.155.
96. Ibid., pp.155-157.
97. Ibid., pp.164-167.
98. Ibid., p.155.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid., p.178.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. See, for example, Miliband, Divided Societies, especially Chapters 3,5,7.
105. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.179.
106. Ibid., p.189.
107. Ibid., p.139.
108. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, p.122, cited in Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.139.
109. Marx, Letter to Kugelmann, p.86, cited in Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.139.
110. Marx, The Civil War in France, p.54, cited in Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.139.

- 111.V. I. Lenin, The State and Revolution, in The Lenin Anthology, Edited by Robert C. Tucker, (New York: Norton, 1975), p.339, cited in Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.139.
- 112.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, pp.138-139,178-179.
- 113.Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," p.538, cited in Miliband, Marxism and Politics, pp.138-139.
- 114.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.138.
- 115.Engels, Introduction to The Civil War in France, p.629; Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.138, Note.
- 116.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.138, Note.
- 117.Ibid., p.179.
- 118.Ibid., Chapter 6, and Divided Societies, Chapter 7.
- 119.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.189.
- 120.Ibid.
- 121.Ibid., pp.169-172, and Divided Societies, pp.217-218.
- 122.Miliband, Divided Societies, p.217.
- 123.Ibid., p.219.
- 124.Ibid.
- 125.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.172.
- 126.Ibid., pp.189-190, and Divided Societies, especially pp.217-219.
- 127.Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.217-218.
- 128.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.179.
- 129.Ibid.
- 130.Ibid., p.189.
- 131.Miliband, Divided Societies, p.228.
- 132.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.179.
- 133.Ibid., p.180.
- 134.Miliband, Divided Societies, p.220.

135. Ibid., p.234.
136. See also Ralph Miliband, "Fukuyama and the Socialist Alternative," New Left Review, 193, (May-June 1992), pp.108-113.
137. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.110-111,217.
138. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.161.
139. Ibid., pp.161-163,174-175, and Divided Societies, pp.219-224.
140. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.161.
141. Ibid., p.183.
142. Ibid., p.189.
143. Ibid., p.188.
144. Ibid..
145. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.228-229,233.
146. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.188.
147. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.217,223.
148. Marx, The Civil War in France, p.54; Miliband, Marxism and Politics, pp.188-189.
149. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.228-231,233.
150. Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," p.491; Miliband, Divided Societies, p.233.
151. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.184.
152. Ibid., pp.184-189.
153. Ibid., p.187.
154. Ibid..
155. Ibid., p.176, and Divided Societies, p.225.
156. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.225.
157. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, pp.187-188, and Divided Societies, p.230.
158. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.184.

159. Ibid., p.188.
160. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.229.
161. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, pp.186-187.
162. Ibid., p.189.
163. See, for example, Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.47.
164. See Andre Gorz, Socialism and Revolution, Translated by Norman Denny, (New York: Anchor, 1973), pp.136-167.
165. Mihailo Markovic, Democratic Socialism: Theory and Practice, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), p.58.
166. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.228-229,233.
167. Ibid., p.228.
168. Ibid.
169. Ibid., pp.228-231,233.
170. Ralph Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," Socialist Register 1990, Edited by Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, (London: Merlin Press, 1990), pp.352-355.
171. Ibid., p.352.
172. David Laibman, "Capitalism, Socialism, and 'Market Economy,'" Dialogue and Initiative, 5, (Spring 1993), p.22.
173. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.153.
174. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.183.
175. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.228.
176. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, pp.76-81.
177. Ibid.
178. Marx, Letter to Kugelmann, p.86.
179. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, p.162.
180. Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," p.538.
181. Friedrich Engels, Anti-Duhring (Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science), (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p.307, and "On Authority," in The Marx-

- Engels Reader, pp.732-733.
- 182.Karl Marx, "Political Indifferentism," in Karl Marx: Political Writings, Vol.3, The First International and After, Edited by David Fernbach, (New York: Vintage, 1974), p.328.
- 183.Ibid.; and Engels, "On Authority," pp.732-733.
- 184.Karl Marx, "Conspectus of Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy," in The Marx-Engels Reader, p.544.
- 185.Ibid., pp.543-544.
- 186.See Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, pp.232-243; and Michael Levin, Marx, Engels, and Liberal Democracy, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp.111-138.
- 187.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.180.
- 188.Ehrenberg, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, p.187.

Chapter 5. Rethinking Revolution

As both Perry Anderson and Ralph Miliband have observed, contemporary Trotskyists can reasonably claim to be the intellectual and political heirs of the tradition of revolutionary Marxism.¹ Although they do not play a significant role in the political life of any of the advanced capitalist countries, it cannot be denied that they have managed to keep alive the vision of socialist revolution among modest numbers of militant workers and radical intellectuals. In marked contrast with advocates of radical reformism such as Poulantzas and Miliband, representatives of the various tendencies within Trotskyism have sought to defend the classical Marxist notion of the revolutionary seizure of state power. Perhaps the most comprehensive and concrete articulation of such a socialist strategy in recent decades has been produced by Ernest Mandel. In an impressive series of books, articles, and essays, Mandel has developed an extensive critique of radical reformism, a full-bodied defense of the revolutionary Marxist tradition, a sustained argument for "smashing" the capitalist state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat," and a detailed strategy for the conquest of state power by the working class.²

This chapter is concerned with the critical analysis of Mandel's case for socialist revolution and the retheorization of revolutionary change in the advanced capitalist countries. The first part of the chapter examines and assesses Mandel's central arguments. This section agrees that the development of workers' councils and mass extra-constitutional direct action are essential preconditions for socialist transformation, but criticizes Mandel's failure to recognize that working class hegemony and electoral mandates are equally indispensable. The section criticizes the repudiation of representative assemblies in Mandel's earlier work and endorses his more recent conclusion that they should join congresses of workers' councils as primary "repositories of popular authority."³ The section interrogates Mandel's failure to rethink his strategic prescriptions in light of this change in his views on the socialist state, and challenges some of his claims on the devolution of power and the abolition of bureaucracy. This section agrees with Mandel that "smashing" the capitalist state and creating "the dictatorship of the proletariat" must be the central strategic objectives of socialist movements, but insists that they must be reconceptualized in the context of advanced capitalism.

The second part of the chapter attempts to rethink the meaning of a democratic socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist societies. This section draws on the respective

strengths of the revolutionary and radical reformist traditions within Marxism in seeking to retheorize the "smashing" of the capitalist state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat." The section outlines an alternative revolutionary and democratic strategy through which working class movements which have achieved hegemony could move to abolish the capitalist state and create a new socialist state. This strategy emphasizes the imperative need for socialist parties and movements to support both constitutional struggles aimed at winning electoral mandates for socialist transformation and the creation of workers' councils and other forms of popular power which can engage in mass extra-constitutional direct action. This strategy conceives electoral mandates for socialism as popular mandates for revolutionary changes in the state and revolutionary measures against capital. Yet this strategy envisions a very special function for socialist-led parliaments in the creation of the new socialist state, as well as a central role for radically democratized representative assemblies alongside workers' congresses in this new state. The contours of a democratic socialist revolution are only sketched here, but it is hoped that this prospectus may contribute to the further development of Marxist thought on socialist strategy in the countries of advanced capitalism.

The Case for Socialist Revolution

As we observed in the last chapter, Mandel castigates the Eurocommunists and Poulantzas for holding that that popular socialist movements could use the existing state institutions to help bring about socialist transformation.⁴ In Mandel's judgment, historical experience suggests that electoral and parliamentary processes cannot be used to mount a fundamental assault on the capitalist state and capitalist property relations. Mandel maintains that radical reformism grievously underestimates the extent to which the capitalist state remains what Marx called a "bureaucratic-military machine" and the likelihood that the state bureaucracy and the repressive apparatuses of the state could thwart a "constitutionalist" strategy for radical social change.⁵ Mandel argues that this strategy is "a utopian dream," and he points to the fate of the Popular Unity government in Chile as evidence of the catastrophic results such a strategy is bound to produce.⁶ For Mandel, any socialist strategy that eschews breaking the power of the capitalist state will invariably lead the working class and their allies into "a bloody trap."⁷

Mandel submits that contemporary Marxists and socialists should recognize the imperative need to "smash" the capitalist state in order to create a new workers' state and make possible the socialization of the economy. By this, Mandel means that the various institutions and structures which constitute the capitalist state must be dismantled or de-

stroyed so that new institutions and structures of working class power can be created.⁸ Mandel insists that these new institutions and structures must enable the working class to reappropriate powers formerly exercised by parliamentary deputies, executive officials, and state functionaries, and to use these powers in support of socialist objectives. He places considerable emphasis on the need for the socialist movement and the working class to do away with the repressive apparatuses of the capitalist state, and to acquire "the monopoly of armed force."⁹

Mandel rejects the commonly held view that the "essence of revolution" is a "widespread explosion of violence and mass killings."¹⁰ He points out, however, that "What does occur most often, if not always, at some point of the revolutionary process, is the desperate recourse to violence by the most radical and the most resolute sectors of the rulers' camp, intent on risking everything before it is too late, because they still have human and material resources left to act in that way."¹¹ Mandel writes:

When the chips are down, when power relations are stripped of all mediations and are nakedly reduced to bare essentials, Friedrich Engels's formula is then borne out by empirical evidence: in the final analysis, the state is indeed a gang of armed people. The class or layer which has the monopoly of armed force possesses (either keeps or conquers) state power. And that again is what revolution, and counter-revolution, are all about.¹²

Mandel submits that the dynamic of class struggle in revolutionary situations will almost inevitably lead to counter-revolutionary violence.¹³ The socialist movement and the working class must be able to overcome this danger and defend the development of socialist democracy by force of arms.

Mandel's conviction that the capitalist state must be "smashed" is closely linked to his argument for "the dictatorship of the proletariat." In the spirit of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, Luxemburg and Gramsci, Mandel vigorously defends "the dictatorship of the proletariat" as an essential component of socialist democracy.¹⁴ Mandel recognizes that the historical experience of authoritarian socialism makes it easy to equate this notion with "the dictatorship of the party." But he "completely disagrees" with the abandonment of this central conceptual element of Marxist political thought by radical reformists.¹⁵ He contends that Marxists and socialists must instead recover the original democratic content of this concept and place it at the center of their strategy.¹⁶

Mandel conceives of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" as Marx did in the "Critique of the Gotha Program": it is the "form" of the state during the "revolutionary transformation" from capitalist into communist society.¹⁷ Mandel contends that the "establishment of organs of workers' and people's power" will constitute "a new state, a new class

power...."¹⁸ This new workers' state is a "dictatorship of the proletariat"

to the extent that, as the Communist Manifesto puts it, it takes "despotic measures" against private property and the bourgeois state, crushing the violence and power of the bourgeoisie.¹⁹

Mandel stresses that "the dictatorship of the proletariat" is not a dictatorship in the usual sense of the term. He emphasizes that this is a "dictatorship that consolidates and deepens all democratic freedoms...."²⁰ Mandel explicitly acknowledges that even bourgeois parties and their supporters must be free to organize and propagandize freely, so long as they do not attempt to use violence to restore capitalist property relations.²¹ The capacity of the working class to effectively use "the monopoly of armed force" to defend the process of socialist transformation appears to be the most important element in Mandel's conception of "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Although Mandel recognizes that these central concepts in Marxist political thought have been associated with authoritarianism, bureaucracy, and repression in the actually existing socialist societies, he insists on the need to recover their radical democratic content and to place them at the center of a renewed revolutionary praxis. Mandel's conviction that the process of socialist transformation must be

both unabashedly revolutionary and unmistakably democratic leads him to emphasize the centrality of workers' councils in both the struggle for state power and the creation of a new socialist state. When Mandel considers the historical experience of the Bolshevik Revolution and the fate of the socialist experiment in Russia, he draws radically different conclusions than those reached by Poulantzas. Whereas Poulantzas eventually came to argue that the "seeds" of authoritarian socialism were "contained in the original workers' councils experience," Mandel maintains that it was the suppression of the Russian soviets as organs of workers' power that eventually led to the emergence of a party-state bureaucracy and authoritarian rule.²²

Like many Marxists and socialists, Mandel finds that the fundamental mistake of the Bolsheviks in post-revolutionary Russia was their increasing "substitution" of the party-state bureaucracy for the working class as the agency of socialist construction.²³ Mandel grants that Lenin's and Trotsky's support for the banning of other political parties and intra-party factions during the "dark years" of 1920-1921 contributed to the growing "bureaucratic degeneration" of the first workers' state.²⁴ Yet Mandel submits that these tragic mistakes must be analyzed in the context of the growing economic and social catastrophe faced by the communists in the wake of the civil war.²⁵ He points out that Lenin himself came to recognize the growing problems of bureaucra-

cy before his death in 1924.²⁶ And Mandel emphasizes that, by the mid-1930's, Trotsky had significantly modified his earlier views, embracing not only the exercise of power by workers' councils, but also the imperative need for a multi-party system and the defense of democratic freedoms.²⁷

In Mandel's judgment, "lengthy historical experience" reveals that workers' councils are a recurring and vital form of working class organization.²⁸ Mandel holds that the development of workers' councils in workplaces and communities is absolutely essential for the fostering of radical class consciousness, and the mobilization of militant challenges to the capitalist class and the capitalist state. He submits that workers' councils are unique insofar as they can enable workers to prepare to assume control of their workplaces and various state powers, and insofar as they "prefigure" the new forms of working class power in socialist society. For Mandel, a system of workers' councils and a central congress of workers' councils must be created if the socialist movement and the working class are to be able to "smash" the capitalist state and construct a new workers' state.²⁹

Mandel endorses Lenin's claim in The State and Revolution that a socialist state based on workers' councils would be vastly more democratic than the parliamentary systems of the capitalist countries.³⁰ For most of his career Mandel has insisted that it is necessary to replace or strictly limit

the role of representative assemblies in post-revolutionary society.³¹ Mandel argues that parliamentary forms of government were the historical creations of rising capitalist classes, and he insists that parliamentary democracy is inevitably bourgeois democracy.³² In his judgment, parliamentary democracy is, at best, a kind of indirect democracy in which "atomized" individuals cast their votes as "abstract" citizens.³³ The relatively long terms and professionalization of parliamentary representatives, along with the absence of effective recall processes, are seen as limiting their accountability to their working class constituents.³⁴ From this perspective, parliamentary institutions reveal a profound distrust of self-rule by the working class majority.³⁵ Moreover, Mandel observes a tendency in the advanced capitalist countries in recent decades toward the growth of executive and administrative power that is increasingly independent of effective parliamentary control.³⁶

Mandel holds that a system of workers' councils and other organs of self-management would constitute a "higher" form of democracy because it would facilitate a kind of direct democracy in which workers have significant power not only in their workplaces but in the society as a whole.³⁷ For Mandel, such a system of workers' councils would make it possible for the working class and the general population to take into their own hands the management of the "general

affairs of society."³⁸ In much of his work, Mandel contends that a central congress of workers' councils, and councils at regional, local, and enterprise levels would assume the legislative, executive, administrative, and military powers formerly exercised by officials of the capitalist state. Recalling Marx's positive evaluation of the Paris Commune, he suggests that making elected delegates subject to recall at any time and paying them the same wages earned by an "average" worker will ensure their accountability and competence.³⁹ Mandel grants that a pyramidal system of workers' councils in which central powers are exercised by a congress of delegates elected from these councils does have some elements of indirect democracy, but this does not deter him from arguing that such a system is still qualitatively more democratic than the most advanced parliamentary democracy.⁴⁰

Mandel's commitment to "smashing" the capitalist state and creating "the dictatorship of the proletariat" leads him to support a revolutionary strategy that significantly diverges from the radical reformism advocated by Poulantzas and Miliband. Unlike these other socialist theorists, Mandel believes that a revolutionary road to socialism is indeed possible in the advanced capitalist societies.⁴¹ While he acknowledges that Western working classes are deeply committed to parliamentary institutions, he maintains that working classes in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations may well be moved to support the "higher" democracy of

workers' councils.⁴² Mandel grants that socialists should seek to win parliamentary representation and engage in various kinds of struggles for reforms which will benefit the working class. But he clearly emphasizes the development of workers' councils and their capacity for mass extra-constitutional direct action as the first priority of the socialist movement.⁴³ Mandel explicitly rejects any need for electoral mandates for socialist transformation, and any possibility that socialist-led parliaments could have a special role in the abolition of the capitalist state and the establishment of a new socialist state.⁴⁴

Mandel also rejects Gramsci's argument that working class or socialist hegemony is an essential precondition for revolutionary change. Although Mandel stresses that the success of the revolutionary socialist project depends on the support of the majority of workers and the population, he dismisses as "unrealistic" the notion that the working class could "conquer the sort of hegemony within capitalist society that the bourgeoisie conquered within semi-feudal society."⁴⁵ He finds it "absurd," for example, to expect the working class to be able to "conquer ideological hegemony over the press (let alone radio and television) before it has expropriated capital and conquered political power."⁴⁶ Instead, Mandel anticipates that large numbers of workers would be won over to the socialist movement amid the development of "dual power."⁴⁷

Mandel follows Lenin in holding that revolutions occur "when 'lower classes' no longer want to be ruled in the old way, and when the 'upper classes' cannot carry on ruling in the old way."⁴⁸ Mandel suggests that a revolutionary crisis develops when the organization of workers' and popular power has become widespread and successful, when the capitalist state faces an escalating "crisis of legitimacy" in the eyes of the majority of workers, and when there is "advanced decomposition" or crisis within the repressive apparatuses of the state.⁴⁹ Mandel expects the proliferation of workers' councils and other organs of popular power in such a crisis as leading to a situation of "dual power" which can end only in the "smashing" of the capitalist state or the restoration of the old order.⁵⁰ Once the majority of workers and citizens support the objective of socialist transformation, Mandel submits, they must take direct action to seize the means of production and state power, and thus begin the transition to socialism.⁵¹

Mandel provides a concrete account of the process that might characterize "possible revolutions in the West."⁵² He anticipates the following "chain of events":

mass strikes; political mass strikes; a general strike; a general sit-down strike; coordination and centralization of democratically elected strike committees; transformation of the "passive" into an "active" general strike, in which strike committees assume a beginning of state functions, in the first place in the public and the financial

sector...This leads to the emergence of a de facto generalized dual power situation with emerging self-defense of the masses.⁵³

Mandel envisions millions of workers actively engaged in radical democratic but extra-constitutional direct action to take control of their workplaces, to "assume a beginning of state functions," and to break the power of capital and its allies in the state.⁵⁴ Of particular concern to Mandel is the mobilization of working class action against the bureaucracy and the repressive apparatuses of the capitalist state. Mandel supports the organization of democratic councils of police and military personnel which could contribute to the progressive "decomposition" of these repressive institutions, as well as the arming of workers to defend the revolutionary process against sabotage and violence from the Right. When the "monopoly of armed force" passes from agents of the capitalist state to the new organs of workers' power, then the working class will have conquered state power.⁵⁵

Interestingly, Mandel's views on the institutional infrastructure of the socialist state have changed during the last two decades. Mandel has often posited an "irreconcilable" conflict between the indirect democracy of parliamentary systems and the direct democracy of workers' councils, and has often criticized socialists such as the Austro-Marxists for advocating the combination of these forms of

power.⁵⁶ Mandel has often anticipated that as mass revolutionary workers' movements and workers' councils develop, they are likely to come into conflict with parliamentary institutions.⁵⁷ And he has suggested that, in some cases, bourgeois parliaments may well play a reactionary role by serving as the institutional agency for what Lenin and Trotsky called "democratic counter-revolution."⁵⁸ Nonetheless, in his most recent work Mandel clearly modifies his exclusive or near-exclusive focus on workers' councils and qualifies his opposition to representative assemblies as a prospective "repository of popular authority" in the socialist state.⁵⁹

In Power and Money, for example, Mandel ventures that the "freely elected central bodies responsible for the priority allocation of national resources" would be "parliament, a central workers' council, an economic senate."⁶⁰ Mandel still feels the need to stress that "the rights of a parliament-type body would be "limited by the rights of other chambers representing sectors of society (nationalities, producers, women, and so on)."⁶¹ But the shift in Mandel's conception of the socialist state is substantial. Moving toward a position not unlike the Austro-Marxists, Mandel now makes a strong case for the proposition that the development of "forms of direct democracy" would provide "not substitutes but complements to universal-suffrage institutions."⁶² He also suggests that increasing the frequen-

cy of elections, developing effective recall provisions, and submitting vital political questions to the electorate would serve to increase democratic participation and delegate accountability in representative assemblies.⁶³ Strikingly, however, Mandel does not discuss the possible changes in his revolutionary strategy which might be entailed by his revised views on the socialist state. Although transformed representative assemblies would be an integral part of this new socialist state, he apparently continues to believe that existing parliaments can be "bypassed" in the revolutionary seizure of power.⁶⁴

Mandel submits that the new socialist state would be a "weaker" state than the modern capitalist state insofar as it would have less centralized political power.⁶⁵ While the central organs of the socialist state would exercise some substantial authority, Mandel emphasizes the significant devolution and decentralization of power to organs of workers' and popular power in regions, cities, communities, and enterprises.⁶⁶ He proposes an immediate fifty-percent reduction in the number of state bureaucrats and the assumption of their responsibilities by workers' councils and other self-management bodies.⁶⁷ The professional police and military forces which are part of the capitalist state would be replaced by units of armed workers who democratically elect their leaders and freely debate their orders.⁶⁸

For Mandel, the reappropriation by society of powers

formerly exercised by the capitalist state would make possible the abolition of capitalist property relations and wage labor, the development of diverse forms of social ownership and democratic economic planning, the self-management of individual enterprises, the eradication of various forms of inequality and oppression, and the emergence of a "socialist commonwealth."⁶⁹ Although Mandel recognizes that the development of new working class movements for socialism may take "quite some time" in the advanced capitalist countries, he contends that the socialist project can hardly be dismissed as "utopian."⁷⁰ Mandel insists that socialism remains not only possible, but absolutely necessary for the survival and progress of humankind.⁷¹

Although the present global crisis of socialism and the "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist countries make it difficult to imagine any sort of revolution in the foreseeable future, Mandel's case has a great deal to be said for it.⁷² In the first place, Mandel's critique of radical reformism is compelling in a number of respects. As we observed in the last chapter, both Poulantzas and Miliband understand that the fierce resistance of the state bureaucracy and the repressive apparatuses of the state would pose a grave danger to an elected Left government, but neither of these theorists is able to adequately explain how this resistance could be successfully overcome. In contrast, Mandel's clarity about the necessity of break-

ing the power of these institutions--and the institutions themselves--enables him to recognize the imperative need for mass extra-constitutional direct action against them. Moreover, Mandel may be credited with providing a much more realistic assessment of the likelihood of Right-wing violence and a much more substantial discussion of how such violence may be thwarted than either Poulantzas or Miliband. As we have noted, Poulantzas is "remarkably silent" on the question of using armed force to overcome such a threat.⁷³ Miliband not only understates the danger here, but also fails to explain how an elected Left government could effectively gain control over the "monopoly of armed force," much less employ this form of state power against its "enemies."⁷⁴ In contrast, Mandel quite reasonably emphasizes that the historical experience of socialist movements, particularly the fate of the Popular Unity government in Chile, indicates that Right-wing violence is indeed likely. Mandel's call for armed workers and democratic councils of police and military personnel to prevent or suppress such violence may sound terribly old-fashioned, but it has the significant merit of at least articulating how workers and citizens could act in a democratic if extra-constitutional way to overcome this threat.

Mandel is thus able to provide solid grounds for believing that any viable transition to socialism would necessarily involve "smashing" the capitalist state and creating

"the dictatorship of the proletariat." Mandel's own conception of precisely what these central strategic objectives should mean in the context of advanced capitalism is open to substantive challenge. But he develops very strong arguments on behalf of the propositions that the working class must break what Marx called the "bureaucratic-military machine" of the state in order to win state power, and that the working class must be able to exercise what Marx called "the general means of coercion" to overcome sabotage and violence by the capitalists and their allies, to enforce "despotic measures" against capital, and to protect the new forms of workers' power.⁷⁵ Mandel effectively retrieves the radical democratic content of these central precepts of Marxist political thought, and impressively defends the need for a revolutionary socialist perspective today.

Although his own strategy for socialist transformation must be critically interrogated on several counts, Mandel should also be credited with attempting to envision such a process as both unabashedly revolutionary and unmistakably democratic. Mandel's emphasis on the crucial role of workers' councils and other organs of popular power in a revolutionary transition to socialism is especially salutary in this regard. Mandel's work supplies a sharp refutation of Poulantzas's claim that the tragedy of Stalinism had its roots in the "original workers' councils experience." And Mandel offers substantial reasons for rejecting Miliband's

conclusion that socialist movements must abandon any commitment to the centrality of workers' councils in the struggle for socialism. As we have observed in the last two chapters, considerable historical evidence suggests that workers' councils are indeed uniquely valuable for the development of radical class consciousness and socialist praxis, for the mobilization of popular challenges to capital and the capitalist state, and for the development of workers' power in socialist society.⁷⁶

While Poulantzas favors the "unfurling of forms of direct democracy" and Miliband advocates the democratization of society through "organs of popular participation," only Mandel recognizes workers' councils as a organizational form through which workers can mobilize to seize power in their workplaces, communities, cities, regions, and country.⁷⁷ If the transition to socialism is understood as requiring the mass participation of millions of people in mass extra-constitutional direct action against capital and the capitalist state, then it is difficult to imagine a serious movement for socialism that does not prioritize the development of workers' councils and their capacity for mobilizing such radical democratic political action. Furthermore, if the objective of the socialist movement is the gradual but comprehensive abolition of wage labor, not the "mixed economy" advocated by Miliband, then workers' councils would appear to have a much greater role to play in the construc-

tion of a socialist society. It should also be noted that Mandel's recent acceptance of the need to combine conciliar forms of power with radically democratized representative assemblies marks an important step forward in the tradition of revolutionary socialism and opens the way to a critical reassessment of the meaning of a democratic socialist revolution, although he does not undertake such an endeavor himself.

The urgent need for such a reconceptualization of revolution in the countries of advanced capitalism becomes clear, however, when some of the serious difficulties in Mandel's own strategy are explored. Significantly, although Mandel develops a persuasive case for revolutionary change, his conception of this process and its strategic imperatives suffers greatly from the absence of sufficient critical attention to some of the crucial insights of revolutionary Marxists such as Gramsci as well as radical reformists such as Poulantzas and Miliband. In particular, Mandel's rejection of working class or socialist hegemony and electoral mandates as essential preconditions for socialist transformation, his near-exclusive focus on extra-constitutional forms of political action and belief that existing parliaments can be "bypassed" in the struggle for state power, and his argument for a "weaker" socialist state are subject to devastating criticism. It is unfortunate that Mandel has not been concerned to revise his strategic prescriptions in

light of the recent changes in his conception of the socialist state. For a critical analysis of the grave problems plaguing his strategy points to the need to rethink the meaning of "smashing" the capitalist state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat" in the advanced capitalist societies.

Mandel's dismissal of the need for the working class to achieve hegemony before it moves to take state power represents an especially inauspicious regression in revolutionary Marxist theory. Mandel's view that relatively large numbers of workers and other citizens can be won to the cause of socialism in a relatively brief period of escalating economic and political crisis invites close scrutiny. For while this was certainly true in Russia prior to the October Revolution and in some other militant working class struggles earlier in this century, Gramsci and other revolutionary Marxists have decisively laid to rest the notion that socialist strategy in the advanced capitalist countries should be predicated on such a tenuous assumption. It is important to recall that Gramsci developed his theory of hegemony precisely as a critique of the narrowly "economistic" view of some communists that deteriorating economic and political conditions would necessarily give rise to revolutionary working class movements able to win massive popular support for radical social change.⁷⁸ Although he, too, was committed to the revolutionary and democratic seizure of

state power by the working class, Gramsci understood that this strategic objective could not be achieved without a long period of political, ideological, and cultural struggles which would prepare the working class to become the ruling class in a socialist society.⁷⁹

As we remarked in the third chapter, Gramsci held that the working class must be able to supplant the capitalist class as the leading social group in civil society prior to the conquest of state power. Gramsci maintained that the "war of position" and the achievement of working class or socialist hegemony are absolutely necessary for both a successful "war of maneuver" at the appropriate time and the creation of the political, ideological, and cultural foundations for the development of a new kind of society and a new state.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, in eschewing Gramsci's theses on hegemony, Mandel largely evades any sustained attention to the necessarily complex and protracted process of class struggle through which the working class could transform itself into a collective revolutionary subject, forge alliances with other "subaltern" social groups, and help create the "collective will" for revolutionary change among the majority of the population.⁸¹ Mandel's vision of socialist transformation is undermined by his failure to see that what Raymond Williams calls "the long revolution" would surely be required for any revolutionary seizure of state power.⁸²

Mandel's argument that it is "unrealistic" or "absurd" to consider working class hegemony as a precondition for taking power reveals a serious misunderstanding of Gramsci's views. Mandel is probably right to assume that control of the major mass media and many other institutions which are dominated by capital would not pass into the hands of the working class and the population before the conquest of state power and the expropriation of the capitalists. But this assumption by no means entails Mandel's more sweeping conclusion, which issues instead from a conflation of power and hegemony. The Gramscian commitment to the struggle for hegemony envisions a great variety of struggles by the working class within many different institutions and domains of social life, but it is these struggles themselves--not the acquisition of power in any particular capitalist social institution--which are seen as leading to the emergence of working class or socialist hegemony. It is quite rash for Mandel to suggest that capitalist control of the major mass media would inexorably prevent the socialist movement and the working class from developing, in time and with the appropriate praxis, the capacity to provide "intellectual and moral leadership" for the vast majority of citizens.⁸³ Indeed, if new socialist movements could help create the kinds of radical political education and political participation emphasized in the third chapter, they may well be increasingly able to disrupt "the manufacturing of consent"

by the corporate media, as well as organize a broad range of alternative media and educational institutions to promote the dissemination and critical discussion of socialist ideas and objectives.⁸⁴

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Mandel retains too narrowly "economistic" a conception of the emergence of mass working class and popular support for socialism, and that he fails to demonstrate any substantial concern with the development of what we might describe as the "politics of feasible socialism."⁸⁵ Although Mandel holds that a "crisis of legitimacy" is a vital prerequisite for the overthrow of the capitalist state, he too readily assumes that this kind of crisis would necessarily follow from mounting economic and political crises. While he grants that a "gigantic cultural revolution" would be required for socialist transformation, his assertion that this must come after the seizure of state power discloses a very limited appreciation of the political, ideological, and cultural transformation of the working class and the population which would be required for a revolutionary and democratic transition to socialism.⁸⁶ Mandel's repudiation of working class hegemony as a fundamental precondition for this transition leaves him ill-prepared to articulate the new kinds of socialist parties, movements, and politics which, as we suggested in the third chapter, would be indispensable for any prospective rebirth of socialist struggles in the coun-

tries of advanced capitalism.

Although Mandel convincingly argues that an exclusively "constitutionalist" strategy for socialist transformation is unworkable, his near-exclusive focus on extra-constitutional mass direct action suffers from significant problems of its own. Paramount among these is Mandel's profoundly problematic view that existing parliaments can be more or less "bypassed" in the conquest of state power by the working class.⁸⁷ Mandel's critique of capitalist democracy, like that of Miliband, is persuasive on many counts. And it is fortunate that Mandel has recently rethought his earlier claims that representative assemblies are inexorably bound up with bourgeois democracy and that there is an inevitable conflict between representative democracy and direct democracy. But it is regrettable that Mandel's deeper appreciation of Western working classes' commitment to representative assemblies and acknowledgement that radically democratized assemblies should join central workers' councils as primary organs of socialist state power do not lead him to revise his strategy for socialist revolution. For while Mandel presents a strong case on behalf of the revolutionary perspective, the recent evolution of his views would appear to call for the re-evaluation of what such a perspective involves in the advanced capitalist societies.

Although Poulantzas and Miliband may be mistaken in rejecting the need for a revolutionary strategic orienta-

tion, as we saw in the last chapter they do develop impressive arguments for seeking and winning parliamentary power and electoral mandates for socialist transformation. Now that Mandel has come to share the radical reformist view that working classes consider representative assemblies indispensable for any kind of democracy, it is unclear how Mandel can avoid the conclusion that socialist movements must achieve parliamentary power and electoral mandates as a prelude to radical social change. Mandel does not afford much critical attention to Marx and Engels's view that winning "the battle of democracy" in capitalist democracies is an important part of socialist transformation.⁸⁸ Mandel does not appear to be aware of, or concerned about the fact that many workers and citizens may well question the democratic credentials of a socialist strategy which seeks to simply "bypass" existing parliaments. And he does not take up what is arguably the most critical theoretical challenge confronting socialist strategy: the articulation of the forms and objectives of constitutional and extra-constitutional struggles which, conjoined and coordinated, could make possible a revolutionary transition to socialism.

The imperative of radically transforming, not abolishing, existing representative assemblies as part of the revolutionary socialist project requires that we rethink the "smashing" of the capitalist state. As we have observed, Mandel rightly emphasizes the need for the working class and

population to "smash" the bureaucracy and repressive apparatuses of the capitalist state in order to attain and consolidate state power. And Mandel rightly emphasizes the revolutionary rupture in the unity and continuity of the capitalist state which the working class would need to bring about if it is to establish new forms of workers' and popular power, including effective control of "the monopoly of armed force." However, the need for the socialist movement to achieve electoral mandates for such fundamental social change, and the need for a socialist-led parliament to play a special role in the abolition of the capitalist state and the creation of a new socialist state requires that we abandon Mandel's view that the seizure of state power should be initiated by mass revolutionary direct action. Unfortunately, Mandel does not explore how the notion of "smashing" the capitalist state might be reconceptualized to take into account the need for electoral mandates and accession to parliamentary power, as well as various forms of extra-constitutional direct action. He is, in the end, unable to undertake the retheorization of a democratic socialist revolution in the countries of advanced capitalism.

Nor is Mandel able to offer an entirely satisfactory account of the new socialist state or its status as "the dictatorship of the proletariat." As we have noted, Mandel rightly emphasizes that the development of socialist democracy is inconceivable without the institutionalization of

working class control over what Marx called "the general means of coercion." And Mandel rightly emphasizes the imperative need for the working class to use this "monopoly of armed force" to overcome sabotage and violence from the Right, to enforce "despotic measures" against capital, and to protect the new forms of workers' and popular power. But notwithstanding the recent changes in his views on the structure of the socialist state, some very serious problems attend his arguments for a "weaker" state, the immediate significant devolution and decentralization of state power, the abolition of bureaucracy, and the replacement of professional police and military forces by units of armed workers. Although Mandel persuasively defends the critical insights at the heart of the Marxist notion of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" against the premature dismissals of the radical reformists, his own vision of "almost direct" popular power in the aftermath of socialist revolution is, as Miliband's work suggests, unrealistic and impractical.

Mandel's insistence on a "weaker" state rates as one of the least persuasive of his major arguments. Mandel is undoubtedly right to point out that the development of socialist democracy involves the reappropriation of important state powers by society, especially the working class. But Mandel's anticipation of substantial immediate progress toward the "withering away" of the state reveals the vestiges of what Anderson describes as "too close an imagina-

tive adherence to the paradigm of the October Revolution...."⁸⁹ As Miliband contends, the vision of a socialist state with very limited central authority and the immediate devolution and decentralization of most state powers cannot reasonably be taken as the kind of state which would, in fact, be necessary for socialist transformation.⁹⁰ Mandel's vision discloses a stunning disregard for the broad range of functions and powers that must arguably be exercised by the democratically elected central bodies of the socialist state.

Mandel largely evades any critical recognition that the working class and the population might well find that the national organs of state power would be the most appropriate locus of significant authority. It is striking that Mandel does not explore the important role that the democratically elected central bodies of the socialist state would need to have in directing and defending the process of socialist transformation, ensuring the achievement of national economic goals, promoting a radically democratized notion of "the general welfare," eradicating various forms of domination and inequality, and much else as well. Although Miliband may not be able to explain how the working class could effectively attain and consolidate state power, he sees much more clearly than Mandel that a "state proper" would be indispensable for a successful transition to socialism. As we noted in the last chapter, Miliband is persuasive in arguing

that the socialist state would need to possess "very considerable power" in order to advance socialist objectives and defend itself against its "enemies."⁹¹

Like Mandel, Miliband believes that the socialist movement must be committed to the long-term reduction, not inflation, of state power. As we have already observed, Miliband finds "nothing pleasing" about the need for a strong state in the transition to socialism and recognizes that the state should be considered a problem.⁹² But Miliband's work makes clear that the immediate devolution and decentralization of state powers advocated by Mandel is virtually impossible. As Miliband underscores, the devolution and decentralization of state powers would require a lengthy historical process and cannot be taken as an immediate strategic goal.⁹³ Reaching a similar conclusion, Tim Wohlforth writes that "Decentralization must necessarily be seen as a transitional process and that therefore there will be a transitional period during which an inherited centralization of government and economy will persist."⁹⁴ Only gradually, insists Wohlforth, can power be transferred from "centralized representative institutions" to "decentralized, participatory bodies...."⁹⁵

In this context, it seems clear that Mandel's views on the abolition of bureaucracy and professional police and military forces are somewhat dubious. Although Mandel is certainly justified in stressing the importance of disman-

tling or destroying the bureaucratic and repressive institutions of the capitalist state, his call for an immediate fifty-percent reduction in the number of state functionaries seems unrealistic and unattainable. While the long-term goal of reducing the number of unelected administrative personnel in the socialist state is unquestionably a sound one, Mandel errs in holding that functionaries who are "professionally paid to carry out their functions" are bound to become "divorced from the mass of society...."⁹⁶ It may be reasonably argued that elected delegates in the primary organs of state power, as well as various functionaries, must be "professionally paid" for what would inevitably be full-time work, and that a more practical solution to the problem of bureaucracy lies in the development of diverse forms of democratic accountability.

Similarly, though Mandel's argument for "arming the masses" and creating democratic councils of police and military personnel to help break the power of the capitalist state is compelling, there are some substantial difficulties with his proposed abolition of professional police and military forces in socialist society. While it is true that the conquest of state power by the working class would require "smashing" the repressive apparatuses of the capitalist state, this need not be taken to mean that the socialist movement and the working class should eschew the creation of new kinds of professional police and military forces. As with state

bureaucrats, Mandel too hastily moves to the conclusion that "professionally paid" police and military forces would necessarily be "divorced" from the population in socialist society. And Mandel never considers the very real possibility that, following a successful seizure of state power, the working class may well prefer such professional forces to compulsory service as "armed workers," provided that these forces are subject to effective democratic control.

Moreover, Mandel's assertion that armed workers could perform police and military duties without command structures or discipline simply borders on the fantastic. It is undoubtedly true that new kinds of police and military forces would require new forms of command structures and discipline, not their total abolition. There is something to be said for the idea that police and military personnel should be empowered to democratically elect their leaders. However, Mandel's vision of a multitude of police and military councils freely debating their orders and free of any chain of command in the state is both utopian and unwise. Mandel is unable to see that democratic control of the police and military would entail their supervision by, and accountability to the primary organs of the socialist state and the people they serve--but not the free deliberation of lawful directives by police and military personnel. Here again the vestiges of "too close an imaginative adherence to the paradigm of the October Revolution" prevent Mandel from

articulating a practical and viable solution to an important problem of the socialist state.

In sum, although Mandel persuasively defends the Marxist premise that any viable socialist state must be a "dictatorship of the proletariat," the grave problems with his own conception of this state require that this notion be retheorized. While Mandel's recent endorsement of combining congresses of workers' councils and democratized representative assemblies as primary "repositories of popular authority" makes an important contribution to contemporary discussions on the structure of the socialist state, the profound difficulties which arise from his insistence on a "weaker" state, the immediate and massive devolution of state powers, and the abolition of professional police and military forces point to the urgent need for rethinking the role and powers of the socialist state and its status as "the dictatorship of the proletariat." Although Mandel presents a compelling case for socialist revolution, it is clear that the conditions and contours of such a revolution must be critically reconceptualized.

A Revolutionary and Democratic Strategy for Socialism

As we have seen, a contemporary revolutionary and democratic strategy for socialist transformation need not and should not center on a military "insurrection" by a small

number of people, or on the organization of mass direct extra-constitutional action which simply "bypasses" existing representative institutions. But such a strategy would embrace, for the reasons we have detailed in the last chapter and the present one, the imperatives of abolishing the capitalist state, creating a new state, and the coordination of electoral and extra-constitutional struggles to achieve these objectives as preconditions for socialist transformation. Retheorized in the context of advanced capitalism, the central Marxist notions of "smashing" the state and "the dictatorship of the proletariat" would be at the heart of any such strategy.

"Smashing" the state would be understood as the process through which electoral and extra-constitutional political action culminates in a fundamental rupture of the existing "state system," the breaking of the state bureaucracy and repressive apparatuses, and the establishment of "a new state, a new class power." Yet this process would also recognize the need for the radical democratization, not the total abolition, of existing representative assemblies, and hence envision a special role for a socialist-led parliament in the rupture of the capitalist state and the formation of a new "state system." As we have suggested, this new "state system" should consist of transformed representative assemblies and central workers' councils which would jointly exercise legislative and administrative

authority, as well as various new administrative, judicial, police, and military institutions. The new socialist state would be a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the sense that it would be able to use the "general means of coercion" or "the monopoly of armed force" in order to enforce "despotic measures" against capital, to establish and protect new forms of workers' and popular power, and to suppress sabotage and violence from the Right. But, far from being a system of "almost direct" democracy, the socialist state would require "very considerable power" and would need to be, as Miliband insists, checked as well as supported by popular power.

This revolutionary and democratic strategy would require very different "forms of articulation" of working class and popular struggles than those advanced by either the radical reformists or revolutionary socialists inspired by Trotsky. As the third chapter suggested, the forging of a mass popular challenge to capitalism in the decades ahead is inconceivable without the formation of new working class movements, the creation of new historic blocs, and the development of socialist hegemony. What Williams calls "the long revolution," in which the working class and population challenge and eventually "defeat" the "system of meanings and values" associated with capitalism, must surely be considered a vital precondition for the conquest of state power.⁹⁷ The development of working class or socialist

hegemony would have to find expression in electoral struggles at every level of government and, eventually, parliamentary power and electoral mandates for socialism. But these and other constitutional forms of struggles would need to be effectively and democratically conjoined with struggles to create a system of workers' councils and other forms of popular power, and to mobilize millions of people for extra-constitutional mass direct action against capital and its allies in the state.

These coordinated electoral and extra-constitutional struggles would, if successful, lead to a form of "dual power" which is different than the kinds advocated by Miliband and Mandel. This notion of "dual power" would involve growing numbers of socialists in elective office using their official powers in support of socialist objectives, as well as much larger numbers of people organizing and preparing for direct action in their workplaces and communities. The purpose of this form of "dual power" would be to make possible both electoral mandates for socialist transformation and the extra-constitutional mass action which would be necessary to ensure the successful conquest of state power and socialization of the economy. The development of this "dual power" would lead to a process which amounts to the dismantling of the capitalist state, but which invests socialist state power in a radically transformed representative assembly as well as in a congress of workers' coun-

cils. This notion of "dual power" may be said to be dialectical insofar as it envisages the abolition-yet-preservation of existing representative institutions as an integral part of a broader, deeper, and distinctively socialist democracy.

This revolutionary and democratic strategy offers a different conception, too, of the seizure of state power. Socialist parties would seek electoral victories and accession to parliamentary power as a mandate for, and prelude to revolutionary changes in the state and revolutionary measures against capital. The achievement of such electoral mandates would be viewed by socialists and their supporters as the highest form of democratic legitimation for radical social change that is possible within the existing state. A socialist victory in what Marx and Engels called "the battle of democracy," along with the preparedness of millions of people to engage in direct action, would signal the beginning of the conquest of state power. This process would not unfold, as Miliband would have it, "within more or less constitutional bounds."⁹⁸ Unmistakably revolutionary action would be taken by the new socialist-led parliament in close cooperation with the system of workers' councils and other organs of popular power. But the forms of radical democratic political action which are central to this process would respect and defend the civic freedoms and individual (non-property) rights which presently exist.

Unlike the radical reformist path, this strategy envi-

sions the socialist-led parliament initiating a rupture with the existing "state system" and the establishment of a new one. This process would begin with the immediate radical democratization of these parliaments themselves. Undemocratic parliamentary organs would be abolished outright. Bicameral assemblies would be transformed into unicameral assemblies, and provisions for shorter terms, effective recall, and the submission of vital political questions to the electorate would be implemented. Although a decisive socialist majority would be the predominant force in the new representative assemblies, duly elected parliamentary deputies from non-socialist parties would also be included in the new representative assemblies. Even more momentous changes would have to take place in other parts of the capitalist "state system." Independent presidencies would be dismantled. At the same time, the socialist majority in the new representative assembly would act to invest state power in the congress of workers' councils which has been created as the national organ of workers' power. These new representative assemblies and workers' congresses would share national legislative and administrative powers. The creation of new organs of central state power would have to be accompanied by a similar process in regions, cities, and communities.

The socialist-led representative assemblies and workers' congresses would take decisive measures to abolish many

bureaucratic structures and to radically transform others. Where possible, administrative powers would be delegated to democratic bodies which are accountable to the primary state organs and the people as a whole. The remaining officials, experts, and functionaries would also have to be brought under effective democratic supervision and control. Existing judicial institutions would be replaced by a new judicial system in which all judges and magistrates are elected. After the working class has consolidated state power and taken capital away from the capitalists, a new constitution for the socialist state would have to be developed and submitted to the people for their direct popular approval. From that time on, democratically elected constitutional courts in socialist judicial systems would have an important role to play in exercising a new form of judicial review of both state and popular power. But any realistic appraisal of the struggle for state power and the "expropriation of the expropriators" suggests that the disjunction between the constitutional processes of the capitalist state and those of the new socialist state would probably be significant.⁹⁹

The new primary organs of state power and the system of workers' councils and other popular organizations would need to act in concert to break the repressive apparatuses of the capitalist state and to ensure that the "general means of coercion" or "monopoly of armed force" passes into the hands

of the working class. The immediate retirement of police and military leaders whose loyalties are to the old regime, and the immediate abolition of "national security" or domestic intelligence agencies would only be the first steps in such a process. For what would really be required is the destruction of institutional infrastructures which provide a military capacity for the Right, and the creation of new kinds of armed forces which can defend the socialist state and workers' power in the transition to socialism. The new primary organs of state power would authorize democratic councils of police and military personnel to assume power within their institutions, as well as authorize the arming of volunteers through the workers' councils and other popular organizations.

The democratic councils of police and military personnel would undertake, with the support of armed workers and under the supervision of the new state, the wholesale restructuring of their institutions. Police and military personnel who are unable to support this process would be discharged. The election of leaders and major functionaries would be important, but democratic control of these new institutions would entail, as suggested earlier, their accountability to the primary organs of state power and the people. The national representative assembly and workers' congress would exercise joint command and effective coordination of both the transformed "regular" military forces and some of the volunteer

military forces formed by armed workers. New regional and local police forces and some of the armed workers would come under the joint command of regional and local organs of state power. In time, with the diminution of the danger from the Right, it may be expected that the "regular" and volunteer armed forces would be integrated and developed into new kinds of professional yet democratically accountable police and military forces.

The successful transfer of the "general means of coercion" from agents of the capitalist state to the armed forces of the new socialist state, along with the effective mobilization of mass direct action on a national scale, would make possible the abolition of capitalist property relations and the socialization of the economy. Far from envisioning any "mixed economy" of the sort advocated by Miliband, this revolutionary and democratic strategy conceives socialist transformation as encompassing the expropriation of all private capital and the abolition of all wage labor. Although this would necessarily involve a protracted process, the broadest possible beginnings in this direction must be made. The primary organs of the new socialist state would authorize extraordinary measures to confiscate the assets and wealth of the capitalist class, and to enable workers' councils to seize control of their enterprises. In contrast with Miliband's scenario, this strategic perspective recognizes the imperative need for

the new socialist state and the system of workers' councils to take decisive extra-constitutional measures to prevent economic and social "dislocation and disruption" by the capitalist class. Any attempts at capital flight, capital strikes, lockouts, or economic "disruption" would have to be considered sabotage and treated as such. The democratic coordination of workers' councils would be essential for the consolidation of working class power in the economy and the development of democratic economic planning. Indeed, such a system of workers' councils, whose central organ is invested with state power, arguably offers the most effective means of reconciling and achieving the socialist objectives of economic planning and self-management.

Of course, it is highly unlikely that the process of socialist transformation would proceed thus far without the eruption of Right-wing violence. Miliband may be right that conservative forces may forego a "pre-emptive coup" after a socialist electoral victory in the belief that they will be able to destabilize and thwart the new government by other means. But it is difficult to imagine that these forces could forego a resort to arms amid the revolutionary abolition of the capitalist state and the implementation of "despotic measures" against capital.¹⁰⁰ Any such eruption of Right-wing violence would have to be suppressed by armed force and popular resistance. The full military capacity of both the regular and volunteer socialist armed forces

would be brought to bear on the enemy. But the broad and deep popular support for radical social change must also find expression in the willingness of millions of people to engage in direct action against the Right, despite the considerable risks involved. Such a combination of armed force and popular resistance could overcome the danger from the Right and break their power permanently. With the "monopoly of armed force" in the hands of the working class, the process of socialist transformation could proceed.

The effective consolidation of socialist state power and workers' power in the economy would enable the working class and population to turn their attention to other vital imperatives. The development of a new constitution or fundamental law for socialist society, as suggested above, would be one of these vital tasks. While the primary organs of the new socialist state would have a leading role in this process, the participation of large numbers of workers and citizens in critical discussions, debates, and initiatives would be absolutely indispensable. The new socialist constitution would articulate the institutional arrangements in the state and the economy, a role for direct popular participation in deciding the most vital political questions, and a system of checks and balances among the major "repositories of popular authority" and other forms of workers' and popular power. The new socialist constitution would also articulate the expansion of civil freedoms and individual (non-property)

rights inherited from bourgeois democracy, as well as codify new social and political rights to be enjoyed by all citizens. Significant special measures aimed at the eradication of sexism, racism, and national oppression would also need to be included in this new fundamental law. And the empowerment of democratically elected constitutional courts to provide judicial review of state and popular power would, as noted above, help make the further development of socialist society a constitutional process, although a qualitatively different one than that associated with the capitalist state.

The working class and population would also have to take decisive measures to ensure the effective development of democratic economic planning, much of which would necessarily be at the national level. Although this would clearly be an arduous and problematic process, it would be absolutely imperative for the achievement of national economic objectives. For the eradication of the economic and social problems which are a legacy of capitalism would surely require radical measures by the new socialist state and organs of workers' and popular power--measures which are inconceivable without a significant degree of planning and coordination. In the first place, it should be recalled that not inconsiderable numbers of workers and citizens would be in dire need of work or income, housing, health care, and much else. Although it would be unrealistic to expect that

the remuneration and living standards of all workers could be dramatically improved overnight, the new socialist state would have to act immediately to ameliorate the conditions of life for the poorest sections of the working class.

Moreover, the socialist state and the new organs of workers' and popular power would have to undertake, with the active support of the population, a program of extensive economic reconstruction and responsible economic development. One of the central objectives of this program would have to be the production of new forms of social wealth which can be used to improve the material and social conditions of life for the population as a whole over time. Another central objective of this program would have to be the democratic planning and coordination of measures which create socially useful, self-managing, and adequately remunerated work for all adult citizens. The progressive reduction of the work week to thirty hours without any loss in pay would be important not only for the generation of new jobs, but also for the freeing of time for workers to participate more actively in the process of socialist transformation, as well as pursue their other interests. The special role of women in social reproduction would also have to be recognized, remunerated, and supported by new institutional arrangements.

In addition, the new state would have to bring about the significant improvement of public and social services which

have been ravaged in late capitalist society. The codification of new social rights for workers and citizens in the socialist constitution would ring hollow without the development of a new system of public and social services and benefits which effectively delivers adequate housing, health care, education, transportation, and a great deal more to the working class and the population. The state would also have a vital role to play in the implementation and evaluation of systematic measures against discrimination and domination based on gender, race, and nationality. The state's chief institutional "partner" in this process would be the popular organizations through which women and racially and nationally oppressed people articulate "in their own voices" their needs, interests, and aspirations. And the successful further development of socialist hegemony would undoubtedly require that the working class be willing to sacrifice some of its "corporate" interests in order to advance the struggles against these other forms of oppression.¹⁰¹

It may be reasonably expected that a new socialist state would also be committed to the radical transformation of previous economic and political relationships with other countries. A new socialist society would have to unequivocally repudiate imperialism and militarism. It would seem obligatory for such a society to attempt to redress at least some of the horrendous human and social costs incurred by

its previous rulers, and this might be accomplished in part through significant programs of economic assistance to governments or popular movements in various countries. The new kinds of relationships which must be developed with other nations would need to be non-exploitative, mutually beneficial, and democratically oriented. The socialist state would have to maintain sufficient military power to deter, or defend itself against threats to the radically redefined "national security." But a new socialist foreign policy would be genuinely committed to the peaceful and just resolution of global conflicts, national self-determination, the amelioration of poverty and destitution, democratic economic development, solidarity with other socialist democracies, the proliferation of civic freedoms and individual (non-property) rights, and progressive global nuclear disarmament.

Although a more comprehensive prospectus for the development of socialist society lies beyond the scope of the present work, it is clear that the success of socialism would depend in large part on the development of radical democratic political processes and a new socialist political culture. This strategy for socialist transformation envisions millions of people actively participating in new structures of democratic power in workplaces, communities, cities, regions, and at the national or central level. While these new structures would not produce "almost direct" democracy

beyond the level of enterprises and communities, they would indeed make possible the profound democratization of the state, the economy, and society as a whole. But the democratization of power in the various domains of social life would be a much more complicated and difficult process than Mandel imagines, and could not be achieved without the confidence of the majority of people in the new political processes of socialist society, as well as their commitment to the radical democratic values and norms of a new socialist political culture.

New forms of democratic praxis must make possible the continually evolving articulation and realization of the "collective will" for revolutionary change. Socialist political processes must facilitate the empowerment of "ordinary" people in the truly extraordinary project of defining, directing, and supervising the myriad of far-reaching changes in social structures and social relations which would be necessary for socialist construction. In the long run, the future of socialism would be shaped by the ability of the working class and the majority of the population to use radical democratic means to attain radical democratic ends. Viewed from this perspective, the most "revolutionary" dimension of a democratic socialist revolution would not be the conquest of state power, but the realization of significant progress toward the development of a genuinely democratic society.

Notes

1. Perry Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism, (London: Verso, 1983), p.79; Ralph Miliband, Divided Societies: Class Struggle in Contemporary Capitalism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.67.
2. See Ernest Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, Translated by Jon Rothschild, (London: New Left Books, 1978), Revolutionary Marxism Today, Edited by Jon Rothschild, (London: New Left Books, 1979), "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," Socialist Register 1989, Edited by Ralph Miliband, Leo Panitch, and John Saville, (London: Merlin Press, 1989), pp.159-184, and Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy, (London: Verso, 1992). For an alternative Trotskyist perspective on socialist revolution, see Alex Callinicos, The Revenge of History: Marxism and the East European Revolutions, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).
3. Again, I borrow this expression from Leo Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labor and the State, (London: Verso, 1986), p.239.
4. See Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism. His critique of Poulantzas's work appears on pp.174-178.
5. Ibid., especially pp.154-187; and Karl Marx, Letter to Kugelman, (April 12, 1871), in Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin, The Civil War in France: The Paris Commune, (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p.86.
6. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.171,182-187, Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.44-46, and "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," p.166.
7. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, p.156.
8. Ibid., especially pp.154-187.
9. Mandel, "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," p.165.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, p.156, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.58.

14. See especially Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.16, 21-22, 26-30, 232.
15. Ibid., pp.27-29.
16. Ibid., pp.16, 21-22, 26-30, 232.
17. Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," in The Marx-Engels Reader, Edited by Robert C. Tucker, Second Edition, (New York: Norton, 1978), p.538; Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.21-22, 27-29.
18. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, p.162.
19. Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.29.
20. Ibid., p.27.
21. Ibid., p.29.
22. Nicos Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, (London: Verso, 1980), pp.255-256; Mandel, Power and Money, pp.103-152.
23. Mandel, Power and Money, pp.103-152.
24. Ibid., pp.117-125, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.31.
25. Mandel, Power and Money, p.117.
26. Ibid., pp.120-125.
27. Ibid., p.247, Note 10.
28. Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.32.
29. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.160-178, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.8, 16-34, 232-233.
30. V. I. Lenin, The State and Revolution, in The Lenin Anthology, Edited by Robert C. Tucker, (New York: Norton, 1975), pp.374-384; Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.6-34.
31. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.159-165, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.29-35.
32. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, p.159.
33. Ibid., pp.163-165.
34. Ibid., pp.158-165, and Power and Money, pp.200-202.

35. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.163-164.
36. Ibid., pp.159-160.
37. Ibid., p.162.
38. Mandel, Power and Money, p.246.
39. Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.22.
40. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, p.162, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.21-22.
41. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, especially pp.160-165, Revolutionary Marxism Today, especially pp.8,14-18, and "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," pp.169-171.
42. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.160-165.
43. Mandel, "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," p.170, and Power and Money, p.234.
44. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, especially p.165, Note, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.36.
45. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, p.203.
46. Ibid.
47. Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.17-18,41-45.
48. Ibid., p.7; V. I. Lenin, "The Downfall of the Second International," in The Lenin Anthology, p.275.
49. Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.7-9.
50. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.172-178.
51. Ibid., pp.162-166, Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.8-9, 18-19,21-22,40, and "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," pp.169-171.
52. See especially Mandel, "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," pp.169-171.
53. Ibid. p.169.
54. Ibid., pp.169-171, and From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.172-178.
55. Mandel, "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," pp.165-166.

56. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, p.169, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.34.
57. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.164,176, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.29.
58. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, p.176, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.29.
59. In From Stalinism to Eurocommunism (1978), Mandel indicates a willingness to discuss the creation of a representative assembly alongside a congress of workers' councils in the new socialist state, but insists that this is a purely "conjunctural" question, not a "matter of principle." (p.169) In Revolutionary Marxism Today (1979), Mandel reiterates that the question of a representative assembly is an "essentially tactical" issue, not a "question of principle." (p.29) In "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today" (1989), Mandel revises this position and remarks that "Whenever and wherever the masses clearly express their wish to have parliamentary-type power organs elected by universal franchise...revolutionists should accept that verdict." (p.171) In Power and Money (1992) Mandel embraces the combination of representative assemblies and workers' congresses as primary organs of the new socialist state as a matter of principle. (pp.199-201)
60. Mandel, Power and Money, p.199.
61. Ibid., p.201.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., pp.201-202,212.
64. See Mandel, "The Marxist Case for Revolution Today," pp.169-171. Mandel's Power and Money does not explore how his revised conception of the socialist state might entail some important modifications of his revolutionary strategy.
65. Mandel, Power and Money, p.197.
66. Ibid., pp.196-202,213.
67. Ibid., p.198.
68. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.157,177, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, pp.29-30.
69. Mandel, Power and Money, p.246.

70. Ibid., p.233.
71. Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.236, and Power and Money, pp.243-246.
72. I borrow this expression from Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis.
73. Bob Jessop, Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p.304.
74. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.228.
75. Karl Marx, "Conspectus of Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy," in The Marx-Engels Reader, p.544, and Letter to Kugelman, p.86.
76. For example, see Callinicos, The Revenge of History, pp.106-118.
77. Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, p.256; Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.188-189, and Divided Societies, pp.228-229.
78. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, Edited and Translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp.164-168, 184-185.
79. Ibid., pp.57-58, 129-133, 161, 181-185, 237-239, 243.
80. Ibid., pp.237-239.
81. Ibid., pp.129-133.
82. Raymond Williams, Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism, Edited by Robin Gable, (London: Verso, 1989), pp.xxi, 76.
83. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, p.57.
84. I borrow this expression from Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media, (New York: Pantheon, 1988).
85. I borrow this expression from Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism, p.103.
86. Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, p.235.
87. I borrow this expression from Norman Geras, Discourses of

Extremity: Radical Ethics and Post-Marxist Extravagances, (London: Verso, 1990), p.54.

88. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in The Marx-Engels Reader, p.490.
89. Anderson, In the Tracks on Historical Materialism, p.79.
90. Ralph Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," Socialist Register 1990, Edited by Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, (London: Merlin Press, 1990), pp.356-357, and Divided Societies, pp.228-233.
91. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.228.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., pp.228-229, 231, and "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," pp.356-357.
94. Tim Wohlforth, "Transition to the Transition," New Left Review, 130, (November-December 1981), p.79.
95. Ibid., p.80. The strategic perspective outlined in the second part of this chapter agrees with Wohlforth on the importance of "centralized representative institutions" but affords a much larger role to workers' councils and other organs of popular power in the transition to socialism.
96. Mandel, Power and Money, p.214.
97. Williams, Resources of Hope, pp.xxi, 76.
98. Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.186.
99. Karl Marx anticipates a workers' revolution in which "the expropriators are expropriated" in Capital, Vol.1, (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p.763.
100. Marx and Engels advocate "despotic inroads on the rights of property" in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party," p.490.
101. Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, p.161.

Chapter 6. The Conquest of State Power

Amid the present global crisis of socialism and the "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced socialist countries, the revolutionary and democratic strategy for socialist transformation outlined in the last chapter may appear impossible or unlikely to some analysts.¹ And as we have observed, Ralph Miliband is right to emphasize that the possibilities of new socialist movements cannot be "proved" except "in practice."² But this dissertation has sought to make plausible the rebirth of socialism through a critique of various obituaries for the socialist project and a critical analysis of contemporary Marxist and socialist discussions on the renewal and revitalization of socialist movements.

This work has argued that the contradictions and problems of capitalism constitute a solid objective or social basis for the rebirth of socialism, and that the working class majority in these societies may be reasonably said to have a fundamental interest in the creation of societies without exploitation, oppression, and domination. This work has suggested that the development of new kinds of socialist parties and movements committed to new kinds of socialist

politics could potentially facilitate the transformation of the working class into a social agency for radical social change, the creation of new historic blocs which support socialist objectives, and the development of working class "intellectual and moral leadership" in society.³ And this work has articulated a revolutionary and democratic strategy through which a working class-led popular movement for socialism which has achieved hegemony could undertake the conquest of state power and the expropriation of capital.

This concluding chapter explores the problems and prospects of such a strategy in the advanced capitalist societies. The chapter focuses on the plausibility of socialists winning electoral mandates for socialist transformation and successfully organizing mass extra-constitutional direct action against capital and its allies in the state. The first part of the chapter develops a critique of Adam Przeworski's argument that such electoral mandates are unlikely in any foreseeable future. The second part of the chapter critically interrogates Miliband's argument that working classes will not support extra-constitutional direct action and Ernest Mandel's argument that extra-constitutional and constitutional struggles could not be successfully conjoined and coordinated to break the power of capital and its state. The chapter acknowledges the scope and depth of the problems facing any prospective attempt at fundamental social change, but suggests that the successful development of new social-

ist parties and movements, new historic blocs, and working class hegemony could make possible the electoral mandates and extra-constitutional direct action which would be required for the conquest of state power.

Electoral Mandates for Socialism

Przeworski's theses on class, working class interests, and "class compromise" in the advanced capitalist societies are, as the second chapter argued, far from persuasive.⁴ But Przeworski contends that there is yet another structural feature of democratic capitalism which virtually forecloses any prospects for democratic socialist transformation: the electoral process itself. In Przeworski's view, the historical experience of social democracy reveals that Marx and Engels were gravely mistaken to have believed that the achievement of universal suffrage would inevitably help the working class win political power and begin the process of socialist transformation.⁵ In fact, Przeworski's study of social democracy leads him to the conclusion that the process of electoral competition inevitably undermines the organization of workers as a class.⁶ Przeworski suggests that social democratic parties faced three important choices at their inception: whether to participate in the developing electoral process, whether to rely exclusively on working class support or seek support from other classes, and

whether to seek the abolition of capitalism or more limited reforms within capitalism.⁷ For Przeworski, the social democratic parties' decision to participate in the electoral process was pivotal. The "very act of taking part" in the political process would inexorably shape the party and the working class--in ways quite unanticipated by Marx.⁸ After this crucial choice had been made, Przeworski writes, almost everything else necessarily followed, and the fate of social democracy was sealed.

Although Przeworski acknowledges that there are some "external" reasons for the failure of social democratic parties to win electoral mandates for socialism, he attributes explanatory primacy here to the unforeseen consequences of political participation and a "purely electoral dilemma."⁹ The decision to participate in the electoral process led to social democratic parties accepting the "rules of the game" and disavowing direct, extra-parliamentary action against the capitalist state. The focus of these parties on mobilizing voters and electing officials resulted in diminished party support for the organization of militant class struggles by rank-and-file workers. And, as Robert Michels saw long ago, the very growth of mass social democratic parties gave rise to bureaucratic organization, oligarchy, and embourgeoisement.¹⁰

Even more important, however, in Przeworski's account is the "perverse trick" played on the working class by the

electoral process in capitalist democracies.¹¹ It should be recalled that Przeworski's definition of the working class is limited to industrial and manual workers. Because the industrial proletariat never became a demographic majority in these societies, Przeworski contends that this "perverse trick" consists of minority status under conditions of majority rule.¹² Accordingly, social democratic parties are forced to choose between seeking electoral victories and promoting the formation of the "proletariat into a class."¹³ Because the working class is ostensibly a minority, the pursuit of electoral victories requires support from other classes and groups. However, Przeworski finds some evidence of a trade-off between working class votes and middle class votes.¹⁴ And he argues more generally that when social democratic parties begin to promote the interests of different classes and groups in order to obtain the support of the latter, they inescapably undermine the organization of workers as a class.¹⁵

Przeworski holds that political parties are especially important in shaping workers' political behavior. When social democratic parties undertake to represent other classes and groups, they significantly diminish the salience of class interests, class issues, class identification, class loyalty--of class in general. Over time, workers come to see themselves and others less as members of classes, and more as citizens and individuals who belong to various and over-

lapping social groups.¹⁶ With the decline in the political and social salience of class and the proliferation of heterogeneous interests, elections become inherently conservative.¹⁷ Far from enabling the working class to win political power and commence socialist transformation, as anticipated by Marx and Engels, universal suffrage and majority rule have proved to be insurmountable barriers to socialist aspirations.

As we observed in the second chapter, Przeworski goes far beyond arguing that social democratic parties will not lead working classes to socialism. In addition to insisting that workers will continue to choose "class compromises" over class struggles for socialism, Przeworski maintains that socialist parties will find it all but impossible to achieve electoral victories and accession to parliamentary power.¹⁸ Przeworski concludes that "an overwhelming mandate for socialist transformations is not a likely outcome of elections regardless of strategies parties adopt."¹⁹ Przeworski doubts that socialism can be brought about by political parties, labor unions, or governments. In fact, he appears to doubt that socialism can be brought about at all.²⁰

Przeworski's critique of "electoral socialism" is not without merit. His contention that winning "the battle of democracy" has proved to be a much more complicated matter than Marx and Engels expected is difficult to dispute. Przeworski's focus on the importance of political parties for

the "organization of workers as a class" is salutary, if hardly original. And his finding that social democratic politics has diminished the salience of class identity and class interest among workers is reasonable enough. Nonetheless, here too it appears that Michael Burawoy is right to argue that while Przeworski's work may have delivered a "devastating blow" to the theory and practice of social democracy, "as a theory of the transition to socialism, it is inadequate."²¹

On closer inspection, Przeworski's depiction of a "purely electoral dilemma" turns out to be gravely flawed. As we remarked in the second chapter, Przeworski does not provide a very comprehensive historical or sociological account of working class and socialist struggles in the advanced capitalist societies. A more inclusive historical perspective and a more incisive critical analysis of the major political parties of the Left point to an altogether different explanation for the limited success of socialist electoral struggles. Even a cursory interrogation of his central arguments reveals that Przeworski errs egregiously in substituting what Leo Panitch calls "a mechanical and pessimistic 'inevitability of failure' for the earlier mechanistically optimistic 'inevitability of revolution.'"²² While prospective new socialist movements would undoubtedly have to address many substantial challenges in winning and sustaining electoral support, the prospects of electoral mandates for

radical social change in the decades ahead can hardly be dismissed as impossible or unlikely.

As Panitch remarks, Przeworski does not present "a history of electoral socialism," as the subtitle of one of his books suggests, but instead "a rather circumscribed 'model' of that history."²³ Przeworski's claim that workers' movements have had to choose between social democracy and "insurrection" by a minority curiously disregards the entire history of Western communist parties pursuing political power through constitutional and electoral processes.²⁴ His assertion that social democratic parties are the only Left parties which have been able to deliver meaningful reforms to the workers is unsupported by any kind of argument or historical evidence, and simply ignores the role of communist parties in Italy, France, and some other countries.²⁵ Przeworski's failure to investigate the historical record of communist parties and their political struggles is important because such an inquiry might well suggest that far more than a "purely electoral dilemma" must be invoked to explain both their failures and their achievements.

Although an adequate historical analysis of the Western communist experience lies beyond the scope of this work, a few critical observations may suffice to indicate the gravity of this lacuna in Przeworski's case. One would never know from reading Przeworski that, in at least a few Western countries, millions of workers--and some middle class citi-

zens as well--have for decades supported communist parties committed to socialist transformation. Nor would one know from reading Przeworski that, in at least a few instances, communists and socialists have been able to join forces to win electoral mandates for radical social change "pointing in socialist directions."²⁶ It should also be recalled that the communist party in one European capitalist democracy, Czechoslovakia, won almost forty percent of the votes in 1946, a plurality which enabled it to assume power and begin a transition to socialism.²⁷ While most Western observers have focused their attention on the communist seizure of total power two years later and the subsequent repression and tragedies, there can be no doubt that the communist-led expropriation of capital did begin with significant popular support.²⁸

Of course, even when these historical achievements are considered along with communist electoral victories and accession to power in regions and localities of various countries, it must be readily acknowledged that the projections of Marx and Engels on socialist advance have proved to be much too optimistic. But it may be reasonably argued that the limited success of Western communist parties cannot be attributed to the "minority" status of industrial workers. Instead, significant explanatory weight must be afforded the problems arising from these parties' relationship to the Soviet Union, their internal bureaucracy and dogmatism,

their tendencies toward class collaboration at crucial historical conjunctures, and their inability to develop working class or socialist hegemony.²⁹ And significant explanatory weight must also be afforded the role of Right-wing forces in preventing communist advance over the decades. Conspicuously absent from Przeworski's account is any discussion of the destruction of popular communist movements by Fascism, the British intervention against the Greek revolutionary movement, or United States covert support for anti-communist parties in France, Italy, and Japan after the Second World War.³⁰ Only by eschewing any substantive concern with the Western communist experience can Przeworski avoid confronting very serious questions about the real dilemmas faced by parties pledged to radical social change.

Przeworski's insistence that the fate of social democracy reveals almost deterministic structural constraints on the prospects for socialist transformation invites close and critical scrutiny. Przeworski's conclusion that social democratic parties will not lead working classes to socialism is, as we observed in the second chapter, hardly novel. What is curious in his account, however, is his treatment of social democratic parties as bona fide agencies of socialist transformation throughout the course of the twentieth century. Przeworski himself acknowledges that most social democratic parties abandoned any real commitment to fundamental social change by the 1930's, yet he develops an analysis

which suggests that these parties did remain potentially radical agencies whose capacity to bring about such change was largely thwarted by the limited number of industrial and manual workers.³¹ When it is recalled that these parties have generally been committed to reforming, not abolishing, capitalism for several decades, the appropriateness of Przeworski's focus on them appears questionable.

Przeworski's depiction of a "purely electoral dilemma" is also more than a little undermined by his analysis of one major "external" process which ostensibly helps explain the limited success of socialist movements in capitalist democracies. Notwithstanding his disclaimers, Przeworski's account of this electoral impasse is integrally related to, and dependent on, his finding that working classes can achieve important improvements in their immediate material conditions through "class compromises." As we remarked in the second chapter, Przeworski's failure to develop a comprehensive historical or sociological study of social democracy leaves him unable to acknowledge either the very real problems with his account of social pacts or the potential implications of the contemporary unilateral abrogation of such "compromises" by capitalists. Similarly, as Panitch emphasizes, Przeworski eschews any "systematic investigation of the actual (fixed or changing) strategies, organizational transformations, or policies of the parties in question."³² Przeworski's "rather circumscribed 'model'" of "electoral

socialism" is unable to provide much insight into the totality of conditions which have limited or thwarted socialist possibilities in the countries of advanced capitalism.³³

Przeworski's entire argument on the "purely electoral dilemma" of socialist movements rests on what Panitch calls his "narrow, a priori" definition of the working class.³⁴ For it is only by egregiously reducing the working class to the industrial proletariat that Przeworski can posit a "perverse trick" of minority status in conditions of majority rule. In fact, however, as we argued in the second chapter, the working class should be understood as generally including all unpropertied persons who sell their labor in order to make a living.³⁵ When it is recognized that the vast majority of people in the advanced capitalist societies do indeed belong to the working class, the only "perverse trick" which remains is Przeworski's effort to evade this vital historical and sociological reality, and to posit the fate of socialist movements as strictly determined by the number of industrial workers. As Miliband reminds us, this line of reasoning is mistaken in assuming that industrial workers are always the most important or the most radical partisans of working class struggles, and in ignoring the substantial participation of other kinds of workers in militant class struggles.³⁶ And Przeworski's implication that the fate of Western socialist movements would have been

different if only there had been larger numbers of industrial workers discloses more about the poverty of his analysis than about the historical prospects and problems of these movements.³⁷

As Panitch notes, Przeworski may be right to point out that some non-industrial workers may not perceive themselves as workers, and they may not be viewed as workers by some members of the industrial proletariat. But this can hardly be accepted as a "clinching argument" for an insurmountable chasm between these fractions of the working class.³⁸ As Miliband emphasizes, workers of different occupations and different backgrounds have demonstrated "solidarity in struggle" in many historical instances.³⁹ Furthermore, the evidence marshalled by Przeworski in support of a trade-off between working class and middle class votes is far from comprehensive or conclusive, and Przeworski himself grants that some social democratic parties have been able to avoid such a trade-off.⁴⁰ Moreover, as Miliband recalls, some middle class voters have joined working class voters in casting ballots for parties pledged to radical reforms.⁴¹

Panitch submits that the diminished salience of class may well be explained by various other political practices of social democratic parties instead of the pursuit of middle-class votes. Panitch writes:

Perhaps they diluted their class appeal (with appeals to nationalism, local particularisms,

deference to "expertise," or moderation and consensus) because they sought to gain (the easy way, i.e. on the terrain of bourgeois hegemony) the votes of those many workers who resisted or were at least unmoved by earlier "pure" class appeals? Perhaps they diluted their class appeal because their leaders came to adopt some of those values genuinely and sincerely?...Perhaps these parties diluted their class appeal because they sought to strike a compromise with capitalists or to rationalize such a compromise made pragmatically by their leaders while in office.⁴²

In addition, as we saw in the second chapter, Przeworski's account of social democracy largely ignores the historical divisions and conflicts between social democratic party and labor union leaders who have tended to embrace corporatist arrangements, and those rank-and-file workers and Left activists who have been committed to militant class struggles.⁴³

It may be readily granted that the "very act of taking part" in the electoral processes of the advanced capitalist societies does impact on socialist movements. Miliband acknowledges that the fate of social democracy has been shaped to some extent by the "ideological and political positions induced and reinforced by the political context provided by bourgeois democracy."⁴⁴ Miliband also recognizes that Michels pointed to "a very real and powerful tendency" in any organization toward "an appropriation of undue power by those in charge of it."⁴⁵ Still, both the eschewal of radical, non-parliamentary political action and the growth of

bureaucracy in social democratic parties should be understood not as the inexorable result of electoral participation per se, but as the product of social democratic leaders' embrace of class collaboration and abandonment of radical aims.

Finally, it should be reiterated that Przeworski also fails to consider how popular pressure "from below" has occasionally led these parties to seek and win electoral victories on the basis of radical programs. While Przeworski correctly notes that there have been no national electoral mandates for full-scale socialist transformation in Western Europe, he inexplicably fails to explore those instances in which electoral and parliamentary majorities have been won by parties formally pledged to radical social change "pointing in socialist directions." These historical examples include the Popular Front victory in France in 1936, the Labor victory in Great Britain and the Communist-Socialist victory in France in 1945, the victory of Mitterand the "Common Program" in France and the victory of P.A.S.O.C. in Greece in 1981.⁴⁶ Although the governments formed as a result of these electoral victories invariably abandoned their radical objectives in the face of strong capitalist opposition, the willingness of popular majorities in these instances to cast ballots in support of such objectives demonstrates that Przeworski's case is on very shaky historical ground. As Miliband emphasizes, the argument that

electoral mandates for socialist transformation are virtually impossible is simply not supported by the historical record.⁴⁷

The decline of various working class parties during the last fifteen years may be more properly attributed to their own critical deficiencies as political agencies of the Left than to the limited number of industrial workers or the "recomposition" of the working class. As Miliband, Panitch, and quite a number of other Marxist and socialist scholars underscore, the limited successes of socialist movements throughout much of this century must be explained in large part as the product of the historical inadequacies and failures of both communist and social democratic parties.⁴⁸ With an eye to the prevalence of the latter in most of the advanced capitalist countries, Miliband writes:

The root of the problem, which is of historic proportions, lies not in the working class, nor in "the electorate," but in these political agencies themselves, and notably in the main political formations of the Left in advanced capitalist countries--namely social democratic parties.⁴⁹

A more comprehensive and more critical investigation of Western socialist movements than that undertaken by Przeworski suggests that at the heart of the present "crisis of working class politics" is what Miliband calls "the crisis of agencies."⁵⁰ The future of socialism is not foreclosed by

any "perverse trick" of the electoral system but does depend, as the third chapter acknowledged, on the development of new kinds of socialist movements and politics.

Both old notions of the "historic inevitability" of socialism and new notions of the "inevitability of failure" should be discarded by scholars and activists concerned with the prospective rebirth of socialism. As we have already suggested, the exploitation and domination inherent in capitalist society and capitalism's inability to solve "the most important problems confronting humankind" surely constitute what Norman Geras calls "a solid, objective basis--no more, but equally no less--for a unifying socialist politics."⁵¹ But we have also recognized that even massively deteriorating material and social conditions and the specter of barbarism cannot be taken as automatically or ineluctably producing new socialist movements. The view that a rebirth of socialism is likely derives not from a crude determinism or wishful thinking, but from the critical understanding that "ordinary" people are, as Miliband insists, capable of working together to abolish conditions of subordination and unfreedom, and to create an egalitarian, cooperative, democratic, and classless society.⁵²

The prospects for electoral mandates for socialism, as well as for extra-constitutional mass direct action against capital and its allies in the state, will be shaped by the success of "ordinary" people in creating new kinds of so-

cialist parties and movements and a new "politics of feasible socialism."⁵³ As we observed in the third chapter, new socialist political agencies and new forms of praxis must be able to facilitate the political, intellectual, and cultural transformation of the working class. The development of a "working class majority in terms of collective socio-political identity" and the radical popular redefinition of working class interests are inconceivable without a contemporary version of Raymond Williams's "long revolution."⁵⁴ But the successful development of such a process could make possible the authentic embrace of socialist objectives by the preponderant part of the working class, the emergence of alliances between the working class and other "subaltern" groups in new historic blocs committed to radical social change, and the development of working class or socialist hegemony in the society as a whole. And in this vastly different historical and social context, electoral mandates and mass direct action would be quite plausible.

As we have remarked before, the present global crisis of socialism and the "crisis of working class politics" in the advanced capitalist societies may make it difficult for some analysts to envision such a scenario for fundamental social transformation. But those who dismiss the renewal and revitalization of the socialist alternative as "unrealistic" under any circumstances would not appear to have a very realistic appreciation of the depth of the contradictions

and problems of capitalism, or the capacity of "ordinary" people to recognize the need for "visions of an alternative society" and "strategies to realize them."⁵⁵ These analysts also fail to afford what E. P. Thompson calls "a moment of serious historical imagination" to the question of socialism.⁵⁶ Thompson's famous response to Lesjak Kolakowski's ominous depiction of what "the dictatorship of the proletariat" would look like in the United States is worth recalling here. Thompson writes:

...you have simply assumed a white working class, socialized by capitalist institutions as it is now, mystified by the news media as it is now, structured into competitive organizations as it is now, without self-activity or its own forms of political expression: i.e. a working class with all the attributes of subjection within capitalist structures which one then "imagines" to achieve power without either changing those structures or itself....⁵⁷

If we are willing to give "a moment of serious historical imagination" to the ways in which the working class could potentially transform itself through radical political participation and radical political education, the prospects for electoral mandates for socialism may appear much less far-fetched than Przeworski's account indicates.

Direct Action and Revolutionary Change

The revolutionary and democratic strategy for socialist transformation outlined in the last chapter affords a central role to both constitutional struggles aimed at the achievement of electoral mandates for socialism and the organization of extra-constitutional direct action against capital and its state. As we have remarked, this conception of the "forms of articulation" of working class and popular struggles differs from both the radical reformist view that socialist transformation must occur through existing constitutional processes, and the traditional revolutionary socialist view that workers' councils and new forms of popular power can more or less "bypass" existing representative institutions.⁵⁸ Of course, the leading representatives of these two traditions have raised some important questions which bear on the desirability and viability of such an alternative strategic perspective. Miliband holds that working classes in the advanced capitalist societies will not support extra-constitutional mass direct action under any foreseeable circumstances.⁵⁹ And Mandel insists that constitutional and extra-constitutional forms of struggle could not be successfully conjoined and coordinated to bring about revolutionary change.⁶⁰ Although these writers point to some of the very serious challenges confronting any prospective new socialist movement committed to revolutionary and democratic social transformation, neither argument should be viewed as particularly compelling,

much less conclusive.

As we observed in the fourth chapter, Miliband's own radical reformist strategy is informed by his firm belief that revitalized socialist movements must achieve political power through exclusively constitutional processes. Miliband arrives at this conclusion, in part, by recognizing that working classes in the countries of advanced capitalism strongly support "legality, constitutionalism, electoralism, and representative institutions of the parliamentary type...."⁶¹ But another central premise in Miliband's argument here is his equally resolute view that working classes will not endorse socialist transformation if it is conceived as the "total negation" of existing political and social arrangements.⁶² Miliband insists that the broad and deep popular backing which is absolutely essential for radical social change cannot be won by socialists committed to an "insurrectionary" seizure of power. Hence Miliband's own embrace of a radical reformist perspective which primarily emphasizes the role of a socialist-led parliament and new "organs of popular participation" which operate within the legal and constitutional framework of democratic capitalism.⁶³

As we noted in the last chapter, Mandel's exclusive focus on the organization of workers' councils and direct extra-constitutional action lead him to neglect the importance of constitutional struggles by socialist parties and movements.

Notwithstanding the recent changes in his views on the socialist state, Mandel apparently remains committed to a mass "insurrectionary" movement which basically "bypasses" existing parliaments. As we have already remarked, Mandel not only rejects the imperative of achieving electoral mandates for socialism, but also anticipates a likely conflict between parliaments dominated by opponents of socialism and the developing system of workers' councils and other forms of popular power.⁶⁴ Mandel stresses the vital need for the democratic conjoining and coordination of these organs of workers' and popular power. But he emphatically dismisses the possibility that extra-constitutional and constitutional political action could be effectively combined as equally indispensable elements of a revolutionary and democratic transition to socialism.⁶⁵

It is undoubtedly true that the "forms of articulation" of socialist struggles at the heart of our conception of a democratic socialist revolution would be unimaginable without the successful development of new kinds of socialist movements and socialist praxis. The active participation of millions of people in direct action against capital in workplaces, communities, and the country as a whole, like the achievement of electoral mandates, could only be brought about by the radical transformation of the working class, the forging of new historic blocs united by socialist objectives, and the development of working class or socialist

hegemony. Yet even "a moment of serious historical imagination" may suffice here too to suggest that it would be premature to dismiss the prospects for mass direct action in support of socialist objectives, and for the effective conjoining and coordination of constitutional and extra-constitutional struggles.

On closer inspection, Miliband's analysis of popular support for "legality, constitutionalism, electoralism, and representative institutions of the parliamentary type" cannot be reasonably said to entail his sweeping conclusion that the working class will never, under any conditions, embrace extra-constitutional mass direct action. As the last two chapters have made clear, Miliband is right to stress that socialists must engage in constitutional struggles, achieve electoral mandates for socialist transformation, and radically transform--not abolish--existing representative assemblies. But as these chapters have also suggested, the urgent if retheorized strategic imperatives of "smashing" the capitalist state and creating "the dictatorship of the proletariat" would surely also require the organization of a system of workers' councils and mass extra-constitutional direct action against capital and its allies in the state.

Miliband's insistence that the latter is virtually impossible derives from a partial and incomplete assessment of working class support for existing democratic forms in advanced capitalist society. As Mandel incisively observes,

this support should be understood in historical and social context as an enduring preference for even the limited and inadequate forms of bourgeois democracy over authoritarianisms of the Right or the Left. But as Mandel underscores, this preference for bourgeois democracy over any sort of authoritarianism should not be misunderstood as entailing an insurmountable barrier to working classes developing, through political struggle over time, a new and "higher" conception of democracy which legitimates and inspires extra-constitutional mass direct action as part of a revolutionary transition to socialism.⁶⁶ As we also noted in the last chapter, Mandel's own notion of this "higher" democracy has problems of its own, and our revolutionary and democratic strategy offers an alternative conception which draws on both the radical reformist and revolutionary traditions within socialism. But Mandel's point is still well taken. Miliband does not consider how the radical reconceptualization of democracy among the preponderant part of the working class and the population may produce growing political opposition to many elements of capitalist "legality" and "constitutionalism." Moreover, if socialist objectives include the comprehensive expropriation of capital and socialization of the economy, not the "mixed economy" advocated by Miliband, then the centrality of extra-constitutional direct action in this process becomes difficult to ignore.

Miliband is certainly right to raise substantial doubts

about the prospects of popular support for the traditional revolutionary socialist objective of a mass "insurrection" which simply "bypasses" or abolishes outright existing representative institutions. But the more important question here is whether a socialist movement which achieves electoral mandates for radical social change and radically democratizes existing representative assemblies as part of a new socialist state could also help mobilize millions of people to take direct action to ensure the successful birth of this new state and the expropriation of capital. This revolutionary and democratic strategy may well be capable of winning popular support for extra-constitutional political action precisely because the latter is dialectically related to constitutional political action which aims to achieve the highest form of democratic mandate for revolutionary change which is possible within the existing state. This strategy may also be capable of winning popular support for direct mass action because the revolutionary process of which it is a part would respect and extend--not abolish--existing civil freedoms and individual (non-property) rights.

Miliband's sweeping dismissal of the prospects for mass direct action is, to borrow his own expression, "exceedingly premature."⁶⁷ Although it is certainly true that the twentieth century has not witnessed successful mass "insurrectionary" seizures of power in the advanced capitalist countries, it is also true that working classes and other

"subaltern" groups have not totally shunned direct action, either. As Mandel emphasizes, the development of workers' councils and extra-constitutional political action has been a historically recurring phenomenon in many different instances of escalating class struggles.⁶⁸ Moreover, various forms of direct action have been embraced by workers, women, and racially and nationally oppressed people, among others, at different points in time.⁶⁹ It may be more reasonable to conclude that the prospects for radical political action by millions of "ordinary" people in the decades ahead are hardly foreclosed by the present ideological reach of capitalist legality and constitutionalism. The prospects for mass direct action, as well as electoral mandates, may be better understood as contingent on the success of new socialist parties and movements in achieving broad and deep popular support for these objectives as part of its hegemonic project.

Similarly, Mandel's hasty dismissal of the possibilities of conjoining and coordinating constitutional and extra-constitutional struggles for socialist transformation falters under critical scrutiny. As we argued in the last chapter, Mandel presents a persuasive case for revolutionary change but errs grievously in eschewing the need for electoral mandates for socialism and a special role for the socialist-led parliament in the rupture of the capitalist state and the creation of a new state. If both constitution-

al and extra-constitutional forms of working class and popular struggles are indeed necessary to bring about a successful transition to socialism, as our argument for an alternative revolutionary and democratic strategy indicates, then the real question is whether there are any identifiable obstacles which may prevent their effective combination. And here Mandel's analysis is far from persuasive.

A close reading of Mandel's argument here discloses that he rather too readily assumes an almost inevitable conflict between existing parliaments and new systems of workers' councils and other organs of popular power. Mandel's assumption that parties opposed to socialism will probably dominate parliaments even as growing numbers of workers and citizens join workers' councils and embrace "dual power" is quite dubious. As Geras points out, it is difficult to imagine a popular democratic movement for socialist transformation which does not find political expression within existing representative institutions even as it fosters the development of new forms of democracy.⁷⁰ But because Mandel does not consider electoral mandates and accession to parliamentary power as vital prerequisites for revolutionary change, he does not actually devote any sustained attention to the conditions and possibilities of a strategy which conjoins these objectives with the organization of workers' councils and extra-constitutional mass direct action. If Mandel now believes that the socialist state should comprise

transformed representative assemblies and workers' congresses as "complementary" and democratically coordinated organs of popular power, it appears incongruous for him to deny the desirability and viability of "complementary" and democratically coordinated forms of constitutional and extra-constitutional struggles which aim at the creation of such a state and the expropriation of capital.⁷¹

It may be reiterated here that the development of such a democratic socialist revolution would depend on the effectiveness of new socialist parties and movements in facilitating the political and ideological transformation of the working class, in organizing and leading new historic blocs, and in achieving working class or socialist hegemony. But if these fundamental socialist objectives could be realized, then the concrete political challenges involved in the "forms of articulation" of working class and popular struggles would hardly appear to be insurmountable. As we remarked in the third chapter, the demands and difficulties presented by our revolutionary and democratic strategy seem clear enough. Socialists who win office in the existing state must be able to use their authority to prepare the ground for the abolition of capital and the capitalist state. The socialist party and the broader socialist movement would have to ensure that their representatives remain accountable for their actions, and to guard against any tendencies toward "parliamentarism," opportunism, bureauc-

racy, or corruption. At the same time, the development of workers' councils and other organs of popular power--and their capacity to take direct action in conjunction with the revolutionary measures taken by a new socialist-led parliament--would also require the most prodigious political work and a historically unprecedented blend of democracy and discipline. The socialist party and the broader socialist movement would have to provide a profoundly democratic kind of "intellectual and moral leadership" for millions of people who are able and willing to participate in various ways to create a new society. And it is clear that only a deep commitment to socialism and a great deal of courage could move such numbers of people to confront the capitalist class and the armed forces it will be able to muster.

The very idea of the rebirth of socialism and the vision of a democratic socialist revolution are not likely to be taken very seriously by observers who lack a realistic appreciation of the contradictions and problems of advanced capitalism, or the capacity to engage in a little "serious historical imagination." But this dissertation has provided some grounds for affirming that the renewal of the socialist project is indeed quite plausible, and this chapter has offered some reasons for believing that new socialist parties and movements may well be able to win both electoral mandates for socialist transformation and popular support for extra-constitutional direct action. As the crises of

contemporary capitalism mount and the specter of barbarism becomes increasingly prominent, we may well discover that "class struggle for the creation of democratic, egalitarian, cooperative, and classless societies, far from coming to an end, has barely begun."⁷²

Notes

1. Again, I borrow this expression from Leo Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labor and the State, (London: Verso, 1986).
2. Ralph Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," Socialist Register 1990, Edited by Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, (London: Merlin Press, 1990), p.350.
3. This definition of hegemony appears in Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, Edited and Translated by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p.57.
4. See Adam Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
5. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, especially Chapter 1.
6. Ibid., pp.3,23-29.
7. Ibid., p.3.
8. Ibid., p.13.
9. Ibid., p.27.
10. Ibid., pp.14-15. See also Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, (New York: Collier Books, 1962).
11. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.23-25.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., pp.4,23-25. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels identify "the immediate aim of the Communists" as the "formation of the proletariat into a class" in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in The Marx-Engels Reader, Edited by Robert C. Tucker, Second Edition, (New York: Norton, 1978), p.484.
14. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, especially Chapter 3; and Przeworski and Sprague, Paper Stones.

15. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.27-29.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p.129.
18. Ibid., pp.4,23-29.
19. Ibid., p.4.
20. Ibid., p.247.
21. Michael Burawoy, "Marxism Without Micro-Foundations," Socialist Review, 89:2, (1989), p.77.
22. Leo Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution: The Contemporary Meaning of Revolution," Socialist Register 1989, Edited by Ralph Miliband, Leo Panitch, and John Saville, (London: Merlin Press, 1989), p.19.
23. Leo Panitch, Review of Paper Stones, by Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, American Journal of Sociology, 93, (September 1987), p.491.
24. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, p.1.
25. Ibid.
26. Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," p.362.
27. Roland Stromberg, Europe in the Twentieth Century, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p.328.
28. John Tagliabue, "In Red-Garlanded City, Unbidden Specter of 1968," New York Times, (February 25, 1988), p.A4.
29. See, for example, Ralph Miliband, Divided Societies: Class Struggle in Contemporary Capitalism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.85-94; and Ernest Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, Translated by Jon Rothschild, (London: New Left Books, 1978).
30. See, for example, Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.63,187-191.
31. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.35-42.
32. Panitch, Review of Paper Stones, p.491.
33. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.47,67.
34. Panitch, Review of Paper Stones, p.491.

35. See Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.22-23,37-41; and Alex Callinicos, Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp.121-127.
36. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.46-48.
37. Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution," p.21.
38. Panitch, Review of Paper Stones, p.491.
39. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.48.
40. Przeworski, Capitalism and Social Democracy, pp.109-111, 117-129. Panitch submits that Przeworski's analysis of the trade-off between working class votes and middle class votes "leaves much to be desired." In Panitch's view, Przeworski's argument is weakened not only by his stunted definition of the working class, but also by a post hoc, propter hoc fallacy in which social democratic parties' failures to win potential working class votes are erroneously attributed to any increased support among other voters. See Panitch, Review of Paper Stones, p.491.
41. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.220.
42. Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution," pp.20-21.
43. See Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.68-69,222.
44. Ibid., p.74.
45. Ibid., pp.67-68.
46. Ralph Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society: An Analysis of the Western System of Power, (New York: Basic Books, 1969), pp.98-118; Panitch, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution," p.8.
47. Miliband, Divided Societies, pp.78-79,220.
48. Ibid., pp.78-91,220-224; Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, pp.49-51, and "Capitalism, Socialism, and Revolution," pp.10-14.
49. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.223.
50. Ibid.
51. Norman Geras, Discourses of Extremity: Radical Ethics and Post-Marxist Extravagances, (London: Verso, 1990), p.76.
52. Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," p.350.

53. Again, I borrow this expression from Perry Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism, (London: Verso, 1983), p.103.
54. Panitch discusses the need for the creation of a "working class majority in terms of collective socio-political identity" in Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.52. Raymond Williams explains his views on the "long revolution" in Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism, Edited by Robin Gable, (London: Verso, 1989), pp.xxi, 76.
55. The latter expressions appear in Alex Callinicos, The Revenge of History: Marxism and the East European Revolutions, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p.135.
56. See E. P. Thompson, "An Open Letter to Lesjek Kolakowski," Socialist Register 1973, (London: Merlin Press, 1974), pp.99-100, Note 69, cited in Panitch, Working Class Politics in Crisis, p.220.
57. Ibid.
58. I borrow the expression "forms of articulation" from Nicos Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, Translated by Patrick Camiller, (London: Verso, 1980), p.264. Geras criticizes the idea of "bypassing" existing representative institutions in Discourses of Extremity, p.54.
59. Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.157-175, and Divided Societies, pp.215-224.
60. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, especially pp.163-178.
61. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, p.172.
62. Ibid., pp.189-190, and Divided Societies, especially pp.217-219.
63. Miliband's radical reformist strategy is outlined in Marxism and Politics, Chapter 6, and Divided Societies, Chapter 7.
64. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.163-178.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., pp.162-165.
67. Miliband, "Counter-Hegemonic Struggles," p.362.

68. Mandel, From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, pp.163-167, and Revolutionary Marxism Today, (London: New Left Books, 1979), pp.59-63.
69. See, for example, Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979.)
70. Geras, Discourses of Extremity, p.54.
71. Ernest Mandel's revised views on the structure of the socialist state are developed in Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy, (London: Verso, 1992), Chapter 5.
72. Miliband, Divided Societies, p.234.

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