
Book Reviews

The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies by John Urry, Humanities Press, 1981.

The concept of civil society has not been popular in Marxist discourse for quite some time. Its usefulness has been specifically argued against by Althusser (1971) and Poulantzas (1973). In his analysis of capitalist societies, John Urry resurrects civil society as a viable concept. Urry seeks to forge a passage between the pitfalls of "reductionist" and "autonomist" positions. Civil society is the vehicle he uses in this quest. For Urry, civil society is the "site where individual subjects reproduce their material conditions of life" (p. 16). As such, it is not "merely the world of individual needs, but rather, . . . sets of structured, institutionalized social practices" (p. 17). In particular, civil society consists of three spheres: circulation, reproduction and struggle. The social practices in these spheres are constituted in class and non-class relations, the latter including race, gender, generation and nation.

By using this concept of civil society, Urry argues that Marxist theory can avoid reducing ideology and the state to the economy. He agrees that Althusser and Poulantzas' concept of relative autonomy is superior on both logical and empirical grounds to reductionist theories, and does not accept the autonomist position that if there is no direct determination, there is autonomy. According to Urry, civil society is the intermediary between state and economy, suffering the pertinent effects of each. Poulantzas argues there are individualizing effects of both nationalism and legal equality from the state in the ideological instance. But Urry points out that there are also individualizing effects on subjects from commodity exchange and personal consumption in civil society. It is only by ignoring circulation and consumption that Poulantzas is thus able to reject civil society.

The Spheres of Production and Circulation

It is in civil society that a sphere of exchange exists, separate from production. The separation of exchange from production, and therefore the existence of civil society, only began with the bourgeoisie. This separation is the premise of capitalism (pp. 28-30, drawing from Marx, 1968:48-9). Usually, this distinction is referred to as the difference between production for use and production for exchange. While making basically the same argument, Urry does not refer to the distinction between production for use and for exchange. Perhaps this is due to his stress on exchange relations.

Urry argues that the capitalist economy is not a structure, level, or instance but instead "a set of circular relationships, of circuits, especially that of $M-C-C'-M'$ which begin and end in the sphere of circulation" (p. 30). Instead of an economic instance then, we have two spheres—one of production and one of circulation. What the difference is between a sphere, instance, level, or structure is not elucidated by Urry. Nor does he adequately explain why the *circular* relationship of exchange-production-exchange could not as easily be seen as production-exchange-production. This is not a historical problem of which came first "the chicken or the egg." Urry is probably correct in saying it was the egg; primitive accumulation prepared the way for capitalist production. The problem here is one of primacy of production over exchange. It is this primacy which is the difference between Marxist and pre-Marxist bourgeois economic theory.

Urry does not so much directly deny the primacy of production over exchange as he neglects it. This may be the reason he places an inordinate amount of social relations into civil society rather than production or the state. Civil society not only includes the sphere of circulation and the sphere of reproduction but also the sphere of struggles. What begins as a very useful concept for analyzing circulation and reproduction is blown up into an all-encompassing arena. Relations of gender, race, nation, generation, and class only exist in civil society. Corresponding struggles of the popular-democratic form, class struggle between capital and labor, and classes—in struggle (the nondirect antagonist relations to ground-rent landlords, the new middle class, petty bourgeoisie and lumpenproletariat) also exist only in civil society (see Chapter 5, esp. pp. 66-67). Class struggle in production, the struggle which shapes, mediates and defines political and ideological struggle for most Marxists, does not have a place in Urry's analysis.

The inadequate analysis of capitalist production seems to stem from the centrality Urry gives to exchange. For example, when Urry discusses unions, he only sees their market effects, that is the effects on the price of labor in the marketplace (pp. 27-31, 70). Urry points out that the struggle for the reproduction of labor power is important in analyzing the relative autonomy of the state and the reformist nature of working class movements. But Urry's neglect of class struggle in the development of the forces and relations of production prevents him from establishing the mediation of class struggle in the marketplace by class struggle in the workplace. The excellent work in Edwards, Reich, and Gordon (1975) or more recently, Gordon, Edwards and Reich (1982) on the effects of class struggle in production on the labor market is sufficient to demonstrate the insufficiency of Urry's analysis.

Civil Society and the Ideological Instance

The separation of production from circulation, reproduction and struggle results in a set of social practices in civil society which are necessary for production but not directly determined by it. These

social practices, including class practices, have no inherent unity. The forms of class practice such as "interest, ritual, know-how, symbols and illusions, modes of thought, and views of life . . . 'may or may not overlap with that of other classes. There may or may not be relations of domination between different class practices'." (p. 47.) There is no cohesive ideology of the capitalist mode of production or a dominant ideology of the capitalist class. In fact there is no ideological instance for Urry. Instead, there are only ideological effects on social practices. Social or class practices are not part of a unified ideological instance but merely social practices and nothing more.

By rejecting the unity of ideology and the ideological instance, Urry can use a more traditional meaning of ideology. He restricts ideological practices to those only where there is "a concealment of causes, nature and consequence of that practice . . . and this concealment is in the interests of one or more of the dominant social forces..." (p. 45). Urry is right to point out that social practices where class interest is concealed are a distinctive category of practices which require special investigation (pp. 45-46). But I am not convinced that only these distinctive practices should be considered ideological. For example, appropriate deference by an employee to his or her boss, is in the interest of the dominant social forces, but there is no concealment of causes, nature or consequences. Deference, demeanor and similar practices which represent classes or relations between classes as well as the state (and civil) apparatuses which reproduce these practices seem to me to have ideological effects without necessarily requiring concealment.

Urry's rejection of the ideological instance is based on the lack of unity at this level, since class practices overlap and may or may not be relations of domination. However, that practices overlap does not mean they do not have a unified pattern. It could mean that some ideological class practices have hegemony over others and that practices of domination are more important than class practices which do not express domination. On the other hand, Urry may have a point when one looks at the social formation as a whole. At this level, there is no single dominant ideological instance exhibiting a constant unity of function. Instead, a "more pluralist view of competing ideologies" (p. 150) is appropriate.

At this point, it seems that Urry has begun a very important criticism of the concept of the ideological instance. But it seems to me that his argument is not developed enough to be able to accept or reject it. For instance, Urry's criticism of Althusser (pp. 49-57) is that his theory is functionalist. He then rejects functionalism because it implies that reproduction is "automatic" and "so structured that it is the most functionally appropriate for social relations of capitalist production" (p. 52). This may be true, but it is quite possible to make a functional argument which does not imply an automatic or most appropriate reproduction. This is basically what Urry does when he examines the relationship of the economy to the state.

After criticizing the theories of McDonnell, Althusser, and Hindess and Hirst regarding ideology, Urry goes on

to describe the practices of civil society (Chapter 5). He has argued that social practices previously seen as part of the ideological instance should instead be conceived as practices of civil society. As an example, he examines only the family and women's role in it as domestic labor. Urry presents no examination of race, generation, and national relations despite earlier claims as to the usefulness of the concept of civil society for their analysis.

In looking at the family, Urry makes some excellent points (following from Humphries, 1977) on how the family is used by the working class to its advantage in securing its reproduction (p. 76). He then draws several conclusions about domestic labor as the means for reproducing labor power.

Unfortunately these conclusions are not well supported or developed. This section (pp. 77-79) may well be the weakest part of the book. For one, it tends to be very economic. His analysis centers on the relation of noncommodity domestic labor to its product, labor-power, which is a commodity. He repeatedly states that there is no relationship between labor-time involved in reproducing labor-power and wages received for labor-power within exchange (pp. 77, 78). Does this mean education or training does not involve reproducing labor-power? Or if we only consider domestic labor, is there no relationship between productivity and health and welfare of the worker? In general, higher wages for an individual wage earner (especially for overtime) will increase hours worked and decrease time available for performing domestic labor. I would say that this is a direct relationship between wages and domestic labor.

Wage levels also affect lifestyles, which are the character of reproduction for a family. Urry does not mention lifestyle, sexual relations, sexist ideologies, the role of children or so on. Of course this is not a book about women and the family, but Urry is supposedly trying to show how the concept of civil society is superior to the concept of the economic or ideological instance. This section could have easily been written as the effects of the economic instance on domestic labor (and been criticized for ignoring the ideological level).

The State

Urry does not ignore the state. He provides a long, if somewhat obvious list of what an adequate theory of the state should include (pp. 80-82). The theory should: (1) be of states in particular societies (in this case of the capitalist state) not of the state in general; (2) it should depend on the structural interrelationships of the state with production and civil society, and therefore reject reductionism-instrumentalism and neutrality of the state; (3) it should not be functionalist assuming an automatic correspondence of state form and policy to the capitalist system but instead place state operation in the context of social struggle; (4) it must explain the distinctive character of state institutions and not define the state by its functions which places institutions into the state which are not distinctive to it (such as the church or unions in Althusser, 1971); (5) it must recognize the diversity of capitalist states, both internationally and (6)

in form—democratic, military, fascist—which depend on world and social struggles.

Following the list, Urry provides a long critique of recent Marxist theories of the state. He admonishes deficiencies of Miliband, Poulantzas, Holloway and Picciotto, Altvater, Hirsch and others. These deficiencies in theories are noted in the somewhat irksome manner of giving a number, (1-6) which corresponds to each point in Urry's list. Nevertheless the critiques are generally quite good. This is one of Urry's strong points. Unfortunately, he continues with a series of critiques long after chapter six, "The State: A Critique" and well into the theoretical chapters which follow. The theoretical points and logic of his argument are continually delayed or interrupted by still another tangential critique. The later chapters read more like a mystery novel where one has to piece together the scattered clues of an otherwise straightforward plot.

Let me summarize what I thought were his most important points. First, the functions of the state are specified by its relation to the sphere of capitalist production. Since the state is distinct from production, it is able to bring about the conditions of profitable capital accumulation and the reproduction of labor power which the process of capitalist production tends to destroy. Secondly, the state has a relative autonomy from capitalist production because it operates to secure accumulation and reproduction not in production but in civil society. Since civil society is created by capitalism as a separate sphere for circulation and reproduction, then the state is also allowed an autonomy due to its relation to civil society. This autonomy is relative to the function specified by capitalist production.

State involvement in directly maintaining accumulation and reproduction in the sphere of production (OSHA for example) is ignored by Urry. Also, the often derided "instrumentalist" relations between capitalists and the state are simply rejected as inadequate without analysis as to their effects. That Reagan has eleven millionaires in his cabinet is an inadequate explanation of the relationship of the state to capital, nevertheless the effects of capitalists in the state need to be explained. Perhaps a noninstrumentalist analysis of the relation of the state to production and of the effects of capitalists (or their representatives) in the state should be added to Urry's list of an adequate theory.

The State and Civil Society

The relationship between the state and civil society is portrayed by Urry as analogous to the relationship between production and exchange in the economy. Production and exchange are distinct but connected. The connection is the circulation of capital (and of labor-power). The medium of this circulation is money. The state and civil society are also distinct. The distinctiveness of the state and state apparatuses being in their unity "based on the centralization of the means of violence within a specified territory" (p. 102). The connection between the state and civil society is also in the form of circuits. These are circuits of power and ideology. The medium of this circuit is the law.

Seeing the law as a medium analogous to money is an intriguing idea. Unfortunately, Urry never develops this notion. What are the implications for political class struggles? What is the position of lawyers, judges, legislatures and so on? Does common law provide a fetter to struggle? How does ideological hegemony relate to legal practice? These questions are never asked, much less answered. But there is a more important problem with Urry's theoretical use of the law. His theory leaves out important relations between state and civil society which operates outside the law (illegal repression for example) or within the law but independent of it (the demanding effects of welfare for example). In particular, Althusser (1971) argues that the educational system has tremendous effects on the relationship between state and society, effects which cannot be explained by analysis of laws dealing with education.

The State, Labor-Power and Class Struggle

Finally, in the last chapters, Urry makes a strong argument for establishing the context of struggle (class struggle, classes-in-struggle, and popular-democratic struggle) in which the state operates. While the demands placed on the state are set by the economy, the resulting policies are neither automatic, unidimensional, or even necessarily beneficial (pp. 122-23). State policies and state actions are conditioned by social struggles. Therefore, reforms brought about by subordinate class movements are not illusionary but the real outcomes of social struggles (though partial and transmuted (p. 147)).

Urry argues the reformist effects of these struggles are necessary for the reproduction of labor power. The process of capitalist production (due to its competitive and profit oriented structure) continually uses up labor power, without replacing it. The working class must continually struggle for its simple, much less expanded, reproduction. Reproduction takes place in civil society, therefore so does the class struggle (ignoring, as noted earlier, the struggle for control over production). This sets the context under which accumulation and reproduction are maintained by the state. Reforms which enhance the reproduction of labor power (such as National Health Insurance (p. 119)) are beneficial to the well being of the working class. Yet, the reproduction of labor power is necessary for the profitability of capital and therefore, the reform is also in the long term interest of the capitalist class. This explains the strong support for reformist politics among the subordinate classes and to a lesser degree, the benefits to capital of reforms which most capitalists will oppose.

Urry makes an argument concerning the struggle for a representative democratic form of state similar to the struggles for reproduction of labor power (Chapter 9). He also periodizes struggles in civil society between those in which circulation is dominant and those in which reproduction is dominant. The former is a struggle for equality in exchange, for "Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham" (p. 125). The latter is a struggle over the distribution of consumption (p. 127). The struggle for reproduction has become dominant over the struggle for

exchange equality since expanding relative surplus appropriation deflates the profit rate, thus requiring expanded consumption. Urry lists a series of propositions which follow from this, the most plausible being the expansion of the state. The least plausible is a decline in the importance of class and class struggle (pp. 128-31). These propositions are only sketched out by Urry, but they seem to be a fruitful starting place for further theoretical-historical work.

I have some strong misgivings with parts of Urry's analysis of the anatomy of capitalist society, especially that of capitalist production and the place of struggle therein. I have short shrifted his arguments concerning ideology, which were interesting but left me unconvinced at present whether to accept or reject them. That is a criticism in and of itself, but I do not wish to harshly portray this book (any theory can be criticized). One use of this book is for Urry's long series of critical reviews. Future theoretical work should also pay attention to Urry's list of six criteria of an adequate theory of the state (and perhaps a seventh criteria concerning the direct relations of state to capitalist production).

Those points aside, it is the concept of civil society which is the centerpiece of Urry's theory. It seems to me that Urry demonstrates the concept of civil society is a quite useful way of avoiding reductionist and autonomist positions by explaining the distinct but connected spheres of production and exchange. To a lesser extent, he also shows its usefulness in establishing the effectivity of subordinate class struggles on the state. But one area of immense promise for the utility of civil society that Urry teasingly hints at then fails to deliver is on the role of race, gender, nation, generation and the family in Marxist theory.

Early on, Urry insightfully remarks that "one paradox of contemporary Marxist debates is the reproduction of certain problems which have already been encountered in orthodox sociology" (p. 4, see also p. 31). Urry cites only functionalism and humanism as examples. One could also use the concept of civil society to explain the relative location of the immense amount of orthodox sociological research which specializes in race, gender, nation, generation and the family. Marxists can then avoid the pitfalls of repeating, reducing, or rejecting this research but instead can demonstrate its relation to capitalist production and the state. Quality Marxist research on the relations and struggles of race, gender, generation, family, and nation should benefit from the conceptual use of civil society. In general, establishing the relation between capitalist production, civil society, and the state provides a framework to integrate the increasing variety of sophisticated Marxist research. By bringing civil society back into theoretical discourse, Urry has provided one beginning of a rough framework for Marxist analysis which resolves problems persistent to it. The question now is whether anyone will use his theory.

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State and Capital: A Marxist Debate.

by John Holloway and Sol Picciotto, eds.
University of Texas Press, Austin, 1978.

State and Capital: A Marxist Debate (Univ. of Texas Press, Austin, 1978) by John Holloway and Sol Picciotto (hereafter, HP) brings to English-speaking audiences several important contributions to the development of a materialist theory of the capitalist state. Each of the essays collected herein was originally published in West German journals between 1970 and 1975 as part of the ongoing 'state derivation' debate. The aim of this debate has been "systematically to 'derive' the state as a political form from the nature of the capitalist relations of production, as a first step towards constructing a materialist theory of the bourgeois state and its development" (HP:2). By creating a theory which "founds both the specificity of the political and the development of political forms firmly in the analysis of capitalist production" (HP:3) the authors of this volume attempt to avoid the problems inherent in 'economic determinist' and 'politicist' theories of the capitalist state. Unfortunately, many of the eight approaches collected in this volume do not avoid the problem of economic determinism, but the state derivation debate breaks new and interesting ground in theorizing the complex articulation of the political and economic instances in capitalist social formations. No future materialist theory of the capitalist state can afford to ignore either their theoretical advances or their often informative mistakes.

In the introductory essay to this volume, Holloway and Picciotto attempt to relate the state derivation debate to the political events in the Federal Republic of Germany in the late 1960s (including the 1966-67 recession, the problem of reformism which surfaced when the Social Democrats shared state power in 1969, and the rise and decline of a powerful student movement), to contrast the 'state derivation' debate to contemporary Marxist theories of the state in England, and to briefly outline the similarities and differences that exist within

the debate. They argue that the discussion of the state in England has "become stuck in the rather infertile rut of the Miliband-Poulantzas debate" which has "given rise to an illusory polarity between the approaches of these two authors" (HP:3). Holloway and Picciotto argue that the similarity between Miliband and Poulantzas far outweighs their differences. According to Holloway and Picciotto, this similarity is based on a common misreading of *Capital* as consisting of the development of concepts (value, surplus value, accumulation, etc.) specific to the analysis of the economic level. If *Capital* is understood primarily as an analysis of the economic level, it follows that a Marxist theory of the state should be based on the development of a regional theory of the political level, as Poulantzas did in *Political Power and Social Classes*. The consequence of this reading of Marx for the work of both Poulantzas and Miliband (as well as some of Gramsci's work (HP:9)) is to sever the study of the political from the major source of change in capitalist society, the contradictions of accumulation powered by the revolutionary struggle of the working class (HP:6). Holloway and Picciotto argue that the concepts of 'relative autonomy' and the 'determination in the last instance' of the economic do not solve the problem of how to theorize the articulation of the political and economic instances but, in an attempt to avoid economic reductionism, sidestep this problem (HP:6).

For the 'state derivation' school "the categories elaborated in *Capital* (surplus value, accumulation, etc.) are seen not as being specific to the economic instance but as historical materialist categories developed to illuminate the structure of class conflict in capitalist society and the forms and conceptions (economic or otherwise) generated by that structure. From this it follows that the task is not to develop political concepts to complement the set of economic concepts, but to develop the concepts of *Capital* in the critique not only of the economic but also of the political form of social relations" (HP:4). The problem with this approach is that it is not at all clear why the state should stand in the same relation to capitalist production relations as do the fetishized appearances in production and circulation (price, profit, etc.) that Marx analyzed in *Capital*. Holloway and Picciotto do not provide any theoretical justification for their claim that the state and the appearances of circulation are analogously related to capital. Each of the articles that follow attempts in different ways to theorize that relation.

The state derivation debate began with an article by Wolfgang Muller and Christen Neususs criticizing the 'revisionist' theories of Habermus and Offe. Only a small excerpt from this long article is published in this volume, (it is available in English in *Telos* 1975, 25). They criticize the basic premise of 'revisionist' theory, that the state is "a more or less independent institution standing outside the contradictions of society" (HP:32). Underlying this premise is the proposition that the state can consciously regulate the laws of motion of capitalism through interventions into the distribution process. This proposition is based on the assumption that the process of distribution is absolutely autonomous from the process of capitalist production, an untenable position (held also by certain neo-Ricardian theorists of the state). The practical political consequence of this position is to view the state as an instrument of social change. They argue that this view of the state accepts the fetishized appearance of the autonomy of the state as reality. Creating this appearance of autonomy is the fact that class struggle does influence state action and does produce reforms. However, the organization and struggle of the working class, the reforms that are a product of this struggle, and the concomitant appearance of the autonomy of the state, are all products of the logic of capitalist social relations. Muller and Neususs argue that the capitalist mode of production, since it is divided into individual capitalists pursuing their own self-interests, would on its own, through competition, destroy the

conditions of the reproduction of the working class and thus destroy the social formation itself. The working class is thus forced to organize to defend its interests since it is only through struggle that it can insure its reproduction. Secondly, a state apparatus is made necessary to insure social subsistence by maintaining the conditions of capital accumulation (i.e., the conditions of the reproduction of labor power) which individual capitalists could not themselves maintain. Therefore, state action often takes the form of reforms that have the contradictory effects of improving the condition of the working class (thus producing the appearance of an autonomous, reformist state) and reproducing the conditions necessary for the accumulation of capital. In the part of the article Holloway and Picciotto did not reprint Muller and Neususs apply their theory to an analysis of the English Factory Acts of 1833, 1844, 1848 and 1850.

Elmar Altvater's article, "Some Problems of State Interventionism: The Particularization of the State in Bourgeois Society," expands on Muller and Neususs' position. He derives the form of the state (its autonomy from capitalist production relations) from its functions, and derives those functions from the fact that total social capital exists concretely as individual capitals in competition. He argues that "capital cannot itself produce through the actions of many individual capitals the inherent social nature of its existence; it requires at its base a special institution which is not subject to its limitation as capital, one whose transactions are not determined by the necessity of producing surplus value" (HP:41). Altvater's essay, and to a lesser extent that of Muller and Neususs, is marred by both functionalism and economic reductionism. His argument that the creation of the state is based on the necessity of the reproduction of capital conceptually excludes the role of class conflict as the motive force of history leaving him with an ahistorical functionalism. In contrast to Altvater, Muller and Neususs allot a prominent place to class struggle but view it primarily, though not only, as serving to reproduce capitalism. Altvater's position is reductionist in that the functions of the state are derived in an unmediated fashion from the logic of capital.

Another position within the state derivation debate, which bases the derivation of the state not on "the essential nature of capital but on the forms of appearance of capitalist social relation on the surface of society" (HP:23) is best exemplified by the work of Sybille Von Flatow and Freerk Huisken. In spite of the fact that over half of the contributors discuss it, their article is not included in this volume. My discussion of their text (which is not available in English) will thus be based on these secondary sources. Flatow and Huisken argue that the appearance of a community of interest on the surface of society, on which working class acceptance of the state is based, can be derived from the trinity formula (capital:profit, land:ground-rent, labor:wages) discussed by Marx in *Capital* (vol. 3, p. 814). All members of society appear to have common interests "by virtue of their common status as owners of a source of revenue. It is this community of interest (albeit superficial) which makes the existence of an autonomous, apparently neutral state possible" (HP:23). Joachim Hirsch cogently criticizes this position (along with Altvater's) as 'idealist' for the following reasons: "They neglect this moment of the objective emergence of the political form from the conditions of the material process of social reproduction, and instead—starting from the surface of bourgeois society—they openly or implicitly construct a 'general will' of the subjects of society which constitutes the particular form of the state—whether these subjects be the universal private property owners, the private commodity producers or the competing individual capitals" (HP:186).

Hirsch's point is well taken, the arguments of Altvater, Flatow and Huisken, and Muller and Neususs are seriously

flawed. However, the general form of their arguments, that the acceptance of the legitimacy of the state by the working class is due to the actual or apparent form of capitalist social relations provides an interesting alternative to the neo-Gramscian emphasis on ideological hegemony or the Althusserian position stressing the importance of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' which are now dominant in marxist theoretical explanations of the continued reproduction of capitalism. An implicit synthesis of the two positions can be found in Burowoy's *Manufacturing Consent* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979) in which ideological hegemony is seen not only as a product of conflict at the ideological level but is located primarily in capitalist social relations of production, in the lived relations of workers in the work process. Although *HP* warn against a facile 'grafting' of the 'German' and 'English' positions (HP:30), I would argue that the dialectical interaction of these two materialist theories will eventually result in a transformation of each that transcends (*aufhebung*) both, thus providing a more complete marxist theory of the complex articulation of the economic and political instances in capitalist social formations.

The last three essays in the book present criticisms and modifications of trends dominant in the state derivation approach. Heide Gerstenberger argues forcefully against the rigid separation of form analysis from historical analysis which results in overly abstract derivations of state functions (see especially the discussion of form analysis in Blanke, et al. (HP:119)). Claudia Von Braunmuhl attempts to locate the bourgeois nation-state within a world market context, arguing that "the appropriate analytical level is thus that of the world market, and the task before us is to explain its differentiation as national capitals and its organization as nation states" (HP:164). The derivation of the state is thus not to be sought only in the form of economic relations within national boundaries but primarily in economic relations in the world market as a whole. Von Braunmuhl concludes her article with an analysis of the Absolutist State in the context of the world market. While her historical analysis is too short to be convincing it does serve to clarify her conceptual argument.

"The State Apparatus and Social Reproduction: Elements of a Theory of the Bourgeois State" by Joachim Hirsch is the high point of this collection. Due to its length and complexity it is also the most difficult to summarize. His argument can be roughly divided into two parts: the first concerns the origin of the form of the capitalist state; the second is centered around the determination of the functions of the contemporary capitalist state by the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production.

Hirsch begins his analysis (as do many of the state derivation theorists) with a set of questions formulated by the Soviet legal theorist Eugene Pashukanis (1951:185):

Why does the dominance of a class not continue to be that which it is—that is to say, the subordination in fact of one part of the population to another part? Why does it take on the form of official state domination? Or, which is the same thing, why is not the mechanism of state constraint created as the private mechanism of the dominating class? Why is it disassociated from the dominant class—taking the form of an impersonal mechanism of public authority isolated from society? (Pashukanis, 1951:185)

These questions concern the form of the state and not the content or function of state activities. Hirsch argues that a definition of the state must be based on its form since there are no functions or specific contents necessary or sufficient to define this specific form of bourgeois domination (HP:58). Hirsch's derivation of the form of the state rests on the necessary separation of the political and economic in the capitalist mode of production. Bourgeois class rule requires

that labor power and other commodities be exchanged between formally 'free' and 'equal' subjects. This necessitates the removal of the means of force from individual capitalists and their concentration in an institution not based on the expropriation of surplus value. The historical emergence of the state thus entailed the suppression of "multifarious 'feudal' restraints and relations of dependence" (HP:62) which then permeated society.

Thus for Hirsch the state is defined by its monopoly on the legitimate means of force within definite territorial boundaries. From this alone its functions cannot be derived. This is in sharp contrast to Altvater's formulation of the state as the institutionalization of the 'general will' of the bourgeoisie as a whole in which the form of the state is derived from its function. Hirsch avoids this static functionalist position by basing his analysis in the historical development of the economic laws of capital as driven by class conflict. For Hirsch there is no guarantee that state interventions will in fact serve the long run interests of the capitalist class as a whole. The state is not above the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production but is a product of them. These ideas follow from the second part of Hirsch's analysis, which is based firmly in orthodox marxist economics.

Hirsch argues that the process of the accumulation of surplus value is a process of class struggle. The inherent tendency of this process is for the organic composition of capital to rise and for the rate of profit thus to fall. In Hirsch's words:

... private individual capitals increasingly find themselves in a situation in which the surplus value which has accrued to them is no longer sufficient to achieve the reorganization of the technological conditions of production necessary to support the process of accumulation. This leads to specifically new forms of state 'capital mobilization' (HP:95).

The state in the monopoly stage of capitalism is thus limited to a role of reacting to the falling rate of profit by attempting to mobilize "counter tendencies" to facilitate necessary reorganization of capital. Important consequences follow from this.

First, under capitalist social relations there can be no unified strategy of state intervention, no consistent political planning (HP:101). Since the state is essentially reacting to economic contradictions beyond its direct control, state interventions will consist of "a heterogeneous conglomerate of individual bundles of measures," or, in other words, "unprincipled muddling through" (HP:101). Moreover, with the exception of the apparatus of force, there is very little unity to the state apparatuses. "The state apparatus cannot be understood as a closed formation, but represents in reality a heterogeneous conglomerate of only loosely linked part-apparatuses" (HP:100). This heterogeneous structure of the bourgeois state "is a precondition of its being able to maintain complex relations to the various classes and class fractions, relations which are the conditions of its ability to function as guarantor of the domination of the bourgeoisie" (HP:100). The ability of the state to act in the interest of the bourgeoisie as a whole is made even more difficult by the fact that individual monopoly capitalists are often able to secure their own individual interests by influencing state intervention, even when these diverge from the interests of the capitalist class as a whole. Hirsch uses the example of the way oil monopolies "ridiculously swindled" the state during the so-called 'oil crisis' to illustrate this point (HP:191). Hirsch argues that the eventual outcome of the historical development of the laws of capitalist production driven by class struggle will be to make the state use force more and more frequently to maintain the conditions of capital accumulation. This will in turn undermine a decisive moment in the preservation of the domination of the bourgeoisie, continued on 45

envisaged great tasks straining the efforts and possibilities of the nation. Implemented under the conditions of the specific international or internal circumstances of that period, changed in the course of its implementation and with insufficient experience in planning and managing the economy, it gave rise to considerable disproportions and difficulties.²⁵

Professor Kazimierz Secomski, another leading economist and a Vice-President of the Planning Commission, referred to the Six-Year Plan as having been accompanied by the 'appearance of a number of economic disproportions and unsatisfactory progress in raising the living standards'.

In the case of almost of almost every item the achievement fell short of the targets laid down in July 1950. For example, the target for cement, which was so urgently needed for construction and reconstruction, was 5 million tons, while the actual output only amounted to 3.8 million. Experts have criticized the plan for laying too much emphasis on steel and too little on coal; for expecting too much of the peasants and doing too little for them; for starting up industries when an adequate supply of the required raw materials was not available; and for embarking on too many kinds of manufacture, instead of concentrating on a selected number. The bureaucratic machine was so huge, and the rules and regulations were so numerous that the system became self-frustrating. The directives usually had some rational purpose, but there were so many of them that they cancelled one another out, and managers were often left to make vital decisions themselves. There were so many appointments to be filled that they were frequently given to candidates who were 'politically reliable' but had no technical qualifications whatever. One of the worst features of the system was a method of granting bonuses to managerial staff, which was based on the excess of output over the planned amount, without any regard to production costs and efficiency. This also led to fallacious figures drawn up by the managers to satisfy leadership and receive their bonuses.

The provision of housing fell far short of what was needed even to keep pace with the rapid increase in population and with the influx of workers into towns and cities. The standard of accommodation in 1956 was much lower than in 1949,²⁶ when War damage had not yet been made good.

Official statistics gave the increase in real wages between 1949-1955 as 27.5% but Gomulka in October 1956, referred to the 'juggling with figures' which had produced this result. The Secretariat of the Economics Commission for Europe estimated that real wages in Poland were 12% lower in 1953 than in 1949 and in 1956 only exceeded the 1949 level by 19%, although there had been a rise in social benefits of all kinds during this period. But when even this is examined from the vantage point of the Marxist labor theory of value, this only amounts to expended labor-power allocated to State revenue, and was more or less a means of political appeasement.

It was these conditions of the workingclasses in Poland which generally led up to the Poznan events in 1956, which are dealt with in Paul Costello's "Class Struggles in Poland" (Nov.-Dec. 1980, *Theoretical Review*) summed up by the First Secretary of the Party committee at the Stalin Locomotive works in Poznan:

. . . . instead of politically directing, the party organization had . . . in practice sought to administer the factory, transforming the party organization into . . . aides of the directors and managers. . . . The voice of the workers was not heard or needed nor were the workers taken seriously. . . . This state of affairs was nothing else than the expression of a lack of faith in the workers' ability to reason politically.²⁷

In 1956 the shallow critique of the Stalin personality cult was

held out to the masses of demonstrating workers in Poland, instead of redressing more profound questions of proletarian hegemony. This was the particularity of a much larger crisis in the international communist movement (as manifested politically in Poland) which was the historical antecedent to the 20th Soviet Congress in 1956.

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namely the bond of the state apparatus with the working class (HP:105).

Hirsch's analysis shows by example the direction in which the state derivation debate must move if it is to develop an adequate historical materialist theory of the capitalist state. Two related problems must be avoided. The first is economic reductionism and the functionalist analysis that follows from it. The value of the state derivation approach is its insistence on the fact that the proper object of analysis is the state as a capitalist state and that its form is ultimately limited by its relation to capitalist social relations of production. The basic form of the state apparatus and the broad limits set on the exercise of state power can and should be derived from the form of economic relations (though not from their fetishized form) dominant in a social formation. However, a complete understanding of the state cannot be based on knowledge of economic relations alone. A complete derivation of the form of the state must include the way the dominant economic forms are mediated by the ideological and political levels and how all of these are articulated in civil society and developed through class struggle. The failure to do this results in a hollow, economic analysis of the state as it functions for capital.

The second recurrent problem in the state derivation debate, closely related to the first, has been the tendency to base the analysis of the state solely on the abstract logic of capital. The consequence of this is an ahistorical analysis that fails to explain the historical development of the capitalist state or the important role of class struggle in that process. For analysis cannot be rigidly separated from historical analysis. The latter cannot be simply tacked on to the former as a specific example of a general (ahistorical) law. Just as form cannot be separated from historical content, the logic of capital cannot be separated from the historical development of class conflict. Hirsch's work indicates that there is a basis for their unity within the state derivation debate. These mistakes need not be repeated by the theorists working within this problematic.

However, there is one problem inherent in this approach. Working only with the categories of 'capital', 'class', and the 'state', its proponents have no conceptual tools to adequately theorize popular democratic struggles. For this it is necessary to develop the concepts of 'civil society' and/or the 'ideological instance'. A good example of the conceptual development of the former is found in John Urry's *The Anatomy of Capitalist Society*, (Humanities Press, 1982) and of the latter in Goran Therborn's *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, (Verso, 1980). Popular democratic struggles are becoming increasingly important for understanding the role of the state in advanced capitalist social formations. The state mediates not only struggles based on class but struggles based on sex, and race and ethnicity as well. For both theoretical and practical political reasons these cannot be ignored. It is the value of the state derivation debate that it makes central the determinant and dominant role of the economic instance in capitalist social formations, it is its major shortcoming that the complexity and relative autonomy of other instances is often ignored.

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