

MARXISM WITHOUT CLASS STRUGGLE?

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A distinguishing characteristic of 'Western Marxism', it is said, has been a separation of theory and practice which has followed inevitably upon the separation of Marxist intellectuals from a revolutionary mass movement.' The result has been a Marxism more at home in the Academy than in the arenas of political struggle. Nevertheless, to say that theory has become divorced from revolutionary practice and from the realities of working-class politics is not necessarily to say that theory has no implications for practice. In fact, many theoretical innovations in contemporary Marxism, for all their philosophical abstraction, have been intended precisely as political statements. In some cases, the theoretical divorce from working-class politics represents a deliberate writing-off of the working class, which is in itself a significant political stance. The most interesting case, however, is the connection between Althusserian, or post-Althusserian, theory with Eurocommunist practice. Some of the most important and influential theoretical developments of contemporary Marxism have emerged as theorisations of Eurocommunist strategy. The political objectives of these innovations have been obscured by their formal abstraction and academicism and their claim to theoretical autonomy and universality. But if people have failed to note their political intentions and consequences, it is probably less because the evidence is obscure—since the theorists themselves are often quite explicit about their practical objectives—than because we have come to take for granted the dissociation of Marxist theory from political practice.

In what follows, it will be argued that the effect of this new unity of theory and practice has been a substantial transformation of Marxist theory which goes to its very foundations. Specifically, class struggle and the self-emancipation of the working class have been displaced from the centre of Marxism.

The Displacement of Class Struggle and the Working Class

Class struggle is the nucleus of Marxism. This is so in two inseparable senses: it is class struggle that for Marxism explains the dynamic of history, and it is the abolition of classes, the obverse or end-product of class struggle, that is the ultimate objective of the revolutionary process. The particular importance for Marxism of the working class in capitalist society

is that this is the only class whose own class interests require, and whose own conditions make possible, the abolition of class itself. The inseparable unity of this view of history and this revolutionary objective is what above all distinguishes Marxism from other conceptions of social transformation, and without it there is no Marxism. These propositions may seem so obvious as to be trivial; yet it can be argued that the history of Marxism in the twentieth century has been marked by a gradual shift away from these principles. The perspectives of Marxism have increasingly come to be dominated by the *struggle for power*. Where the achievement of political power was originally conceived by Marxism as an aspect or instrument of class struggle, whose object is its own abolition, class struggle has increasingly tended to appear as a means toward the achievement of political power—and sometimes not even as a primary or essential means.

Such changes in the Marxist tradition have not been confined to movements whose clear objective has been the attainment of power by 'democratic' or electoral means. Equally important divergences have occurred in revolutionary movements which have accepted insurrectionary action as a possible, even necessary, expedient in the struggle for power. The major revolutionary movements of the twentieth century—in Russia and China—have in a sense been forced by historical circumstances to place the struggle for power above all else, and even to some extent to place the 'people' or 'masses' before class as the principal agents of struggle. In these cases, such developments have been determined by the immediate necessity of seizing power, of taking an opportunity that could not be rejected, and doing so without a large and well-developed working class. The principles of 'popular struggle' and the primacy of the contest for power have, however, taken root in advanced capitalist countries in very different conditions and with very different consequences. Here, the struggle for power has increasingly meant electoral contests; the working class has been large and even preponderant; and the 'people' or 'masses' have ceased to mean primarily an alliance of exploited classes, notably workers and peasants. Electoral strength has become the principal criterion of alliance, with little concern for whether the constituents of the 'popular' alliance can have as their objective the abolition of classes or even, more specifically, the abolition of capitalist exploitation and whether they possess the strategic social power to achieve these objectives. The implications have been far from revolutionary and far more conducive to displacing class struggle and the working class altogether from the centre of Marxism.

These historical developments have had profound effects on Marxist theory. It might have been possible for theory to serve as a guiding thread through the complexities of historical change and the compromises of political struggle, a means of illuminating these processes in the constant light of class struggle and its ultimate goal, analysing changes in class

structure and especially the development of new formations within the working class, laying a foundation for new modalities of struggle while keeping the revolutionary objective constantly in sight. Instead, Marxist theory, when it has concerned itself with matters of practice at all, has increasingly adapted itself to the immediate demands of the contest for political power, whether in the form of revolutionary action or electoral alliance.

In the most recent major developments in Western Marxism, theory has become in many respects a theorisation of Eurocommunist strategy and especially its electoral strategy of 'popular alliances'. While the ultimate objective of Eurocommunism is still the construction of socialism, presumably a classless society without exploitation, this objective seems no longer to illuminate the whole process of revolutionary change. Instead, the process is coloured by the immediate needs of political strategy and the attainment of political power. So, for example, Marxist theory seems no longer designed to enhance working-class unity by dispelling the capitalist mystifications that stand in its way. Instead, as we shall see in our discussion of Nicos Poulantzas and Ernesto Laclau, these mystifications have in effect been incorporated into the Marxist theory of class, which is now largely devoted not to illuminating the process of class formation or the path of class struggle, but rather to establishing a ground for alliances within and between classes as they are here and now, for the purpose of attaining political power.

This reconceptualisation of the revolutionary project has served to reinforce a tendency which has come from other directions as well: the displacement of the working class from the centre of Marxist theory and practice. Whether that displacement has been determined by the exigencies of the power struggle, by despair in the face of a consistently non-revolutionary working class in the West, or simply by conservative and anti-democratic impulses, the search for revolutionary surrogates has been a hallmark of contemporary socialism. Whatever the reasons for this tendency and whether or not it is accompanied by an explicit reformulation of Marxism and its whole conception of the revolutionary process, to dislodge the working class is necessarily to redefine the socialist project, both its means and its ends.

Revolutionary socialism has traditionally placed the working class and its struggles at the heart of social transformation and the building of socialism, not simply as an act of faith but as a conclusion based upon a comprehensive analysis of social relations and power. In the first place, this conclusion is based on the historical-materialist principle which places the relations of production at the centre of social life and regards their exploitative character as the root of social and political oppression. 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, and given the particular nature of production and exploitation in capitalist society, 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 **un**-resolvable 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. Underlying this analysis is an emancipatory vision which looks forward to the *disalienation of power* at every level of human endeavour, from the creative power of labour to the political power of the state.

To displace the working class from its position in the struggle for socialism is either to make a gross strategic error or to challenge this analysis of social relations and power, and at least implicitly to redefine the nature of the liberation which socialism offers. It is significant, however, that the traditional view of the working class as the primary agent of revolution has never been effectively challenged by an alternative analysis of social power and interest in capitalist society. This is, of course, not to deny that many people have questioned the revolutionary potential of the working class and offered other revolutionary agents in its place: students, women, practitioners of various alternative 'life styles', and popular alliances of one kind or another. The point is simply that none of these alternatives has been supported by a systematic reassessment of the social forces that constitute capitalism and its critical strategic targets. The typical mode of these alternative visions is voluntaristic utopia or counsel of despair—or, as is often the case, both at once: a vision of a transformed society without real hope for a process of transformation.

The most recent, and perhaps the single most systematic, attack on the traditional Marxist view of the working class is symptomatic and worth a brief consideration to illustrate the strategic bankruptcy of these alternative visions to date. **André Gorz's** *Farewell to the Working Class* is both utopian vision and counsel of despair. Gorz proceeds from the premise that, since the future of society must lie in the abolition of work, it must be the objective of the socialist project to determine the particular form in which work will be abolished—whether, for example, as the degradation of mass unemployment or as an emancipatory 'liberation of time'. The goal he proposes is the creation of a 'discontinuous social space made up of two

distinct spheres': the realm of necessity, constituted by the demands of necessary material production to satisfy primary needs—a sphere that can never be fully escaped—and a realm of freedom outside the constraints of necessary social production, a sphere of autonomy which must be enlarged and to which the necessarily 'heteronomous' sphere of material production must be subordinated. The working class cannot by its very nature be the agent of this transformation because the abolition of work cannot be its objective. A class 'called into being' by capitalism,³ the working class identifies itself with its work and with the productivist logic of capital. It is itself a *replica* of capital, a class 'whose interests, capacities and skills are functional to the existing productive forces, which are functional solely to the rationality of capital'. It is also a class whose power has been broken by the form and structure of the labour-process itself. The transformative impulse must, therefore, come from a 'non-class of non-workers' not 'marked by the insignia of capitalist relations of production',⁴ made up of people who, because they experience work as 'an externally imposed obligation' in which life is wasted, are capable of having as their goal 'the abolition of workers and work rather than their appropriation'.⁵ This group includes all those whom the system has rendered actually or potentially unemployed or underemployed, all the 'supernumeraries' of contemporary social production.

Countless questions can and certainly will be raised about Gorz's analysis of the labour-process in contemporary capitalism and its effects on the working class. One critical point stands out: his whole argument is based on a kind of inverted technologism, a fetishism of the *labour-process*, and a tendency to find the essence of a mode of production in the technical process of work rather than in the relations of production, the specific mode of *exploitation*. (This, as we shall see, is something that he shares with post-Althusserian theorists like Poulantzas. In both cases, the tendency to define *class* less in terms of exploitative relations than in terms of the technical process of work may help to account for a very restrictive conception of the 'working class', which appears to include only industrial manual workers.) This tendency also affects his perception of the working class and its revolutionary potential, since in his account the experience of exploitation, of antagonistic relations of production, and of the struggles surrounding them—i.e. the experience of class and class struggle—play little part in the formation of working-class consciousness, which seems to be entirely shaped and absorbed by the technical process of work. Gorz is undoubtedly pointing to important changes in the structure of the working class which must be seriously confronted, but, in the end his is a metaphysical, not an historical or sociological, definition of the working class and its limitations, which has little to do with its interests, experiences, and struggles as an exploited class.

Questions could also be raised about his utopian vision itself. What is

important from our point of view, however, is not simply this or that objectionable characteristic of Gorz's utopia, but the very fact that it is a utopia without grounding in a process of transformation—indeed, a vision ultimately grounded in despair. (It is no accident that Gorz's account of the utopia begins with citizens waking up one morning and finding their world already transformed.) In the final analysis, Gorz offers no revolutionary agent to replace the working class. It turns out that the 'non-class of non-workers', this new revolutionary lumpen-proletariat which apparently 'prefigures' a new society, holds that promise only in principle, notionally, perhaps metaphysically; it has, by his own testimony, no strategic social power and no possibility of action. In the end, we are left with little more than the shop-worn vision of the 'counter-culture', bearing witness against the 'system' in an enclave of the capitalist wilderness. This is revolution by example as proposed in various forms from the fatuous 'socialism' of John Stuart Mill to the pipe-dreams (joint-dreams?) of bourgeois flower-children growing pot in communal window-boxes (while Papa-le-bourgeois sends occasional remittances from home).

Even if the objective of the Left were to be perceived as the abolition of work—and not as the abolition of classes and exploitation—it would be the destruction of capitalism and capitalist exploitation, and their replacement by socialism, that would determine the form in which the abolition of work would take place. What is significant about Gorz's argument is that, like other alternative visions, his rejection of the working class as the agent of transformation depends upon wishing away the *need* for transformation, the need to destroy capitalism. It is a monumental act of wishful (or hopeless?) thinking, a giant leap over and beyond the barrier of capitalism, bypassing the structure of power and interest that stands in the way of his utopia. We have yet to be offered a consistent and plausible alternative to the working class as a means of shifting that barrier. Even for Gorz the question is not, in the final analysis: who else will make the revolution? He is effectively telling us: if not the working class then no one. The question then is whether the failure of the working class so far to bring about a revolutionary transformation is final, insurmountable, and inherent in its very nature. His own grounds for despair—based as they are on an almost metaphysical technologism which denies the working class its experiences, interests, and struggles as an exploited class—are simply not convincing. Much the same can be said about other proposals for revolutionary surrogates, including those implicit in the Eurocommunist doctrine of popular alliances.

The Theoretical Requirements of Eurocommunism

The single most influential school of Western Marxism in recent years has been a theoretical current that derives its principle inspiration from Louis Althusser. The innovations of Althusser himself have been located

by Perry Anderson in the general tendency of Western Marxism toward the 'rupture of political unity between Marxist theory and mass practice' occasioned by both 'the deficit of mass revolutionary practice in the West' and the repressions of **Stalinism**.⁶ Hence the 'obsessive methodologism' that Althusser shared with other Western Marxists as questions of theoretical form displaced issues of political substance; hence the pre-occupation with bourgeois culture and the 'retroactive assimilation' into Marxism of pre-Marxist philosophy, notably in its idealist forms, (in Althusser's case, especially the philosophy of **Spinoza**)⁷ as 'bourgeois thought regained a relative vitality and **superiority**'⁸ in the face of a retreating socialism in the West; hence, too, Althusser's linguistic obscurity. Althusser's theoretical academicism has existed in uneasy tandem with his active political involvement in the PCF, and the precise connection between his theory has been a matter of hot dispute. There is in any case a certain incoherence in attempts to combine political practice, especially revolutionary practice, with a theory that acknowledges no subjects in history. The theoretical work of Althusser's pupils and successors has been no less prone to scholastic abstractionism, 'obsessive methodologism', philosophical idealism, and obscurity of language; but their development has been much more clearly and concretely tied to the political movements of the West in the sixties and seventies and specifically to the shifting programmes of Eurocommunism. Whatever the motivations of Althusser himself, the theoretical products of post-Althusserian Marxism have answered directly, albeit often critically, to the demands of Eurocommunist strategy.

Eurocommunists insist that their objective, unlike that of social democracy, is not merely to manage capitalism but to transform it and to establish socialism. Their strategy for achieving that objective is, essentially, to use and extend bourgeois-democratic forms, to build socialism by constitutional means within the legal and political framework of bourgeois democracy. Eurocommunist theoreticians generally reject strategies of 'dual power' which, they argue, treat the bourgeois democratic state as if it were impenetrable to popular struggles and vulnerable only to attack and destruction from without, from an oppositional base in alternative political institutions. Eurocommunist parties, therefore, offer themselves both as 'parties of struggle' and as 'parties of government' which, by achieving electoral victories, can penetrate the bourgeois-democratic state, transform it, and implant the conditions for socialism. This strategy is based on the conviction that, in the 'monopoly phase' of capitalism, a new opposition has emerged alongside—and even overtaking—the old class opposition between exploiters and exploited, capital and labour. In 'state monopoly capitalism', there is a new opposition between monopolistic forces, united and organised by the state, and the 'people' or 'popular masses'. An absolutely crucial, indeed the central, principle of Euro-

communist strategy is the 'popular alliance', a cross-class alliance based on the assumption that a substantial majority of the population including the petty bourgeoisie and wren elements of the bourgeoisie, not just the traditional working class, can be won over to the cause of socialism. It is precisely this new reality that makes possible a 'peaceful and democratic' transition to socialism. **Communist** parties, therefore, cannot be working class parties in any 'sectarian' sense; they cannot even merely open themselves to alliances with, or concessions to, other parties or groups. They must themselves directly represent the multiple interests of the 'people'.

The general strategy of Eurocommunism, then, seems at least implicitly to be built upon a conflict other than the direct opposition between capital and labour and a moving force other than class struggle. Its first object is to rally the 'popular' forces against 'state monopoly capitalism', to create the broadest possible mass alliance, and then to establish an 'advanced democracy' on the basis of this popular alliance, from which base some kind of socialism can be **gradually** constructed. The force that drives the movement forward is not the tension between capital and labour; in fact, the strategy appears to proceed from the necessity—and the possibility—of avoiding a confrontation between capital and labour. Insofar as the strategy is aimed at anti-capitalist goals, it cannot simply be guided by the interests of those who are directly exploited by capital but must take its direction from the varied and often contradictory ways in which different elements of the alliance are opposed to monopoly capitalism. It can be argued, then, that the movement need not, indeed cannot, in the first instance be motivated by specifically socialist objectives.

The doctrine of cross-class alliance proposed by Eurocommunism is, therefore, something more than simply an electoral strategy. It embodies a particular judgment about the source of ~~the~~ impulse for historical transformation. There are two ways of looking at the extension to other classes of the historic role formerly assigned to the working class. One is to stress the optimism of Eurocommunism concerning the revolutionary potential of the 'people'. The other is to stress their pessimism concerning the revolutionary potential of the working class. There can be little doubt that, however optimistic its claims, Eurocommunist strategy is ultimately grounded in the same historical reality that has so profoundly shaped Western Marxist theory and practice in general: the disinclination of the working class for revolutionary politics. It must be added that the Eurocommunist solution has been deeply affected by the experience of the Popular Front. It is even possible that there is more in this political strategy than simply pessimism about the working class. For example, the strategy for transforming the capitalist state by a simple extension of the bourgeois democratic forms, by the proliferation of representative institutions as against a system of direct council democracy, may reflect a more profound lack of interest in, or suspicion of, popular **power**.⁹ At any

rate, though the recoil of the working class from revolutionary politics is a reality which any socialist strategy must confront, there are different ways of confronting it (about which more later); and the Eurocommunist choice is a very specific one which tells a great deal about the nature of the movement. However the doctrine of popular alliances is conceived and explained, the effect is the same: it displaces the working class from its privileged role as the agent of revolutionary change and diminishes the function of class struggle as the principal motor of social transformation.

Here is the crux of Eurocommunism. We cannot get to the heart of the matter simply by equating Eurocommunism with social democracy. It is unhelpful merely to dismiss the professions of Eurocommunists that their objective is to transform, not to manage, capitalism. To do this is to avoid the real challenge of Eurocommunism. Nor can the issue be reduced simply to the choice of means—revolutionary insurrection versus constitutionalism, electoral politics, and the extension of bourgeois-democratic institutions. The critical question concerns the source and agency of revolutionary change. It is this question that, finally, determines not only the means of socialist strategy but also its ends; for to locate the impulse of socialist transformation is, as we have seen, also and at the same time to define the character and limits of socialism itself and its promise of human emancipation.

No socialist organisation can afford to neglect the implications of the working class recoil from revolutionary politics. Nor should socialists deny the necessity of establishing broader alliances in various political and social struggles. It is, however, quite another matter to suggest that other groups or combinations of groups, even 'popular alliances' in which the working class is 'hegemonic', can assume the historic revolutionary role formerly assigned to the working class. To do so may be to redefine the socialist project altogether, to limit its objectives, and to circumscribe socialism itself. To put it simply, however disadvantaged the petty bourgeoisie or 'small' and 'medium' capital may be in the conditions of 'state monopoly capitalism', their self-emancipation cannot be the same, in its means or in its ends, as the self-emancipation of the working class. A socialism that addresses itself to the kinds of oppression they all share, whatever else it may be, is a very different thing from the socialism whose immediate and essential impulse comes from the exploitation of one class by another.

There may or may not be a different emancipatory vision at the heart of this modified socialist project, but it certainly entails a different assessment of social relations and power. The strategic judgments of Eurocommunism have required more than just an evaluation of the political forces in the field at a particular historical 'conjuncture'. They have demanded a more thorough-going reassessment of capitalism, its dominant social relations and its structure of power. Such a reassessment has been provided not only by party strategists but by academic theoreticians; and

in the process, there has occurred an even more fundamental reformulation of Marxist theoretical principles. In the final analysis, the doctrine of cross-class alliances and the political strategy of Eurocommunism have, it can be argued, demanded nothing less than a redefinition of *class* itself and of the whole conceptual apparatus on which the traditional Marxist theory of class and class struggle has rested, a redefinition of historical agency, a displacement of production relations and exploitation from the core of social structure and process, and much else besides.

The Journey to Eurocommunism: A Case Study

The case of Nicos Poulantzas best exemplifies the new union of Marxist theory with Eurocommunist practice. Poulantzas deserves special attention not only because he is perhaps the most important theorist of the post-Althusserian tradition, the one who has done most to ground that tradition, with its philosophical preoccupations, more firmly in the immediate political problems of contemporary socialism, but also because he has made a major contribution to directing Marxists generally to long neglected theoretical problems. The extent of his influence on the present generation of Marxist political theorists, which is the more impressive for the tragic brevity of his career, would be reason enough for singling him out as an exemplary case. But he is exemplary also in a more general, historical sense. The course of his political and theoretical evolution traces the trajectory of a major trend in the European Left, reflecting the political odyssey of a whole generation.

When Poulantzas wrote his first major theoretical work, *Political Power and Social Classes*, published—significantly—in **1968**, like many others he was seeking a ground for socialist politics that was neither Stalinist nor Social Democratic. There was then, on the eve of the Eurocommunist era, no obvious alternative in Europe. Poulantzas' theoretical exploration of the political ground was still abstractly critical, negative, chipping away at the theoretical foundations of the main available options without a clear positive commitment to any party line. Like many of his contemporaries, however, he seems to have leaned towards the ultra-left, more or less Maoist, option. At least, his theoretical apparatus, deeply indebted to Althusser whose own Maoist sympathies were then quite explicit, bears significant traces of that commitment. The attack on 'economism', which is the hallmark of Poulantzas' work and the basis of his stress on the specificity and autonomy of the political, was essential to Maoism and constituted one of its chief attractions for people like Althusser. The concept of 'cultural revolution' also held a strong fascination for Poulantzas, as for the many others who claimed it as the operative principle of 'revolutions' like that of May '68. Whatever this concept meant to the Chinese, it was adopted by students and intellectuals in the West to cover revolutionary movements without specific points of concen-

tration or focused political targets, characterised instead by a diffusion of struggle throughout the social 'system' and all its instruments of ideological and cultural integration. The theoretical implications of this conception are suggested by Poulantzas himself, for example, in his debate with Ralph Miliband. In this exchange, Poulantzas adopted the Althusserian notion of 'ideological state apparatuses', according to which various ideological institutions within civil society which function to maintain the hegemony of the dominant class—such as the Church, schools, even trade-unions—are treated as belonging to the system of the state.¹⁰ He went on to suggest a connection between the idea of 'cultural revolution' and the strategic necessity of 'breaking' these ideological apparatuses. It is not difficult to see why advocates of 'cultural revolution' might be attracted to the notion of conceiving these 'apparatuses' as part of the state and thus theoretically legitimising the shift to 'cultural' and ideological revolt and the diffusion of struggle. Indeed, the centrality of ideology in post-Althusserian politics and theory, whatever modifications it has since undergone, may be rooted in a conception of social transformation as 'cultural revolution'—if not in its original Chinese form, at least in the specifically Western idiom of May '68. There is also in the earlier Poulantzas, as in many of his contemporaries, much that is reminiscent (as Miliband pointed out in the debate with Poulantzas) of the 'ultra-left deviation' according to which there is little difference among various forms of capitalist state, whether fascist or liberal-democratic, and bourgeois-democratic forms are little more than sham and mystification. Strong traces of this view can be found, for example, in Poulantzas' conception of Bonapartism as an essential characteristic of all capitalist states.

Many of these notions were abandoned or modified by Poulantzas in the course of debate and in his later work. As his earlier political stance, with its ultra-left and Maoist admixtures, gave way to Eurocommunism, he moved away from his earlier views on Bonapartism, 'ideological state apparatuses', and so on. Most notably, his theory of the state as well as his explicit political pronouncements shifted from an apparent depreciation of liberal democratic forms toward an albeit cautious acceptance—especially in his last book, *State, Power, Socialism*—of the Eurocommunist view of the transition to socialism as the extension of existing bourgeois democratic forms. From 'smashing' the state, he moved to 'transforming' it. From the unstructured voluntarism of the '68 'cultural revolution', he moved to the highly structured organisation of Communist Party politics.

The shifts, both political and theoretical are substantial; but there is nevertheless a continuity, a unity of underlying premises, that says a great deal not only about Poulantzas himself but about the logic running through the evolution of the European Left, or an important segment of it, since the 1960s. On the one hand, Poulantzas' work is informed by a consistent

anti-statism and a forthright assault on the deformations of Stalinism, as well as on the statism of Social Democracy. On the other hand, there is a characteristic ambiguity in his own conception of democratic socialism and the means by which it is to be achieved, an ambiguity that persists throughout the journey from 'Maoism' to Eurocommunism and tends toward the displacement of class struggle and the working class.

To understand the logic of that journey and the ambiguous conception of democracy and popular struggle that informs it, something more needs to be said about the attractions which the Maoist doctrines of 'cultural revolution', the 'mass line', and anti-economism have held for many people, especially students and intellectuals, in the European Left, something that explains the unlikely transposition of these doctrines from China to be very different conditions of Western Europe. Faced with the 'backwardness' of the Chinese people and an undeveloped working class, the CPC asserted the possibility of 'great leaps forward' in the absence of appropriate revolutionary conditions—i.e. class conditions—by dissociating revolution from class struggle in various ways. Not only did the masses—a more or less undifferentiated mass of workers and peasants—replace class as the transformative force, but the rejection of 'economism' meant specifically that the material conditions of production relations and class could be regarded as less significant in determining the possibilities of revolution. It became possible to conceive of political action and ideology as largely autonomous from material relations and class, and to shift the terrain of revolution to largely autonomous political and cultural struggles. The later Cultural Revolution was the ultimate expression of this view, and of the extreme voluntarism which necessarily followed from this autonomisation of political action and ideological struggle.

This conception of revolution inevitably entailed an ambiguous relation to the masses and to democracy. On the one hand, there was an insistence upon the necessity of massive popular involvement; on the other hand, the Maoist revolution was necessarily a revolution conducted by party cadres for whom popular involvement meant not popular democratic organisation but rather 'keeping in touch' with the masses and constructing the 'mass line' out of the 'raw material' of ideas and opinions emanating from them. The revolution was no longer conceived as emerging directly out of the struggles of a class guided and unified by its own class interests. Instead of a class with an identity, interests, and struggles of its own, the popular base of the revolution was a more or less shapeless mass (What identity do the 'people' or the 'masses' have? What would be the content of a revolution made by them 'in their own name'?) to be harnessed by the party and deriving its unity, its direction, and its very identity from autonomous party cadres.

The transportation of these principles to the advanced capitalist countries of the West, to be adopted especially by students and intellectuals,

was clearly no easy matter and required significant modifications—given the existence of well-developed and large working classes with long histories of struggle, not to mention the less than ideal conditions of intellectuals in China itself. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see the attractions exercised by this view of revolution, with its delicately ambiguous synthesis of democratic and anti-democratic elements. On the one hand, Maoist doctrine, with its insistence on keeping in touch with the masses, its attack on bureaucratic ossification, its mass line, and its Cultural Revolution seemed to satisfy the deepest anti-statist and democratic impulses. On the other hand, (whatever its actual implications in China) it could be interpreted as doing so without relegating declassed intellectuals to the periphery of the revolution. The dissociation of revolution from class struggle, the autonomisation of ideological and cultural struggles, could be interpreted as an invitation to them to act as the revolutionary consciousness of the people, to put themselves in the place of intrinsic class impulses and interests as the guiding light of popular struggles. After all, if there is any kind of revolution that intellectuals can lead, surely it must be a 'cultural' one.

Maoism, never more than a marginal and incoherent phenomenon in the context of advanced capitalism, could not long survive transportation; but the themes of cultural revolution, the autonomy of political and especially ideological struggles, and in particular the displacement of struggle from *class* to *popular masses* did survive in forms more appropriate to a Western setting. At least, some of those who had been attracted to Maoism for its adherence to these doctrines seem to have found in Eurocommunism a reasonable substitute: an alternative to Stalinism which promised both democracy or popular involvement and a special place for elite party cadres and declassed intellectuals. In particular, here, too, *class* was increasingly displaced by the more flexible 'popular masses'—though, of course, in a very different form. And here, too, political and ideological struggles were rendered more or less autonomous from material relations and class. Direct Maoist influences need not, of course, be invoked to explain Eurocommunist doctrine. European Communism has traditions of its own on which to draw—the legacy of the Popular Front with its cross-class alliances, suitably modified versions of Gramsci's theory of hegemony with its stress on ideological and cultural domination, etc. But for one important segment of the European Left, the transition from 'Maoism' (in its Western variant) to Eurocommunism had a certain comfortable logic. It is therefore not surprising to find certain continuous themes figuring prominently in the academic theoretical systems that have grown up side by side with Eurocommunism. Poulantzas, who wrote from the standpoint of left Eurocommunism, had a stronger commitment to the democratic side of the ambiguous synthesis than did many others; and he did not, therefore, go nearly as far as, say, Ernesto Laclau

has done in dislodging class and class struggle from the centre of Marxism or detaching politics and ideology from class. Nevertheless, his theoretical system is, as we shall see, deeply coloured by these themes.

Poulantzas on the State

Two aspects of Eurocommunist doctrine have figured most prominently in post-Althusserian theory: the conception of the transition to socialism as an extension of bourgeois-democratic forms and, more fundamentally, the doctrine of the cross-class 'popular' alliance. Accordingly, the chief theoretical innovations of this Marxism have occurred in the theory of the *state* and the theory of *class*, in which the question of *ideology* has assumed an increasingly pivotal role. The most important contributions have been Nicos Poulantzas' theory of the state, his theory of class in general and of the 'new petty bourgeoisie' in particular, and Ernesto Laclau's theory of ideology.

Poulantzas' theory of the state, for all its scholasticism, was from the beginning motivated by strategic considerations and the need to provide a theoretical base from which 'scientifically' to criticise some political programmes and support others. In his first major work on the state, *Political Power and Social Classes*, Poulantzas constructed an elaborate theoretical argument largely to demonstrate and explicate two principal characteristics of the capitalist state: the unitary character of its institutionalised power, and its 'relative autonomy' *vis-h-vis* the dominant classes. Paradoxically, argued Poulantzas, the dominant classes in capitalism do not derive their 'unambiguous and exclusive' political power from actual participation in or possession of 'parcels' of institutionalised state power, but rather from the 'relative autonomy' which permits the state to provide them with the political unity they otherwise lack."

The question underlying these theoretical arguments is fundamentally a strategic one: 'Can the state have such an autonomy *vis-h-vis* the dominant classes that it can accomplish the passage to socialism without the state apparatus being broken by conquest of a class power?'¹² Poulantzas' answer is aimed at specific targets. He attacks 'instrumentalist' arguments which treat the state as a mere tool of the dominant classes. He also rejects the other side of the 'instrumentalist' coin, the view that the instrument can easily change hands and that, as an inert and neutral tool, it can be wielded as easily in the interests of socialism as it was formerly wielded in the interests of capital.¹³ In short, Poulantzas is explicitly attacking not only the conventions of Stalinist political doctrine but also the theoretical foundations of 'reformism' and the political strategy of social democracy. This strategy in effect shares the bourgeois pluralist view that the state can belong to various countervailing interests, and proceeds from there to the conviction that, once representatives of the working class predominate, revolution can be achieved 'from above',

quietly and gradually with no transformation of the state itself. Indeed, to social democrats, today's state monopoly capitalism may appear as already a transitional phase between capitalism and socialism. Political and juridical forms, which are in advance of the economy, will simply pull the latter behind them, allowing a piece-meal transition to socialism without class struggle.

Poulantzas' theory of the state means that the reformist strategy is mistaken in its very premises. The question then is what political strategy would be appropriate to the realities of the contemporary capitalist state, its 'relative autonomy' and its 'profound relations' with the 'hegemonic fraction' of monopoly capital? Poulantzas does not explicitly outline his strategic proposals until his later work, and then there appear at first to be certain similarities to the reformist programme he has attacked.¹⁴ He too accepts that the state is open to penetration by popular forces and that there is no need for a strategy of 'dual power' which is based on the assumption that the state is a 'monolithic bloc without cracks of any kind'.¹⁵ The state need not be attacked and destroyed from without. Since it is 'traversed' by internal contradictions—the contradictions inherent in intra- and inter-class conflicts—the state itself can be the major terrain of struggle, as popular struggles are brought to bear on the state's internal contradictions. Like the social democratic strategy, this one too seems confident that the state can lead the transition to socialism without encountering insurmountable class barriers along the way. The critical difference between the two strategies, however, is that for Poulantzas, the state cannot be simply *occupied*; it must be transformed. There must be a 'decisive shift in the relationship of forces' within the state—not simply within representative institutions through electoral victory, but within the administrative and repressive organs of the state, the civil service, the judiciary, the police and the military. This project is arguably even more optimistic than the social democratic programme about the possibilities of transforming the capitalist state into an agent of socialism with a minimal degree of class struggle; but the difference between the two strategies is a real one.

At first glance, then, Poulantzas appears to accept the orthodox Euro-communist theory of 'state monopoly capitalism', its strategy of popular alliances and the transition to socialism by the extension of democracy within the framework of the bourgeois-democratic state. Yet much of his work, especially *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, has been devoted to criticism of both the PCF 'anti-monopoly alliance' strategy and the theory of 'state monopoly capitalism' that underlies it. PCF doctrine, according to Poulantzas, contains several fundamental errors. It treats the relation between the state and monopoly capital as if it were a simple *fusion*, ignoring the fact that the state represents a 'power bloc' of several classes or class fractions and not the 'hegemonic' fraction of monopoly

capital alone; it treats all non-monopoly interests as belonging equally to the 'popular masses', including elements of the bourgeoisie, without acknowledging the class barriers that separate the whole bourgeoisie from the truly 'popular' forces; and, in much the same way as the social democrats, it treats the state as in principle a class-neutral instrument, responding primarily to the *technical* imperatives of economic development, so that there appears to be nothing in the inherent nature of the capitalist state that prevents it from being merely *taken over* and turned to popular interests.

So Poulantzas appears to be undermining the foundations of PCF and Eurocommunist strategy. And yet, though it is certainly true that his own position is to the left of the PCF mainstream, it nevertheless represents a criticism from within, proceeding from basic principles held in **common**—notably, the transfer of revolutionary agency to the 'people' or 'popular alliances', the transition to socialism via 'transformation' of the bourgeois state or 'advanced democracy', and hence the displacement of class struggle. In the final analysis, Poulantzas' theory is intended not to undermine Eurocommunist strategy but to set it on a sounder foundation. He does not fundamentally reject the notion of 'state monopoly capitalism' but rather *rescues* it. He reformulates the idea to correct its own contradictions, taking account of the incontrovertible fact that the state represents interests other than those of the hegemonic monopoly fraction. This has the added advantage of making it clear why and how the state is vulnerable to penetration by popular struggles, as Eurocommunist strategy requires. More fundamentally, though Poulantzas questions the unconditional inclusion of non-monopoly capital in the 'people', he retains the conception of 'popular alliance' and the focus of struggle on the political opposition between 'power bloc' and 'people' instead of the direct class antagonism between capital and labour. Poulantzas' 'left Eurocommunism' certainly diverges in significant respects from its **parent**-doctrine, but the shared premises are more fundamental than the divergences and have substantial consequences for Marxist theory.

Here we come to the crux of the matter and Poulantzas' contribution to the displacement of class struggle. The critical **transformation** in Marxist theory and practice, the pivot on which Eurocommunist strategy turns, is a displacement of the principal opposition from the class relations between labour and capital to the political relations between the 'people' and a dominant force or power bloc organised by the state. This critical shift requires a number of preparatory moves. Both *state* and *class* must be relocated in the struggle for socialism, and this requires a redefinition of both state and class. If the opposition between people, or popular alliance, and power bloc *cum* state is to become the dominant one, it is not enough simply to show how the state reflects, maintains, or reproduces the exploitative relation between capital and labour. It must be shown

how the political conflict between two political organisations—the power bloc organised by the state and the popular alliance which organises the people—can effectively *displace* the class conflict between capital and labour.

Poulantzas accomplishes this by ascribing a special and predominant role to the political sphere and the state in state monopoly capitalism: '... monopoly capitalism is characterised by the displacement of dominance within the capitalist mode of production from the economic to the political, i.e. to the state, while the competitive stage is marked by the fact that the economic played the dominant role in addition to being **determinant**.'¹⁶ In other words, despite the separation of the economic and the political which is uniquely characteristic of capitalism and which survives in the monopoly phase, because of the expansion of the domain of state intervention the political sphere acquires a position analogous to the 'dominance' of the political sphere in pre-capitalist modes of production. Poulantzas even draws an analogy between state monopoly capitalism and the 'Asiatic mode of production' in this respect.¹⁷

This analogy and Poulantzas' conception of the 'dominance' of the political in state monopoly capitalism reveals a great deal about his point of view. His argument is based on the Althusserian principle that, while the economic always 'determines in the last instance', other 'instances' of the social structure may occupy a 'determinant' or 'dominant' place. In fact, the economic 'determines' simply by determining which instance will be determinant or dominant. This is at best an awkward and problematic idea (the merits of which I do not propose to debate here); but it makes some kind of sense insofar as it is intended to convey that in some modes of production—indeed typically, in pre-capitalist societies—the relations of production and exploitation may themselves be organised in 'extra-economic' ways. So, for example, in feudalism surplus-extraction occurs by extra-economic means since the exploitative powers of the lord are inextricably bound up with his political powers, his possession of a 'parcel' of the state. Similarly, in the 'Asiatic mode of production' the 'political' may be said to be dominant, not in the sense that political relations take precedence over relations of exploitation, but rather in the sense that exploitative relations themselves assume a political form to the extent that the state itself is the principal direct appropriator of surplus labour. It is precisely this fusion of 'political' and 'economic' that distinguishes these cases from capitalism where exploitation, based on the complete expropriation of direct producers and not on their juridical or political dependence or subjection, takes a purely 'economic' form. This is more or less the sense in which Althusser and Balibar elaborate the principle of 'determination in the last instance'. In Poulantzas' hands, however, the idea undergoes a subtle but highly significant transformation."

In the original formula, the relations of exploitation are always central, though they may take 'extra-economic' forms. In Poulantzas' formulation, relations of exploitation cease to be decisive. For him, relations of exploitation belong to the *economic* sphere; and the 'economic' in pre-capitalist societies, and apparently also in monopoly capitalism, may be subordinated to a separate political sphere, with its own distinct structure of domination. It would, of course, be perfectly reasonable for Poulantzas to point out that the role and the centrality of the 'political' vary according to whether it plays a direct or indirect role in surplus extraction and whether it is differentiated from the 'economic'. It would also be reasonable to suggest that the expansion of the state's role in contemporary capitalism is likely to make it increasingly a target of class struggle. But Poulantzas goes considerably beyond these propositions. He suggests not only that the nature of exploitative relations can vary in different modes of production according to whether they assume 'economic' or 'extra-economic' forms, but also that modes of production—or even phases of modes of production—may vary according to whether the relations of exploitation are themselves 'dominant' at all. When he argues, therefore, that the 'political' and not the 'economic' is 'dominant' in monopoly capitalism, he is in effect arguing that the *relations of exploitation* (though no doubt 'determinant in the last instance') no longer 'reign supreme'.

What all this amounts to is the displacement of exploitative relations to a secondary role, which is a radical departure from Marxist theory (and practice); but it is arguably essential to the Eurocommunist doctrine of state monopoly capitalism and popular alliances. As we shall see, a similar displacement is carried out in Poulantzas' theory of class. The immediate effect is to transform class struggle into—or rather, replace it with—a political confrontation between the power bloc organised by the state, and the popular alliance. One might say that class struggle remains only as a 'structural' flaw, a 'contradiction', rather than an active practice. As Poulantzas points out, the state, together with bourgeois political parties, plays the same organising and unifying role for the power bloc as a 'working class' party plays for the popular masses.¹⁹ Thus, the chief antagonists are no longer classes engaged in class struggle but pluralistic political organisations engaged in party-political contests.

Poulantzas on Class

This new theory of the state in contemporary capitalism goes a long way toward establishing a theoretical foundation for Eurocommunist strategy, but even more important to the doctrine of 'popular alliances' is a comparable transformation in the concept of *class*. If *class* and *class struggle* are to be made compatible with a strategy that displaces the opposition between capital and labour from its pivotal role, it is necessary to re-define class itself in such a way that the relations of exploitation cease to

be 'dominant' in the determination of class. Poulantzas achieves this reformulation, and in the process succeeds by definition in reducing the *working class* to such minute proportions that any strategy *not* based on 'popular alliances' appears recklessly irresponsible.

The most important element in Poulantzas' theory of class is his discussion of the 'new petty bourgeoisie'. The question of the petty bourgeoisie, as Poulantzas points out, 'stands at the centre of current debates' on class structure and is of critical strategic importance.²⁰ It is certainly the issue that most concerns Eurocommunist strategists. Considerable debate has surrounded not only the class situation of 'traditional' petty bourgeois traders, shopkeepers, craftsmen, but most particularly the 'new middle classes' or 'intermediate strata', wage-earning commercial and bank employees, office and service workers, certain professional groups—that is, 'white collar' or 'tertiary sector' workers. These two 'petty bourgeoisies' are the main constituents of the popular alliance with the working class, those which together with the working class constitute the 'people' or 'popular masses'. To locate them correctly in the class structure of contemporary capitalism has been a major pre-occupation of Eurocommunist strategists and theoreticians. Poulantzas stresses the strategic importance of the theoretical debate, the necessity of accurately identifying the class position of these groups 'in order to establish a correct basis for the popular alliance. . . .'²¹

Poulantzas begins by attacking two general approaches to the question of these 'new wage-earning groups', lumping together some very disparate arguments in each of the two categories. The first approach is that which dissolves these groups into either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie, or both. The second general 'tendency' is what Poulantzas calls 'the theory of the middle class', a politically motivated theory according to which both bourgeoisie and proletariat are being mixed together in the 'stew' of an increasingly dominant middle group, 'the region where the class struggle is dissolved'.²² Most of these theories are intended to dilute the concepts of class and class struggle altogether. From the point of view of Marxist theory and socialist strategy, there is only one theory, among the several included in these two categories, which represents a serious challenge to Poulantzas' own: the theory which assimilates the new wage-earning groups to the working class, arguing that white collar workers have been increasingly 'proletarianised'. We shall return in a moment to Poulantzas' reasons for dismissing this approach.

Poulantzas then turns to the solution proposed by the PCF in its political strategy of the 'anti-monopoly' alliance. Like Poulantzas himself, the PCF line rejects the 'dissolution of the wage-earning groups into the working class',²³ but it denies their class-specificity altogether and allows them to remain in a classless grey area as 'intermediate strata'. Poulantzas attacks this refusal to identify the class situation of the new wage-earning

'strata'. It is, he suggests, an abdication to bourgeois stratification theory and is inconsistent with the fundamental Marxist proposition that 'the division into class forms [is] the frame of reference for every social stratification'. The principle that 'classes are the basic groups in the "historic process" ' is incompatible with 'the possibility that other groups exist parallel and external to classes. . . .'²⁴

It should be noted immediately that Poulantzas' criticism of the PCF line on the 'new wage-earning groups' does not strike at its roots either theoretically or practically. In fact, his argument proceeds not as a rejection of PCF principles but, again, as an attempt to supply them with a sounder theoretical foundation, albeit somewhat to the left of the main party line. A truly Marxist theorisation of popular alliances must, he argues, be based on a definition of class which allows these 'strata' their own class position instead of allowing them to stand outside class. The significant point, however, is that this class position is *not* to be found within the working class. In other words, Poulantzas is seeking a more clearly Marxist theoretical support for the Eurocommunist conception of an alliance between a *narrowly defined* working-class and non-working-class popular forces.

Why, then does Poulantzas, in common with the PCF, refuse to accept the theory which 'dissolves' these 'strata' into the working class? This theory, which he attributes primarily to C. Wright Mills, has been developed more recently in unambiguously Marxist ways by Harry Braverman and others. Poulantzas, however, apparently regards it as a departure from Marxism—for example, on the grounds that it makes the *wage* the relevant criterion of the working class, thereby making the mode of *distribution* the central determinant of *class*.²⁵ (It is perhaps significant that Poulantzas focuses on the wage as a mode of distribution and not as a mode of exploitation—as we shall see in a moment.) He argues further that by assimilating these groups to the working class, this view promotes reformist and social democratic tendencies. To identify the interests of 'intermediate strata' with those of the working class is to distort working-class interests, accommodating them to more backward, less revolutionary *elements*.²⁶ A political strategy based on the hegemony of the working class and its revolutionary interests, he maintains, demands the exclusion of these backward elements from the ranks of the working class.

On the face of it, then, Poulantzas' refusal to accept the *proletarianisation* of white-collar workers appears to be directed in favour of a revolutionary stance and the hegemony of the working class which alone is 'revolutionary to the *end*'.²⁷ He even criticises the PCF analysis on the grounds that, despite its refusal to accept this dissolution, it courts the same danger by neglecting to identify the specific class interests of the new wage-earning strata and hence their divergences from working-class interests. It is true that he fails to explain how these dangers will be

averted by a 'working-class' party whose object is precisely to dilute its working-class character by directly representing other class interests, but let us leave aside this question for the moment. Let us pursue the implications of his own theory of the 'new petty bourgeoisie' to see whether it does, in fact, represent an attempt to keep exploitative class relations, class struggle, and the interests of the working class at the centre of Marxist class analysis and socialist practice.

For Poulantzas, the primary structural criterion for distinguishing between the working class and the new petty bourgeoisie at first seems to be the distinction between productive and unproductive labour. The 'unproductive' character of white-collar work separates these groups from the 'productive' working class. Poulantzas proceeds on the assumption that Marx himself applied this criterion and marked off the 'essential boundaries' of the working class by confining it to productive labour. Now it can be shown convincingly that Marx never intended the distinction to be used in this way.²⁸ In any case, Marx never said that he did so intend it, and Poulantzas never demonstrates that this is what he *meant*. He bases his argument on a misreading of Marx. He quotes Marx as saying 'Every productive worker is a wage-earner, but it does not follow that every wage-earner is a productive worker.'²⁹ Poulantzas takes this to mean something rather different: 'as Marx puts it,' he says, putting words into Marx's mouth, 'if every agent belonging to the working class is a wage-earner, this does not necessarily mean that every wage-earner belongs to the working class.' The two propositions are, of course, not at all the same, nor does Poulantzas *argue* that the one entails the other. He simply *assumes* it—i.e. he assumes precisely what needs to be proved, that 'agent belonging to the working class' is synonymous with 'productive worker'. He can then go on to demonstrate that various groups do not belong to the working class simply by demonstrating that they are not, according to Marx's definition (at least as he interprets that definition), productive workers.

Why this distinction—as important as it may be for other reasons—should be regarded as the basis of a *class* division is never made clear. It is not clear why this distinction should override the fact that, like the 'blue-collar' working class, these groups are completely separated from the means of production; that they are exploited (which he concedes), that they perform surplus labour whose nature is determined by capitalist relations of production—the wage-relationship in which expropriated workers are compelled to sell their labour-power; or even that the same compulsions of capital accumulation that operate in the organisation of labour for the working class—its 'rationalisation', fragmentation, discipline, etc.—operate in these cases too. Indeed, the same conditions—the compulsory sale of labour-power and an organisation of work derived from the exploitative logic of capital accumulation—apply even to workers not

directly exploited by capital but employed, say, by the state or by 'non-profit' institutions. Whatever the complexities of class in contemporary capitalism—and they are many, as new formations arise and old ones change—it is difficult to see why exploitative social relations of production should now be regarded as secondary in the determination of class. Poulantzas' use of the distinction between productive and unproductive labour to separate white-collar workers from the working class seems to be largely arbitrary and circular, with no clear implications for our understanding of how classes and class interests are actually constituted in the real world.

In fact, it soon turns out that this 'specifically economic' determination is not sufficient—or even necessary—to define the new petty bourgeoisie. It cannot account for all the groups that Poulantzas wants to include in this class. Not only, he suggests, can it not account for certain groups which *are* involved in the process of material production (e.g. engineers, technicians, and supervisory staff), it cannot explain the overriding unity which binds these heterogeneous elements into a single class set off from the working class. Now, *political* and *ideological* factors must be regarded as decisive. These factors are decisive even for those groups who are already marked off by the productive/unproductive labour distinction,³⁰ and in some cases even override that division. In the final analysis, once these groups have been separated out from the bourgeoisie by the fact that they are exploited, the decisive unifying factor that separates them from the working class is *ideological*, in particular the distinction between mental and manual labour. This distinction cannot be defined in 'technicist' or 'empiricist' terms, argues Poulantzas—for example, by empirically distinguishing 'dirty' and 'clean' jobs, or those who work with their hands and those who work with their brains, or those who are in direct contact with machines and those who are not. It is essentially a 'politico-ideological' division. Although this division cannot be entirely clear-cut and contains complexities which create fractions within the new petty bourgeoisie itself, it is the one determinant that both distinguishes these groups from the working class *and* overrides the various differences within the class, *including* the division between productive and unproductive labour with which it does not coincide. In other words, this *ideological* division is the decisive factor in constituting the new petty bourgeoisie as a class at all.

It is not at all clear to what reality this ideological division corresponds, or why it should override the structural similarities among workers. What *is* true is that the organisation of production in industrial capitalism establishes various divisions among workers within the labour process which are determined not by the technical demands of the labour-process itself but by its *capitalist* character. These divisions often constitute obstacles to the formation of a unified class—even in the case of

workers who belong to the same class by virtue of their relation to capital and exploitation. But it is not clear why the divisions cited by Poulantzas should be more decisive than any others that divide workers in the labour-process or disunite them in the process of class formation and **organisa-tion**. It is not clear why such divisions should be regarded *not* simply as obstacles to unity or roadblocks in the difficult process of class-formation—a process riddled with obstacles even for blue-collar workers—but rather as definitive class barriers dividing members from non-members of the working class.³¹ In fact, Poulantzas' theory seems unable to accommodate any *process* of *class-formation* at all. There seems to be only a string of static, sometimes overlapping, class situations (locations? boxes?). This is a view which in itself would seem to have significant political implications.

If the ideological division between mental and manual workers within the exploited wage-earning groups does not correspond to any objective barrier directly determined by the relations of production between capital and labour, neither does it correspond to a real and insurmountable division of interest between these workers. The class interests of both groups are determined by the fact that they are directly exploited through the sale of their labour-power, these interests have to do in the first instance with the terms and conditions of that sale, and in the last with the elimination of capitalist relations of production altogether, both the 'formal' and the 'real' subjection of labour to capital. The different functions of these workers in the labour-process may create divisions among them, based in some cases on differences in their responsibilities, education, income, and so on,³² but these differences cannot be regarded as *class* divisions by any standard having to do with relations of production and exploitation—and in any case, the organisation of production in contemporary capitalism has increasingly tended to homogenise workers in the labour-process by subjecting them to the same principles of 'rationalisation' and 'productivity'. The ideological divisions between them are constituted less from the point of view of their own class interests than from the point of view of capital, which has an interest in keeping them apart. The imposition of capitalist ideology can certainly operate to discourage unity within the working class and interfere with the processes of class formation and organisation, but it can hardly be accepted as an absolute class barrier between different kinds of workers.

Poulantzas has thus presented a class analysis in which relations of exploitation are no longer decisive. This is in keeping with the fundamental principles of his theory. The relations of production and exploitation, according to him, belong to the 'economic' sphere which, as we have seen, though it 'determines in the last instance' may not be *dominant* in any given mode of production or social formation. This notion is carried over into the analysis of class. It now becomes clear that there are cases in which political or ideological factors 'reign supreme' in determining

class.³³ Poulantzas is saying more than simply that the formation of classes is always a political, ideological, and cultural process as well as an economic one, or that relations between classes are not only economic but also political and ideological. Nor, again, is he simply pointing to the special role of the 'political' where relations of production are themselves 'politically' organised. He is suggesting that ideological and political relations may actually take precedence over the relations of exploitation in the 'objective' constitution of classes, and that political or ideological divisions may represent essential class barriers. Again the relations of exploitation have been displaced.³⁴

What, then, are the practical consequences of Poulantzas' views on class? Why is it a matter of such critical importance whether or not white collar workers are theoretically included in the working class? Poulantzas himself, as we have seen, maintains that it is strategically important to separate out the 'new petty bourgeoisie' in order to protect the revolutionary integrity and hegemony of the working class. There is, however, another way of looking at it. We have seen that for Poulantzas the relations of production are not decisive in determining the class situation of white-collar workers. The 'new petty bourgeoisie' is distinguished as a class on the basis of ideological divisions defined from the point of view of capital. In other words, they constitute a class insofar as they are absorbed into the hegemonic ideology of capitalism; and that absorption seems to be definitive: the new petty bourgeoisie can be made to adopt certain working-class positions—that is, their political attitudes can 'polarise toward' the proletariat; but they cannot be made part of the working class. These propositions are very different from the observation that the inclinations of white-collar workers to accept capitalist ideology may be stronger 'than those of blue-collar workers; that these inclinations constitute a problem for class organisation, for the development of class consciousness, and for the building of class unity; and that they must be taken into account by any socialist strategy. For Poulantzas, it would appear that these inclinations represent a decisive class boundary; and this has significant strategic implications.

Despite Poulantzas' criticism of PCF theory and strategy, his theory of class belongs to the '... attempt of the theoreticians of Eurocommunism to reduce the weight of the Western proletariat to that of a minority within society. . .'.³⁵ At a stroke of the pen, the proletariat is reduced from a comfortable majority in advanced capitalist countries to a rump group which must inevitably place class alliances at the top of its agenda. Poulantzas' very definition of class in general and the 'new petty bourgeoisie' in particular displaces the focus of socialist strategy from creating a united working class to constructing 'popular alliances' based on class differences, even based on divisions imposed by capital. Any appeal to the 'new petty bourgeoisie', for example, must be directed not

to its working-class interests but to its specific interests as a petty bourgeoisie. The strategic implications become even clearer when this view of alliances is embodied in a particular view of 'working class' parties as organisations which do not simply form alliances with other groups and parties but directly *represent* other class interests. Poulantzas insists that 'the polarisation of the petty bourgeoisie towards proletarian class positions depends on the petty bourgeoisie being *represented* by the class-struggle organisations of the working class themselves. . . This means, firstly, that popular unity under the hegemony of the working class can only be based on the class difference between the classes and fractions that form part of the alliance. . .'³⁶ This notion turns out to be a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it suggests that the popular forces should themselves be transformed in the process of struggle. That is why, argues Poulantzas, the alliance should be established 'not by way of concessions, in the strict sense, by the working class to its allies taken as they are, but rather by the establishment of objectives which can transform these allies in the course of uninterrupted struggle and its stages, account being taken of their specific class determination and the specific polarisation that affects them'.³⁷ On the other hand, the very idea that alliances must not be based merely on 'concessions' to allies 'taken as they are' also entails that working-class organisations must cease to be organisations of the working class. It now appears that it is not just the integrity of working-class interests that these organisations must protect, but also that of the petty bourgeoisie. Poulantzas now seems to be criticising the PCF for taking the 'popular masses' too much for granted, instead of acknowledging the specificity of their various class interests. A 'working-class' party cannot simply make 'concessions' to elements outside itself from a vantage point consistently determined by working-class interests, it must actually *represent* other class interests—and this means establishing objectives addressed to these other class interests. This inevitably raises the question of the degree to which the ultimate objectives of socialism itself must be tailored to the measurements of cross-class alliances.

Paradoxically, if Poulantzas' approach—and that of Eurocommunism generally—places unnecessary obstacles in the way of the struggle for socialism by erecting artificial class barriers *within* the working class, the same approach tends to underplay the real difficulties of the struggle by underestimating the barriers *between* classes. Poulantzas' analysis, for example, creates a gradual continuum of classes which blurs the sharp divisions between the working class and clearly non-working-class elements of the 'popular alliance'; but even more fundamentally, the incorporation of a wide range of class interests within the popular alliance, together with the relegation of exploitative relations to a secondary position, tends even to narrow the gap between capitalist and socialist forces. This may help to account for the Eurocommunist tendency 'to understate the problems of

[the] transition³⁸ and underestimate the necessity of direct class confrontation and struggle. The whole approach is compounded of a pessimism based on the assumption that the real (potentially revolutionary) working class represents a minority, and an optimism based on the assumption that the mass constituency for a (modified) socialist programme represents a vast majority. Both assumptions have significant practical consequences which, taken together, circumscribe the socialist project: optimism limits the means, pessimism curtails the ends.

Laclau on Ideology

Viewed from this Eurocommunist perspective, the chief task of the 'working-class' movement is to win the hearts and minds of the 'middle sectors'. Since this battle must be fought on the ideological and political terrain, the strategy of popular alliances places a particularly heavy burden on ideological struggle and attaches a very special theoretical importance to the question of ideology. Ernesto Laclau has clearly formulated the theoretical demands imposed by the strategy of class alliances: 'Today, when the European working class is increasing its influence and must conceive its struggle more and more as a contest for the ideological and political hegemony of middle sectors, it is more necessary than ever for Marxism to develop a rigorous theory of ideological practice which eliminates the last taints of class reductionism.'³⁹ Accordingly, Laclau introduces important innovations into Marxist theories of ideology, with the specific purpose of meeting these strategic needs. To lay the foundation, however, he must first tie up certain loose ends in the theories of class presented by both Eurocommunist strategists and Poulantzas. Again the question is where to locate the 'middle sectors'. Laclau, too, is dissatisfied with the standard PCF notion of 'intermediate wage-earning strata' as fundamentally classless, but he concludes that this position may be less mistaken than Poulantzas supposes.⁴⁰ The difficulty with Poulantzas' position, suggests Laclau, is that by making *ideological* factors the primary determinant of class in these cases, he effectively denies the very basis of Marxism because he defines class apart from production relations.⁴¹ The problem for Laclau, then, is to acknowledge and explain the ideological unity of these groups (which he accepts) *and* to give that ideological unity the priority it deserves, without contradicting the fundamental premises of Marxist class analysis. In his analysis, class retains its theoretical purity but loses its historical significance. Laclau concedes, in contrast to Poulantzas, that the 'new petty bourgeoisie' is a fraction of the working class; he simply goes on to argue that, whatever the objective class situation of these groups in terms of production relations, that situation is secondary in determining their position. For them, the primary 'contradiction' with the 'dominant bloc' is not a *class* contradiction. In their case, the important contradictions 'are posed, not at the level of the

dominant relations of production, but at the level of political and ideological relations. . .⁴³ In other words, their 'identity as *the people* plays a much more important role than their identity as *class*.'⁴³ The fact that Poulantzas' old and new petty bourgeoisies are two different classes, and that the latter technically belongs to the working class, is overridden by the political and ideological unity which binds them together and separates them from other classes; and their location between the two principal classes allows them to 'polarise' either way. The class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, then, is increasingly an ideological battle over these groups as the two contenders seek to win them over by ideological means.

This clearly represents an important innovation in the Marxist conception of class and class struggle. It should be emphasised, however, that all three attempts to revise Marxist theory to accommodate the 'middle sectors'—the PCF theory of classless intermediate wage-earning strata, Poulantzas' theory of the new petty bourgeoisie, and Laclau's displacement of class contradictions by ideological divisions—represent an in-house debate, a dispute about which theory of class is best suited to support the strategy of popular alliance and the 'power bloc versus people' opposition on which that strategy rests. All three depend in one way or another on displacing the relations of production and exploitation and the direct opposition between capital and labour from the centre of Marxist theory and practice.

Laclau then presents a theory of ideology that extends the *autonomy* of ideology by dissociating it as much as possible from class relations. To summarise his argument very *briefly*:⁴⁴ There are ideological 'interpellations' which are generated not by class contradictions and struggles, but by other contradictions, notably that between 'people' and 'power bloc'. The latter ideological elements, though 'articulated' with class ideologies, are in principle neutral, autonomous, not class-specific, and therefore detachable from their class associations. These become the central arena of class struggle, 'the domain of class struggles par excellence',⁴⁵ as one class struggles to detach them from the other in order to establish hegemony over the 'people'. The argument applies specifically to 'popular democratic interpellations' which have tended to be associated with the bourgeoisie. The working class can achieve hegemony by 'disarticulating' these 'interpellations' from bourgeois class interests and claiming them for itself. Laclau thus (as I argued on another occasion) 'makes class struggle appear to be in large part an "autonomous" intellectual exercise in which the "autonomous" intellectual champions of each class compete in a tug-of-war over non-class ideological elements, victory going to that class whose intellectuals can most convincingly redefine these elements to match its own particular *interests*'.⁴⁶

It should be noted that Laclau goes beyond the argument that not all

social conflicts are class struggles and that not all ideologies are class ideologies, even when they are implicated in class struggle. He also goes beyond the observation that a particular class ideology—such as bourgeois-democratic ideology—can achieve a certain appearance of *universality*, and that it is precisely this appearance of universality that constitutes class *hegemony*. He is not even saying simply that such claims to universality must contain an important element of truth in order to be hegemonic. All this would be true, and would correctly characterise bourgeois democracy—which is both a *class* ideology and a plausible claimant to universality to the extent that it has captured the allegiance of other classes not simply by mystification but also by bringing them real benefits. Laclau, however, is saying something else. Instead of arguing that an ideology that is class-determined in origin and meaning may acquire an appearance of generality and thus contribute to the hegemony of its parent-class, he argues essentially the reverse: that such an ideology should be recognised as having 'no precise class connotations',⁴⁷ and that class hegemony depends upon claiming and seizing these essentially class-neutral 'interpellations'. To judge the 'democratic' aspects of bourgeois democracy in these terms, for example, is quite different from acknowledging that bourgeois-democratic forms, however 'bourgeois' they may be, cannot be dismissed as mere sham and mystification. It is, in effect, to argue instead that they are not 'bourgeois' at all. Laclau insists in a footnote that by 'democratic interpellations' he has more in mind than the ideology of liberalism and parliamentary *democracy*;⁴⁸ but it is clear that his argument is calculated to bridge the gap between bourgeois and socialist democracy and to conceptualise away the radical break between them. The strategic implication of this argument seems to be that socialism can be built simply by extending these essentially class-neutral democratic forms. Again we encounter no class barriers along the way. If, in contrast, we were to look upon these forms as class-specific, we could acknowledge their value and even the plausibility of their claims to a certain generality; but we should also have to acknowledge the break, the 'river of fire', between bourgeois and socialist democracy, as well as the difficulty of proceeding from one to the other. For Laclau, the appropriate strategy is not to stress the specificity of socialism, not to reclaim democracy for socialism by challenging the limits of bourgeois democracy with alternative socialist forms, and, finally, not to pursue the specific interests of the working class but to dilute them in an intermediate 'stew'. We now have a theory of ideology to accompany the theories of class and the state which are needed to underpin the strategy of popular alliance and the building of socialism by the extension of bourgeois-democratic forms, all by-passing the direct opposition between capital and labour.

Conclusion

Because for Laclau the chief task of socialist strategy is to forge a popular alliance, the chief enemy is 'class reductionism' and 'sectarianism'. Yet in the final analysis, this is a mystification. The issue is not whether socialists should remain wedded to a dogma of revolutionary purity and 'class-reductionism' which precludes alliances with other forces and dismisses bourgeois democracy as mere sham. The issue is whether the dominant parties or organisations of the Left can be anything else but essentially working-class parties or organisations. It is a mystification to pose the question as if it were a matter of alliances or no alliances, democracy or no democracy, as if the only choice were between, on the one hand, the Eurocommunist strategy of class alliances and, on the other, 'ultra-left' sectarianism which dismisses democratic ideology as simply bourgeois, perceives no difference between liberal democracy and fascism, and rejects any and all alliances. It is, in short, a mystification to transform a case against 'class-reductionism' and 'sectarianism' into an indictment of any working-class politics and into a conception of socialist struggle in which the chief task is to win the allegiance of the 'middle sectors'. It is possible to acknowledge the value of bourgeois democracy without reducing socialism to a mere extension of it, without ignoring its role in absorbing and containing class struggle, and without understating the obstacles it places in the way of socialism and, indeed, in the way of democracy itself.⁴⁹ It is also possible to conceive of alliances that do not dilute the specificity of socialism or curtail its objectives.

There is, in fact, a sense in which the political doctrines espoused by Laclau and his colleagues themselves converge with the undemocratic and reductionist principles of the 'sectarian' left, as described, for example, in the following sharp characterisation of the socialist sects:

. . . **sectism** involves the tendency to counterpose socialism as a Good Idea to the class movement as a defective reality. . . This. . . indicates the source of the close association in socialist history between intellectuals and **sectism**: firstly, predilection for the primacy of ideas over material interests; and secondly, elitist fear of a mass movement which is not under the control of Superior Minds. This intellectualist fear of self-moving masses is transmuted into programmatic terms by the ultimatic requirement that a class movement must measure up to intellectually established political standards before it can be accepted without contamination. . . To put it still another way: sectists saw socialism primarily as a **concept to convince people of**. . . Marx saw socialism as the necessary outcome of the proletariat's struggle. . .⁵⁰

What has characterised these forms of sectarianism above all is the shift away from the interests and struggles of the working class. The linchpin of traditional Marxism has always been the *interests* of the working class—both their short-term material interests and their long-term revolutionary interests. The chief and most delicate problem for socialist

strategy has been to serve the one without betraying the other. If working-class movements have consistently refused to adopt a revolutionary stance, a commitment to socialism and its democratic values allows no simple contempt for working-class 'economism', 'reformism', or 'false consciousness', no easy escape to an elitist vanguard which embodies the *true* consciousness of the working class and will achieve its emancipation by proxy.

Solutions of this 'ultimatic' kind have, however, appeared in various 'Western Marxist' incarnations which go even beyond the most elitist **vanguardism** and substitutism—for example, in the idealism of Lukács which completely separates revolutionary class consciousness from the working-class itself and constructs a disembodied ideal consciousness. The post-Althusserian theories of Poulantzas and Laclau have introduced a new and paradoxical variant to this tendency. The essence of this approach is a replacement of class interest by ideology, either in the sense that class itself is conceived as determined by ideological factors or in the sense that class divisions based on class interests are subordinated to ideological 'contradictions' which cut across class. In either case, 'ideas' take precedence over material interests, and the working class is judged inadequate to the degree that it fails to measure up to the Idea of a true working class. In fact, certain 'backward' elements are in danger of being altogether excommunicated from the working class by definition. In effect, we are being told yet again that the ideological hegemony of capitalism is so complete—at least as it concerns a large proportion of the 'popular masses'—that it has overcome class determinations; and the impulse for revolutionary change can no longer be sought in class interests and class struggle.

It is typical of this mentality that, while it rails against the anti-revolutionary restrictions of working-class politics or trade unionism, it leaps over the heads of the working class to even more restricted forms of cross-class politics. The paradox of this view is that, in practice, to separate the socialist 'idea' from the interests and struggles of the real working class, no matter how deficient in revolutionary consciousness, is to dilute and curtail the socialist idea itself. The quantitative and qualitative inadequacies of the working class must be compensated for by alliances or substitutions which place their own demands and limits on the socialist project—and *these* limits are absolute and final. In the end, the question is a very practical one. If the socialist movement is to consist of 'popular alliances' in which a narrowly defined working-class minority, whose interests are (as Poulantzas puts it) alone 'revolutionary to the end', combines with a non-revolutionary majority, how are we to envisage the process of transition? At what point will socialists come up against the insurmountable differences between the revolutionary interests of some and the non-revolutionary interests of others? When the latter's interest

in change is exhausted, will they simply be jettisoned along the way? How will capitalist opposition be overcome, especially when the unity of the 'people' has reached its limit? Or will the socialist project have to be curtailed to stop short of these obstacles? The strategy of Eurocommunism never faces up to these questions. The issue is evaded by its programme for building socialism through the extension of bourgeois democratic forms. This programme seems never to encounter any real class barriers, by-passing both the oppositions between capital and labour and the barriers within the popular alliance. It is a very different matter to conceive the chief task of the socialist movement in the first instance as an effort to build a united working class by organising its disparate elements in the full recognition of their common class situation, always keeping in view the revolutionary objectives of socialism but never evading the difficulties of reaching them.

The question of how and under what circumstances a working-class movement should establish alliances remains a critical one. The socialist movement has much to gain from association with other popular movements and protests and much to learn from them. It has much to learn not only about the dimensions of human emancipation—here the women's movement is especially important—but even about overcoming the barriers to working-class unity itself—notably the barriers of gender and race. And of course there are many important objectives short of revolution that require alliances of one kind or another. The dangers of nuclear annihilation and ecological disaster have no doubt added a whole new dimension to the problem. But if at the root of these dangers there still lies the capitalist imperative which is able to impose its competitive pressures of accumulation not only on its own people but on the whole world, if that drive has transformed 'life-forms and land-forms' (as Raymond Williams has recently put it) into 'a range of opportunities for their profitable exploitation, which at certain definite technical stages becomes, on a rising scale, a form, not only of production, but of destruction and self-destruction'⁵¹—then it is simply an evasion to say that the terrain of struggle has irrevocably shifted, requiring new visions of social transformation and new agents to achieve it. The structure of power and interest that constitutes capitalism is still in the way, and the class barriers to its destruction are still there. They cannot simply be dissolved in alliances or theorised out of existence. Marxist theory must certainly develop to apprehend the changing structure of capitalism, the transformations in the working class, and the new divisions within it. No one, however in theory or practice, has offered a plausible and realistic substitute for class struggle and its abolition as the form and substance of the revolutionary, emancipatory process, or for the working class as its principal agent.

NOTES

1. See in particular Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London, New Left Books, 1976).
2. André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism* Boston, South End Press, 1982, p. 96.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
6. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 64-5.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
9. Cf. Ralph Miliband, 'Constitutionalism and Revolution: Notes on Eurocommunism', *Socialist Register* 1978, pp. 165-7.
10. See R. Blackburn (ed.) *Ideology in Social Science* (1972) Ch. 11.
11. Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London, New Left Books and Sheed and Ward, 1973), p. 288.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 273, 288.
14. See in particular *State, Power, Socialism* (London, Verso, 1980), especially the last chapter.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
16. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London, New Left Books, 1975), p. 101.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
18. It is worth noting that Poulantzas finds Balibar's approach too 'economistic'. (*Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, p. 13, n. 1.)
19. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, p. 98.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
27. *Ibid.*
28. See Peter Meiksins, 'Productive and Unproductive Labour and Marx's Theory of Class', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Fall 1981, pp. 32-42.
29. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
31. For a discussion of this distinction between class divisions and obstacles to class formation as it applies, for example, to the case of engineers, see Peter Meiksins, 'Scientific Management: A Dissenting View', forthcoming in *Theory and Society*.
32. Some of these factors—e.g. education—may even be purely 'conjunctural', varying in different capitalist countries at different times. Poulantzas may, for example, be generalising from certain European cases—notably France?—in which the education of white-collar workers differs from that of blue-collar workers more markedly than is the case, say, in the United States or Canada. This would not be the first time that the historical particulars of French experience have been transformed into theoretical universals by Althusserian theory.
33. See, for example, *Political Power and Social Classes*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
34. It is worth adding that Poulantzas appears to have difficulty keeping his focus on relations of exploitation even in cases where the 'economic' is clearly 'domi-

nant', that is, social formations where the capitalist mode of production (in its simple or 'competitive' form) prevails. For example, in his statement of basic principles, where he defines the determining characteristics of modes of production, he suggests that *property relations* in all class societies are **characterised** by a separation of the producer from the means of labour. The particular separation from the means of production which uniquely characterises capitalism takes place in the labour process, in the relations of 'real appropriation'. **This** separation 'occurs at the stage of heavy industry' (*Political Power and Social Classes*, op. cit., p. 27). Poulantzas again attributes this view to Marx. For Marx, however, the critical factor is *wage-labour*; the crucial separation occurs long before the 'stage of heavy industry', not merely with the re-organisation of the labour-process in the 'real' subjection of labour to capital, but in the earlier transformation of the *exploitative relationship* in the 'formal' subjection. This is the essential boundary between capitalist relations and other modes of production, even though transformations in the labour-process have followed in its train and have had profound effects on class formation. Poulantzas has shifted the focus away from the relations of exploitation to the labour-process, which then appears as the distinctive and essential characteristic of the mode of production at the 'economic' level. This may help to account for certain peculiarities we have already noted in his analysis of white-collar workers: for example, his refusal to regard their status as *wage-labourers*—i.e. their exploitation through the sale of their labour-power—as decisive in determining their class, on the rather curious grounds that wages are simply a mode of distribution; and his tendency instead to accord a critical role to the position of these workers in the organisation of the labour-process and its ideological expression in the division between mental and manual labour.

35. Ernest Mandel, *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism* (London, New Left Books, 1978), p. 209.
36. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, op. cit., pp. 334-5.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 335.
38. Miliband, op. cit., p. 170.
39. Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London, NLB Verso, 1979), pp. 141-2.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
43. *Ibid.*
44. I have discussed Laclau's argument in another context in 'Liberal Democracy and Capitalist Hegemony: A Reply to Leo Panitch on the Task of Socialist, Political Theory', *Socialist Register* 1981, pp. 183-6.
45. Laclau, op. cit., p. 109.
46. Wood, op. cit., p. 184.
47. Laclau, op. cit., p. 111.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 107, n. 36.
49. The ways in which the liberal democratic state can function in 'managing' class conflict have been explored by Ralph Miliband in *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982).
50. Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Volume II The Politics of Social Classes* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1978), p. 526.
51. Raymond Williams, 'The Red and the Green', *London Review of Books*, 3-16 February, 1983, p. 3.