

## SOCIALIST POLITICS AND THE 'CRISIS OF MARXISM'\*

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### *'THE CRISIS OF MARXISM HAS ERUPTED AT LAST!'*

With this provocative challenge at the conference on 'Power and Opposition in Post-Revolutionary Societies' organized by *Il Manifesto* during the Venice Biennale of November 1977 (*Il Manifesto*, Quaderno 8, 1978), Louis Althusser introduced a wide-ranging discussion which is documented in all essentials in the present volume. In so far as it would be wrong to see this 'crisis of Marxism' imply as a left-wing variant of the general decline of values in late-bourgeois society—a kind of dance on the sinking *Titanic*—then it must itself be explained, or indeed explain itself, in terms of the material conditions of politics and the formulation of theory. Althusser was quite right, therefore, when he continued his intervention: 'At last the crisis of Marxism has visibly surfaced, and at last something new and living can be liberated in the crisis and out of it!'

The contributions published in this volume are responses to Althusser's intervention. When set against the discussion on Marxist theory that has taken place in the Federal Republic, and is still taking place today, particularly the discussion on the theory of the state and its political implications, these responses do provide us with the possibility of reflecting on the Italian debate from the results of our own debates.

### *Marxism in the 'Opposition Culture'*

The need for a reflection of this kind arises from the fact that the discussion on the state among the West German left seems to have

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ended up in a blind alley. The differing approaches to an analysis of the form and activity of the bourgeois state have each been developed to a point at which a change of level and perspective seems the only way of escaping from merely philological exercises of the kind that so frequently fizzle out in senseless polemics. Analyses of the limits of the welfare state or of state intervention were of major importance in the phase of prosperity after 1968, when the bourgeois state was assumed, not only in general consciousness, but also in Marxist theory, to have an almost unlimited capacity to manipulate trends of social development and handle their contradictions. Habermas saw modern state intervention as giving the possibility of overcoming economic crises, even though the price of such intervention was a decline in legitimation. It followed from this that the interest of the state in reform could be viewed as having a basis of its own, so that only minimal attention was consequently paid to the contradictions resulting from the system of capital accumulation. Finally, in the theories of state monopoly capitalism, the idea prevailed of the state being able to steer society in the interest of the monopolies, with the burdens involved in the securing of monopoly profits being shifted onto the non-monopoly strata and the working class. These assumptions as to the role of state intervention typical of the highly developed capitalist societies ('late capitalism' or 'state monopoly capitalism') deserved a fundamental critique, and the Marxist discussion on the 'derivation of the state' devoted itself to this task. State theory thus came to be understood primarily as the analysis of the limits of the state, this in turn providing its political significance, as was shown above all by the broad reception that the state theory of Blanke, Jürgens and Kastendiek enjoyed among the Young Socialists and the SPD (and of course among the new left as well). In these circles, of course, the limits of the state's system and activity could provide ammunition for a criticism and struggle against both the government policy of the Social-Democrats and the illusory position of the '*Stamokap*' (state monopoly capitalism) tendency. In the theoretical context of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the discussion on the derivation of the state was essentially destructive, in the sense of a critique of ideology.

This destructive character rested on the fact that the West German left which produced theories of the state, and gave them an astonishingly broad currency, at least in the universities, had no political responsibility and hence did not need any positive conception of politics. To use a concept developed in a different

context—one of a quite different 'order of magnitude'—as a reason for the crisis of policy affecting the Italian Communist Party, this discussion on the state developed completely within the 'opposition culture', i.e., in an attitude of opposition to the prevailing system, and was never forced even to begin to confront the requirements of a 'governing culture' (Duso, 1978, on the PCI). The relations of political power in the Federal Republic have not permitted anything else. But this position of exclusion from the system of political power was hardly understood within the West German left after 1967 as something negative, being rather interpreted as an advance made against the integration tendencies of the bourgeois state (the 'social state'). The rise of the student movement, followed by the extra-parliamentary opposition (APO), appeared to confirm a theoretical view in which the new political subject had to be discovered outside the domain of the existing political system. West German Marxism accordingly developed exclusively within the anti-institutional opposition, and to a large extent bore the marks of this fact. The Marxian thesis of *Capital* as the 'most fearsome missile ever slung at the heads of the bourgeoisie' was translated into the slogan of a 'struggle against bourgeois science', at least in the universities. It is not our task in the present essay to demonstrate the undoubted subtleties of Marxist debate with bourgeois science that were sometimes concealed behind this rather vapid slogan, and we only want to stress how this Marxism, as a science of the forms of bourgeois socialization in the Federal Republic, found its characteristic limitation in the political fact that it never reflected any effort to escape from the 'opposition culture' into the 'governing culture' (and by this we do not mean simply in the sense of a parliamentary shift). As long as the opposition movement was on the rise, this hardly seemed a weakness. But once the opposition fragmented into tiny grouplets, tendencies and factions, and received some hard blows from the repressive power of the state (*Berufsverbot*, anti-terrorist legislation, proscriptions, etc.), it was inevitable that West German Marxism should come into crisis.

A second relevant aspect to be borne in mind here makes Marxist theory, including its theory of the state, appear 'economically reductionist'. In the crisis of the mid 1970s, experience confirmed what had already been partly established by theory, i.e., that bourgeois rule does not 'collapse' with economic crisis, so that there are necessarily domains, institutions, relationships and mechanisms in bourgeois societies which produce a social hegemony of the bourgeois class going beyond the securing of its rule that results

from economic reproduction. The 'reconstruction of the critique of political economy' in West Germany applied itself first and foremost to the theory of the economic reproduction of bourgeois society, and subsequently either referred its theory of the state to this or even derived it from it. This gave rise, however, to several kinds of reduction, since those aspects involved in the securing of bourgeois rule that could not be subsumed under the concept of 'mystifications' simply remained outside the field of vision. In this way Marxism suffered a loss of plausibility, and had to yield ground to psychologizing and totalizing theories of power, or to political theories which, while opposed to 'bourgeois science', were also divorced from the 'critique of political economy'. In general, this amounted to a 'subjectivist turn', as against the intended objectivism of Marxism. These two interconnected reasons, together with the dimensions reached by the 'academization' of Marxism (cf. Blanke, 1979), are what cause us to speak of a 'crisis of Marxism' in the Federal Republic, too, and to reflect on this via the discussion that has taken place in other countries. This reflection, however, means ascertaining the different conditions of policy formulation and theoretical tradition that obtain in the countries concerned. Whereas in West Germany Marxists also discuss the question of a 'translation' of economic developments and political structures into social action, i.e., cautious attempts are made under the prevailing conditions of political power to set foot in the established political system (and this is only true, moreover, for one wing of the left, another wing preferring to withdraw into the 'opposition culture' in the form of an alternative subculture), the Italian workers' movement today faces the question of the limits that have so far prevented it 'translating' its political strength into a change in relations of social power and model of economic development, the question of the economic and social developments that undermine a stabilization of its political strength (cf. Donolo, 1978).

The 'crisis of Marxism' today, therefore, does not indicate simply a theoretical incapacity (cf. Blanke, 1979)—there has always been this factor, without it creating any 'crisis'—but rather a crisis of working-class policy in those Western countries with a strong Marxist workers' movement, which must be clearly distinguished from the situation in the Federal Republic with its principally academic left. It is in no way paradoxical that the crisis of capitalism and the crisis of Marxism have broken out simultaneously in the mid 1970s. For it is precisely the traditional models of theory and strategy that have become obsolete, through the require-

ments of social transformation, or better: this obsolescence is threatening, and can no longer be dismissed. The set of problems that has to be considered anew does not include only the theory of the state that is under discussion here, but also the theory of classes. For with 'new social subjects', the traditional alliances that are suggested by a class theory focused on the working class are also put in question. Ultimately, even such general categories as that of social progress based on the development of the productive forces must be reconsidered afresh in the light of the destructive and even life-endangering effect of modern technology (e.g., nuclear power). Theoretical deficiencies of this kind find their expression in politics. Is it possible, for example, to whitewash the great defeat of the French (and West European) left in March 1978, a defeat resulting from the self-induced collapse of the Union of the Left, with the old triumphalist rhetoric, or to overcome it by a separation of the PCF from other Socialist forces? Is it possible to overlook the problems that the PCI has had in relation to state power after its electoral victory of June 1976? Do we not also have to see the (repressively supported) consolidation of a reformist Social-Democratic regime in the Federal Republic of Germany, in the face of the Marxist offensive with its critique of reformism, as a sign of the 'crisis of Marxism', and a challenge to new efforts in theory and political strategy? And does not the development in the countries of 'actually existing socialism' give sufficient occasion for the Western left to reconsider its ideas about socialism and its attitude towards basic 'bourgeois' liberties? Has not the drifting of isolated left-wing grouplets into the sphere of terrorism produced evil consequences for Marxism, as well as for Marxists? And last but not least, we should not forget in this enumeration of the aspects of the crisis, the precarious position of academic Marxism and its representatives in the universities today.

But this is a long enough list. The central theme of the contributions in this volume is Althusser's thesis, as expressed in Venice and later developed in reply to Rossanda's questions, that the present crisis of Marxism is essentially attributable to the fact that Marx did not elaborate any theory of the state. In contrast to his theory of the economic reproduction of bourgeois society, as developed in *Capital*, there is no corresponding theory of the state, of the politically mediated framework of domination under capitalism. This 'gap', or 'blind spot', is then responsible for the way in which the traditional ideas of the overcoming of capitalism and the transition to a 'higher' social formation appear inadequate. We shall

go on to see, in the course of our present discussion, that the contention implies a specific conception of Marxist theory, i.e., that there are two distinct modes of approach, or logics, for the economic and the political. In the West German 'reconstruction of the critique of political economy,' however, it was always taken for granted that the state could precisely be 'derived' as a further development of the systemic logic of Marx's critique of political economy. We are thus faced with two differing conceptions of Marxian theory, each able to criticize the other. Critique, however, in no way necessarily means crisis, so that the cause of the crisis must rather be sought in the problems of strategy.

### *A Contradiction between Party and Social Movement?*

That the 'crisis of Marxism' is not simply a theoretical crisis is shown by the fact that the major working-class parties, and not least among them the PCI, are experiencing a crisis of identity, affecting their membership, their voters, the political self-conception of their intellectuals and their responsible leading groups (cf. Kallscheuer, Rafalski and Wenzel, 1978). In the course of the crisis, social movements have developed outside the traditional organizations of the workers' movement, in part even against these organizations; and these new movements radically question both the traditional form of working-class politics and its organization in the trade union and party. The political party is fundamentally criticized as a form of political organization expressing a specialization of politics and the separation between different spheres of human reproduction. Thus it is not just the particular present line of the party that is at issue, but the actual form of the party as such. This history of the workers' movement shows a permanent critique of this kind, from the anarchists, via the council communists in their opposition to the Leninist party, through to the students', women's and youth movements of today. This time, however, the critique is a mass one, with a mass influence, and presents both an opportunity and a great danger: the danger of a split between the traditional workers' movement with its organizations, and the *movimento*, so that the workers' parties may come to find themselves, once more, as the Social-Democrats have long done, in the realm of state power, while the *movimento* breaks up into a plethora of groups and grouplets that are incapable of action and devoid of further perspective, but still able to represent their interests at the corporate level, so that they can be manipulated in the political system as a subject, either in a meaningless or an actually regressive fashion.

This possible danger lies at the root of Althusser's arguments, when he warns the Communist party against getting transformed into a governing party. There could then be a split between those within the state apparatus and those remaining outside of it, yet unorganized and devoid of perspective—a split that could lead to defeat. Formulae such as the 'entry of the masses into the state', interpreted as meaning that the Communist party should make policy in the field of the state are no solution for the contradictory relation between party and masses in the present crisis. And we have now arrived at a further aspect that is made responsible for the 'crisis of Marxism', i.e., the problem of the establishment and reproduction of political power, which has up till now been inadequately conceived.

### *Do We Lack a Theory of Political Power?*

The categories of power and the state are not of course identical. Any 'theory of power', however, is dependent on the conception of the state, and vice versa. On this subject, there are very differing conceptions, ranging between the view that political power is completely dependent on the conditions of economic reproduction ('orthodoxy'), and the view that the development of political power is determined not by economic law but rather by political 'will' and the political organization of class blocs ('revisionism'). Position in this spectrum also determines the view taken of the state, its form, character, functions and the barriers to its intervention. In his early writings (e.g., *The German Ideology*), Marx conceived the state as expressing the duplication of bourgeois society into society and state. This dual relation of state and society, however, is not confined to Marxism and post-Marxian theories, but also underlies the bourgeois idea of the *Rechtsstaat*: the state as a separate institutional system, linked to society through law and hence guaranteeing a state-free space for free exchange between citizens. In this way, legal ideology is constructed, though—as against Althusser's conception—this is in fact not only ideology but also repression, providing in addition the institutional framework for the processes of circulation (i.e., commodity exchange, circulation of capital, relations between classes, labour market), and today ever more the framework also for processes of production (enterprise constitution, economic planning, and all kinds of preventive legislation). According to the conservative doctrine of constitutional law (cf. for example Forsthoff, 1971), this dual relationship should be maintained, and disrupted neither by the 'statification of society'

(in the sense of authoritarian relations) nor by the 'socialization of the state' (in the sense of its 'corporative' use by 'group interest').

The thesis can now be put forward that this same dualism is precisely reproduced in traditional Marxism, with the state being understood only as something negative, i.e., as counterposed to society and its classes and hence as only of instrumental use. (Nor is Althusser completely free of this idea.) Bobbio is thus partly right in reproaching Marxists for having developed only the idea of how to conquer and smash the state (Third International), or alternatively of how to use it instrumentally for reform (Social-Democracy). This concept, which takes concrete form on the one hand in the dictatorship of the proletariat as the negation of the bourgeois state (hence without the positive achievements of civil liberties, for example), on the other hand as a fetishism of the democratic form of the state (hence without any vision of the regressive and authoritarian tendencies immanent within it), is neither analytically nor politically apposite to the 'modern state'. The distinction made by Gramsci, and in recent years widely accepted, between *società politica* (as the state in the narrow sense, the apparatus of state power), and *società civile* (as the system of state institutions that 'extends' into society, together with the para-state formations and non-state or rather privately organized institutions of reproduction of class hegemony), has led to an overcoming of this fatal dualism being at least attempted, as also has the concept of the 'expanded state' (*stato allargato*), the form of which has undergone changes in the process of capitalist development, that a series of authors in this volume place in the centre of their discussions. This negatively defined sense also involves a shift in the concept of the political. Colletti (1979) criticizes this concept of the state for its inability to develop any theory of the political, something that again has fatal consequences for working-class strategy. According to traditional Marxism, the withering away of the state also means the withering away of politics, or at least that politics is reduced to the mere 'administration of things'. This simplification, however, is extremely dangerous for strategies of transition, as is shown by developments in the post-revolutionary societies. Even if the justification of this charge is not contested, however, it is still possible to draw different theoretical conclusions.

The problem of power, however, is not so easily settled. In Marx himself, for example, we find (particularly in *Capital* Volume 1, chapter 23), the first approaches to a theory of the reproduction of social power, when Marx states that the worker reproduces by his

labour both the material conditions of society and the capital relation, i.e., the economically mediated power of the capitalist class. In the revisionism debate, and expressly for example in the controversy over the 'political wage', the question was the extent to which the organization of the immediate producers (in party and trade union) could establish a countervailing power, thus invalidating politically the laws of capitalist reproduction. In this perspective, power was understood simply as a quantitative complex concentrated at two poles, its 'balance of forces' being responsible for the outcome of the struggle between the complexes of class power. How many justifications for a mistaken or even catastrophic policy in the history of the workers' movement have subsequently been based on an 'unfavourable balance of forces'! In this way, there is no understanding of power as a 'capillary' system (cf. the 'molecular diffusion of politics'—De Giovanni), based on complicated mechanisms of economic policy, social and psychological mechanisms. The power that actually 'passes through us', and is reproduced in the institutions of both 'political' and 'social' society, demands reflections on the forms of politics, and political solutions to both these and to the organization of political action, that go beyond the antithesis between 'power' and 'economic law'.

But the problem is not yet exhausted. For with respect to social power, the question also arises as to the political institutions that limit power, i.e., political freedom, democracy and pluralism. All these concepts have been abominably treated in the history of bourgeois society, with the result that they sound hollow and false. But assurances that only under socialism will 'true' democracy be established, 'material' freedoms guaranteed and the 'genuinely' plural development of interests be possible, have lost their credibility with Stalinism, with conditions in the 'Peoples' Democracies' after the Second World War and most recently since 1968 (the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the defeat of 'socialism with a human face'). Even the belief that socialism at least ensures the preservation of peace has been proved untenable by China's 'punitive expedition' against Vietnam. Along with the re-evaluation of 'actually existing socialism' that has thus become necessary (as undertaken by Bahro, 1977), we also require a new definition of the relationship of the left to the 'bourgeois' institutions of freedom, democracy and pluralism, and hence a new definition, too, of the revolutionary road, which can no longer be simply described as the dictatorship of the proletariat (quite apart from the difference in class structure between the Soviet Union of Lenin's time and the developed capitalist

countries of today). Thus the elimination of this concept from the programme of the PCF (the PCI had already not used it for a long while) does not just mean an opportunist adaptation, but rather corresponds to a political necessity.

We can see, therefore, that the 'crisis of Marxism' is in no way simply a theoretical crisis. Quite independent of the changes in the political tasks facing the left in the present crisis, theoretical development would anyway have advanced via a process of reciprocal critique. The sharpening of the crisis of Marxism is a result of the social crisis, which requires the elaboration of theoretically based strategic responses. The opportunity given by this crisis, and this is what Althusser had in mind with his challenging intervention at Venice, is that the crisis, more than the critique, can lead to a productive new development of theory in the direction of an improved understanding of the reproduction of the conditions of domination in bourgeois societies, and how this can be overcome by the workers' movement.

## 2. HISTORICAL PREMISES AND POLITICAL NODAL POINTS OF THE MARXIST THEORY OF THE STATE IN WEST GERMANY AND ITALY

In the first section, we attempted to indicate the political implications of the discussion of the 'crisis of Marxism', particularly for the Italian left. It was already apparent here to what extent any approach to the theoretical problem areas of the Marxist conception of the state is marked by historical premises. This is particularly true of the question under debate here as to the relationship between democracy and socialism, which—as N. Bobbio quite rightly maintains in his summary of the polemic between Communists and Socialists over 'Marxism and the state'—necessarily leads to the question of 'which socialism?' (Bobbio, 1976).

### *The PCI as Part of the Italian Political System*

The first of these premises lies in the fact that in Italy the workers' movement has become a decisive element of the political system within the 'rules of the game' of parliamentary democracy—though in no way as a simple result of these rules—yet without abandoning its anti-capitalist goals. Secondly, this development was only possible on the precondition (necessary but not sufficient) that the movement of the Italian working class had accepted the democratic freedoms as an integral component of its definition of socialism. These two premises, the political strength of the Italian workers' movement and its democratic culture, cannot be divorced from the

specific tradition of Italian communism, beginning already with the 'translation' that the Leninist conceptions of the party and politics underwent for the capitalist West at the hands of Antonio Gramsci (Telò, 1976), though this only became historically effective after 1956, in the 'Italian road to socialism', i.e., in the new definition of the PCI's politics and identity made by Palmiro Togliatti and others—1956 being the year of crisis for both the world Communist movement and for the strategy of the Italian Communists (see Ingrao, 1977, pp. 101-76).

From the 8th party congress in 1956, at the latest, the political practice of the PCI was determined both by a positive (i.e., no longer purely 'tactical') relationship to republican and parliamentary institutions, and also by an active and autonomous mass work by the 'new party' within social conflicts and areas of alliance (see Priester, 1977b). The PCI was also able, in contrast to the French Communist Party, for example, to accept into its institutional strategy from the late 1960s onward the working-class movement of 1968-9 and certain basic aspects of the 'cultural revolutionary' movement and the other new mass movements based on grass-roots democracy. This makes it possible for the Communist A. Asor-Rosa (1977, p. 20), to describe his party as 'at the same time the most authentic heir of the reformism of the Second International ... and the most authentic heir of the Leninist tradition in Italy'. The fact that 1977, the same year that the integration of the PCI into the political system was officially completed by its passage into the government majority, also saw a crisis of identity, for the party and for Communist mass culture, is what gives the 'crisis of Marxism' its historically specific and party-political character in Italy.

Whereas in the West German debate on the state, the question of political democracy remains analytically in the background, being treated at most in terms of a critique of ideology or as the functional equivalent of 'simple circulation', an 'abstract surface' of the overall capitalist process, this is the decisive starting-point for the Italian debate. All this, of course, is impossible to understand without the historical background of the Italian workers' movement, its mass anti-fascist and democratic tradition, the role of the PCI in the founding of the parliamentary republic and its strategy of the Italian road to socialism. In this respect, the present set of problems facing the Italian workers' movement has certain similarities to the situation of the Social-Democratic parties of Germany or Austria after the First World War (as pointed out in Italy by Marramao (1977, 1978) and Rusconi (1977), among others).

The working class see the republic as their work, they are the agent of this form of state, which would have been impossible without their passionate support and defence... It is not the democratic state that now appears to the workers as an obstacle, but rather social influences, and mental influences dependent on these. Their attitude towards the state is therefore a new one.

These words of Rudolf Hilferding, in introducing the journal *Die Gesellschaft* (1924, p. 13), can also serve to characterize the approach of the PCI theorists in particular, though not them alone. The question therefore is how, under the conditions of political democracy, the 'factors of social power' (Bauer, 1920, pp. 345 ff.) of the organized working class can be developed in the direction of a growing 'hegemony' of the working class, and in what relationship to this 'hegemony' the 'autonomy' of new social movements can develop. Both old and new left in Italy are today in broad agreement as to these questions, though they differ in the responses that they give.

### *Three Central Questions*

We shall now introduce three key points, which also indicate certain 'nerve centres' of the Italian political system. The order in which we introduce these questions—leading from the immediate (party-) political problem through to the question of the overall social dynamic—is also characteristic of the political approach to the problem area of the state in the Italian left.

1. What is the significance of the integration of the Italian Communists into their country's political system, as deliberately pursued from their collaboration on the Constitution, in particular after 1956, and now advanced to a new level, as from 20 June 1976, with the formula of the 'entry of the workers' movement into the state'?

—Does it mean a democratization (at least potentially) of the Italian state, a broadening of democratic space, progress in the direction of a 'democratic socialism, as many PCI theorists maintain?

—Or does it imply (the danger of) a de-democratization of the workers' movement, i.e., the first step towards a new 'corporate and authoritarian' state? (Cf. Frederico Stame, 1977, Danilo Zolo, 1978.)

—Alternatively again, is it the expression of a regressive mastery of the social crisis? (Donolo, 1979.)

While the Italian Socialists may well have cultivated the fear of a new 'regime' arising from the direct agreement between Christian Democrats and Communists out of party-political reasons (cf. again Stame 1978), the theorists of the new left represented in this volume rather proceed largely from the danger that the policy pursued by the PCI since 1976 will lead to a weakening of the 'factors of social power' of the working class, and thus indirectly pave the way for a complete restoration of the 'DC regime' which has by no means been broken as the centrepiece of Italian state power, in the way that a creeping defeat of the workers' movement can often prepare the ground for a direct defeat.

2. What is the relationship between the organized workers' movement and the new movements of social liberation, and to what extent is this relationship changed by the 'entry of the workers' movement into the state'?

—Is an 'organic' (and organized) relationship between them needed, as the PCI maintains, so as to prevent the 'marginalization' and destruction of autonomous anti-capitalist conflict potentials and movements?

—Or is a 'separation between state power and collective needs' (Melucci, 1978, p. 17) necessary, so that the liberal freedoms and free space for the development of social movements have now to be defended also against the class parties of the workers' movement?

The concluding contribution to this volume by Rossana Rossanda shows the way in which the axis of the theoretical discussion has shifted under the impact of the political development itself: how the 'hegemonial' optimism of the PCI within the state power has come up against the 'wall' (De Giovanni) of the socio-economic limitations of the existing system, in addition to the political resistance of the Christian Democrats.

In this way, however, the entire horizon of debate is shifted. Without abandoning an iota of the positive value of political democracy for the workers' movement, or of the positive regard for individual and collective liberties (as well as for movements of social liberation), these theoretical parameters are sufficient neither to determine the space of action available to the workers' movement and other 'collective movements', nor to analyse the specific developmental logic of democratic systems in developed capitalist societies—the dangers of an 'involution of democracy'. (It is precisely against the background of these questions that Italian Communists are today making a new theoretical study of the historic collapse of German Social-Democracy in the Weimar period

(Rusconi, 1977; Marramao, 1978; cf. also Blanke, 1978.) The final question, then, is:

3. How is the relationship between social movements and political system evolving in the conditions of economic crisis? Indications of a change in Italy are visible,

—in the shift of emphasis in the PCI strategy from 'historical compromise' to 'austerity' (Berlinguer, 1977; cf. below, section 4), which has been described by a trade unionist independent of the left as the supplementing of political strategy by a 'social philosophy': 'the line of broad agreement at the political level thus found its justification, and not merely a tactical one, in a social package at the level of production' (Lettieri, 1978, p. 7);

—in the crisis of the capacity of the social movements to affect the political system (Donolo, 1978; Melucci, 1978);

—in the growing difficulties of the trade union movement, among other things in the crisis of the factory councils (Trentin, 1978a, 1978b).

These processes find differing theoretical explanations in the Italian discussions. Yet there is a certain common ground shared by the Italian Marxists, which we shall briefly indicate here before dealing with the particular theoretical 'schools'. Almost all the contributions to this volume assume, in discussing Western capitalism since the 1920s, a relationship between economics and politics that has been changed by state intervention into the economic process, and assume also a transformed relationship between the masses and the social institutions. The concept of the 'expanded state' embraces both aspects (see section 4 below). The analysis of the 'change in the form of crisis' (Marramao) thus implies the controversial question as to whether this 'expanded state' is now itself in crisis (through the failure of economic interventionism and the democratizing attempts of the organized masses who have 'entered into the state'), or whether the social and political opposition movements are themselves brought into the crisis through the mechanisms of the 'expanded' presence of the state in society, being 'corporatized' and deprived of their system-changing dynamic. Naturally, these two responses are not mutually exclusive (for the first, see Minucci, 1979, for the second, Zolo, 1978).

### 3. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE ANALYSIS OF THE BOURGEOIS STATE

#### *Althusser's formulation of the problem*

Before we go on to indicate some of the various strands in the Italian discussion of the state, we must refer briefly to Althusser's

position, his works having enjoyed a wide reception and discussion in Italy (as also in the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries) since the early 1960s, in complete contrast to West Germany (see the detailed *Dossier*, 1973). For the echo that the theses of Althusser find throughout the Italian left is understandable only against the background of the role that his works have played in the Italian debates on Marxist theory for the last fifteen years, these having quite pertinently been described as a 'new orthodoxy' (Rovatti, 1974; cf. also Rancière, 1975). In February 1968, for example, the PCI's daily paper already published an interview with the French philosopher (see Althusser, 1968, pp. 203 ff.) by its then Paris correspondent, M.-A. Macciochi, which is moreover well worth reading as a contrast to his contribution in the present volume.

This quite striking distinction—broad discussion already of the first (and best!) works of Althusser's (1969, 1970) in Italy, as opposed to their almost complete neglect in the West German Marxist debate—has very diverse reasons, including those of theoretical history (see Kallscheuer, 1974). It can be at least partly explained, however, in terms of the political problem facing a non-Stalinist Communist theorist after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, i.e., in the years of a 'de-Stalinization' that was substantially delayed in the PCF, as opposed to the PCI. Althusser's purpose at this time (the early 1960s) was to remain a Communist in theory, and to do so on a double front: both against the dogmatic doctrinal edifice of domination of Stalinist 'dialectical materialism', and in opposition to the 'humanist' philosophical tendencies that prevailed in that section of the French left intelligentsia who had ceased their collaboration with the PCF after the crushing of the Hungarian uprising (and the justification of this action by the PCF): an existentialist (Sartre) or phenomenological (Merleau-Ponty) interpretation of Marx. In his quest for a sure basis for Marxist theory and politics, a quest which set an example for many French Communists of this time, Althusser was seeking an epistemological foundation for Marxism, linking up with certain traditions in French philosophy of science, and with elements of structural linguistics and ethnology, and leading to a new and (in part justifiably) scholastic Marxist conceptual vocabulary in the French universities (which all had a strong influence on Marxist discussion in Italy). In certain of its aspects, therefore, Althusser's theoretical approach in the 1960s was comparable to the concern of a section of the West German left after the student movement with a 'reconstruction of the critique of political economy'—though with the basic

distinction that in the Federal Republic both positive and negative theoretical reference points were quite different: the Frankfurt school, the Marxism of Lukács and Korsch, etc. Althusser attempted the epistemological renovation of 'Marxism-Leninism' via a theoretical critique of Stalinism, hoping by the same argument to dispatch the French existentialist and phenomenological philosophy oriented to subjective 'lived' experience by stressing the scientifically 'objective' character of historical materialism as a 'theoretical anti-humanism' (Althusser, 1969, pp. 229 ff.). Later, after May 1968, Althusser criticized in particular the epistemological aspects of his earlier works as 'theoreticist'. Yet this in no way meant that he had abandoned his 'neo-Leninist orthodoxy' (as Giuseppe Vacca describes it in this volume). On the contrary, his fastidious epistemological arguments were rather poorly replaced by a supposed 'new practice of philosophy' (as immediate political intervention) founded on borrowings from Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

Almost all the writers represented here have already engaged in intensive debate with the Althusserian school in the past. (See Luporini, 1967; Vacca, 1968; De Giovanni, 1970, pp. 7 ff. and 46 ff.; De Giovanni, 1976, pp. 243 ff.; Rovatti, 1974; Zolo, 1976, pp. 105 ff.) And it is against this background that we must understand how provocative it is for precisely Althusser, formerly one of the chief representatives of a 'scientific Marxism' (with the stress on science!) now to come forward to proclaim the crisis of Marxism. It is precisely this 'pope of theory' who today proclaims that the political crisis of the workers' movement has its underlying cause in a crisis of theory. Danilo Zolo draws attention to the fact that the final result of Althusser's critical overcoming of Marxist orthodoxy is simply that he makes such 'central components of classical Marxist-Leninist doctrine' as the 'conquest' of state power, the 'withering away of the state', the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', etc., rise again like a phoenix from the ashes of the crisis of Marxism. Biagio de Giovanni and Giacomo Marramao see in Althusser's demand for a '*movimento*' politics quite outside of the state, and his definition of the revolutionary party as 'anti-state', a continuation of the Third International's theory of revolution, which frontally counterposed 'the class' to the state to be 'smashed', and thus remained theoretically blind and politically incapable of action in the face of the new dimensions of politics in the 1920s and 1930s.

*A Radically Opposed Theoretical Position: Cesare Luporini*

The discussion of the state in West Germany has also sought to go

beyond the traditional solutions to the base-superstructure problem. It has however proceeded quite differently in this than Althusser, which also helps explain why, in contrast to literary theory, for example, Althusser's reconstruction of historical materialism has not played any role for the theory of the state in West German Marxism. The basic category of the West German debate was the 'duplication of society into society and state', which the so-called analysis of form was designed to delineate conceptually, so as to develop theoretically step by step at least the 'general concept' of the political structures of those societies which were conceived as capitalist on the basis of the economic determinations.

This premise, however, of going beyond the traditional schema of base and superstructure so as to reconstruct theoretically the relationship of society and state according to a unitary logic, has recently been challenged by an Italian Marxist philosopher, in the contribution that Cesare Luporini presented to the most recent Gramsci Congress, intended also as a response to the Althusserian diagnosis of the crisis of Marxism. (Luporini, 1977, 1978; see also the articles by Luporini and Rossanda in the present volume.) His theses deserve a brief summary here, as they clearly show also the specificity of Italian Marxism in the tradition of Antonio Gramsci.

In Luporini's view, Marx operated with two parallel conceptual registers in his analysis of capitalist society, which are not theoretically integrated even in his mature works.

—The first conceptual pair, *economic base* and *superstructure*, underlies Marx's theoretical analysis in *Capital*. Here we find a theoretical conceptualization designed to analyse the economic forms, the forms of law and the form of politics (of class struggle), but no conceptual basis for the analysis of the state (as was implicitly assumed in the West German 'derivation' discussion).

—In Marx's political writings, on the other hand, a second conceptual pair prevails that is older than historical materialism: *civil society* [ *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* ] and *political state*. This pair is in no way identical with the former. (*Capital*, as the analysis of the economic structure, is an analysis of the 'anatomy of civil society', not the depiction of civil society itself.)

The 'theoretical paradox', then, according to Luporini, is that no integration of the two conceptual pairs is possible, by virtue of their logical heterogeneity. In *Capital* the concept of 'civil society' vanishes, being incongruent with the conceptual framework of that analysis. With it, too, vanishes any explicit thematic reference to the state. True, law and politics are both organically present in *Capital*, but in the field of politics—the class struggle—we do not find the

state as a theoretical concept. In *Capital*, a theoretical conceptualization of the state is in fact prevented and blocked.

In the theoretical model of *Capital*, the capitalist mode of production has to function 'of itself'. There is no theoretical concept expressing the fact that the bourgeoisie needs the 'political state' and its development into the 'modern state', i.e., an extra-economic compulsion, in order not only to establish its class domination, but also to maintain and reproduce it (Luporini, 1978, p. 44).

Law as a form of social organization, and politics (the form of 'class behaviour' for both bourgeoisie and working class) can be conceived in *Capital* in terms of the 'economic base' for the precise reason that in radical contrast to all previous forms, the ensuring of social reproduction is no longer the task of specific social organizations (such as tradition, custom, law, political compulsion), but rather of the economic mechanism itself: the valorization of capital. Thus the economic mechanism is *eo ipso* also a social mechanism, without being directly visible in the social characters that it presents ('economic mystification'). In the form of social reproduction specific to the capitalist mode of production, extra-economic compulsion is replaced by economic compulsion and legal relations (Luporini, 1978, pp. 37-40).

### *Marx and Gramsci*

No direct 'translation' of the Italian debate on the state into the terms of the German debate on the derivation of the state is thus possible, for reasons of method. In their attempt to explain the 'duplication of society into society and state', the West Germans focused (to put it schematically) on the relationship between economics and politics. The Italian Marxists, on the other hand, operate with the relationship between *società civile* and state. The Gramscian concept of *società civile*, however, as Bobbio (1967) has shown in particular, is not identical with the Marxian concept of '*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*' (cf. Priester, 1977a): 'Between the economic structure and the state with its legislation and compulsion, there is the *società civile*' (Gramsci, 1975, p. 1253). Here Gramsci partly adopts the Hegelian concept of '*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*', which in a certain respect is broader than the sense given the term by Marx and Engels, in as much as for Hegel it not only embraces the economic relations and class structure, but also the judicial system and the organization of administration and associations (i.e., subjects that traditionally fall into the sphere of constitutional law). 'For Hegel, "*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*" includes the sphere of economic relations

and their external regulation according to the principles of the liberal state, thus combining bourgeois society and bourgeois state. It is this concept that Hegel uses for his critique of political economy and his critique of the science of politics ...' (Bobbio, 1967, p. 25).

In Gramsci's own analysis of the 'expanded state', the Marxian critique of political economy is supplemented by elements of an analysis of social institutions (*società civile*), and of the state functions which adapt the *società civile* to the changed economic structure. It is only against this theoretical tradition that we can understand the majority of contributions to the problem of the state by Italian Marxists (especially the PCI theorists).

The theoretical 'expansion' of the concept of the state by Gramsci must thus be seen in connection with a real historical development, which has changed in the West the relationship between economic mechanism and political institutions. Through the 'organic' presence of the state in the process of accumulation, we have had a 'diffusion of the superstructure into the base', while at the same time the comprehensive re-combinations of the economic and social process in the 1920s and 1930s had profoundly changed the relationship between masses and institutions, leading to new forms of the 'expanded' presence of the state in the *'società civile'*.

The varying theoretical emphases that differentiate the PCI theorists on the state are also connected with their specific political interpretations of the present Italian historical situation—more precisely, of the phase between the parliamentary elections of 1976 and the entry of the Italian Communists into the government majority. The 'neo-Gramscian' tendency, for example (e.g., Vacca, De Giovanni, Gerratana, Ingrao; see their contributions to the Gramsci Congress of 1978), taking up the Gramscian conception of hegemony as well as his conception of the 'historic bloc', see in the present political phase an 'entry of the masses into the state', bringing with it a 'political re-combination of the entire social body' as well as a 're-combination of technique and politics' in the representative organs of the Italian republic, in administration and the sphere of reproduction (Vacca, 1977, cf. Kallscheuer, Rafalski and Wenzel, 1978). This tendency, however, is itself differentiated, according to whether greater emphasis is placed on the primacy of politics (Vacca, De Giovanni), i.e., among other things the consensus between the democratic parties, or alternatively on the need for a socialization of politics (Ingrao, Trentin), requiring not just the parties, but also the autonomy of the trade unions and other forms of grass-roots democracy and participation.

*The 'Centrality of the Workers' and the 'Autonomy of the Political'*

A quite different theoretical approach to the question of the modern state, with a corresponding political approach to the relationship between the workers' movement and the institutions, is to be found in the theorists of the so-called 'autonomy of the political', in particular Mario Tronti, Alberto Asor-Rosa and Massimo Cacciari. Since this analytical approach, and in particular its normative implications for PCI politics, is directly or indirectly referred to in several contributions to this volume, though none of this tendency's representatives took a direct part in the debate organized by *Il Manifesto*, a few short comments are again required. (See Napolitano and others, 1978.) While the majority of contributions collected in this volume refer to the Gramscian theoretical tradition, the theorists of the 'autonomy of the political' come from a quite different tradition in Italian Marxism, the 'workerist' attempts, linked with the journals *Quaderni Rossi*, *Classe operaia* and *Contropiano*, to give Marxist social theory a new foundation as a 'workers' science', involving also a new reading of the history of the workers' movement as a 'class history' (as distinct from an 'organizational history'). This tendency in Italian Marxism has however found only a very belated and abridged reception in West Germany, i.e., in the version of Toni Negri (the former spokesperson of the *Potere Operaio* group) as the 'mass production workers thesis' and the 'plan state theory' (Negri, 1973, 1977), publicised in particular by Karl Heinz Roth (1976). In presenting the theoretical and political hypothesis of the 'autonomy of the political', therefore, we must show at what point in the theoretical development of 'workersism' it emerged, what are its basic methodological assumptions, what concrete problems of the Italian workers' movement it seeks to answer, and what makes for its political emphasis within the spectrum of PCI discussion.

The starting-point of the 'workerist' conception—see in particular the now 'classical' work of Tronti (1974)—was the reversal of the relationship between capital and labour-power, as a theoretical paradigm for the analysis of capitalism, but also as a political programme (cf. the special issue of *Aut ... Aut*, 1975). In this way, Marxian theory was 'politicized' in a very direct sense, as is clear from Tronti's definition: 'Labour is the measure of value, because the working class is the condition for capital.' (On the following discussion, see also Cacciari, 1978.) Just as labour-power can be conceived theoretically as the condition for capital, so capitalist

development should be interpreted in its totality (its technical, economic and political aspects) as a directly political development, through the movements of the working class. These movements of the working class determine the form of capitalist 'command', the 'government' of capital in the production process and beyond this. 'Factory → Society → State' is thus the theoretical key that the 'workerists' bring to bear on the analysis of capitalist development, and the political path for a 'renovation of the workers' movement' should also be from the factory to society to state power, as prefigured in the 1960s by the movements of the 'mass production workers' of the great factories of northern Italy. The central mediating category between factory and politics was applied in a very reductionist sense, related simply to the immediate relationship between capital and labour in the production process. 'Everything that was not reducible to this level was seen by *operaismo* as functioning as ideology, as a distortion of the class "interest" that proceeded from the immediate relationship of capital and labour', in the self-critical analysis of Cacciari (1978, p. 51).

The further development of this theoretical paradigm led politically in two opposing directions:

The first led from *Potere Operaio* to 'organized autonomy' in which the totality of social relations was seen as the direct expression of capitalist factory despotism ('factory society'), which the 'class autonomy' of the 'mass production workers', and latterly of the 'marginalized' social proletariat, has to confront immediately and quasi-militarily. Politics is thus reduced to direct conflict, to war.

The second path was that taken by the group around the periodical *Contropiano*, leading politically back into the PCI, and theoretically to the conception of the 'autonomy of the political'. Here politics was understood among other things as *mediation*.

The conception of the 'autonomy of the political', amounts to a radical about-turn from the former 'monotheistic conception of capitalist society' upheld by the 'workerists'—the capital relation as motor of capitalist society, and the working class as motor of the capital relation (see Tronti, 1977a, pp. 54 ff.). The development of capitalist society is now separated into two parallel developments, the history of capital (or the history of the workers' movement) on the one hand, and the history of 'the political', of the state or state power, on the other, which in contrast to what Marxism traditionally sees as the foundation of state power (*ibid.*, p. 9), now conceived social classes or relations of production as 'autonomous'. The 'political' in this sense embraces two realities: an objective structure

of power, embodied in specialized institutions, and a 'political leadership stratum', the subject of 'policy-making', which develops its own system of mediation, with privileges and dysfunctions, *vis-à-vis* the social classes. The history of the working class and capital is the history of Marxism, while the history of 'the political', of the modern state and the 'art of politics' is a quite different history, outside the scope of Marxian theory. Thus at the present moment, when the working class is approaching state power, the theoretical question is to read this history of the modern state anew, beyond the sociology of the two great classes. In practice, the class struggle in this field of the political presupposes an 'emancipation of the party from the working class'. The form and content of the 'class combination', the working class and its organization, no longer directly coincide, as they did in classical 'workerism', they are on the contrary completely divided: 'The modern state ... is nothing other than the modern form of the autonomous organization of the working class' (p. 14, see also Tronti, 1978a, 1978b).

This theoretical development of 'workerism' which is at first sight so very striking—from the 'autonomy' of working-class struggle that forces the development of capital, hence producing a revolutionary situation, through to the 'autonomy of the political' *vis-à-vis* both capital and the working class—can be only understood politically against the background of the concrete problems of the Italian workers movement in its present phase.

The first problem, as Asor-Rosa has very clearly expressed it (1978, pp. 197 ff.), lies in the reduced room for manoeuvre that the working class disposes of during the economic crisis. Classical workerism was itself a product of boom conditions, 'in the sense that the acceleration of the accumulation process brought a whole series of working-class struggles that were directed towards checking the newly created profit margins'. But this also 'accompanied and influenced the development of Italian capitalism in the sense that the intensified dynamic of conflict threw the former model of accumulation into crisis and hence forced capital to a renewal and emphasis of its own internal dynamic—in the political aspect as well' (*ibid.*). In the crisis conditions, the balance of forces between capital and labour has been reversed, and the 'centrality' of the working-class struggle itself threatened by this: 'Today the theme of workers' "centrality" is raised in a situation of an evident and far-reaching crisis of capitalist development. We can no longer expect the mechanism of accumulation to start up again automatically, in such a way that working-class struggles will again become

as political as they were before. But just as little can we demand that workers' struggles should again simply function as the driving wheel of capitalist development' (p. 197). The centrality of the working class, which no longer comes about 'economistically', must therefore be achieved politically: the classical formula 'Factory → Society → State', 'in which the party provides not a mediation between different social strata ... but rather the element of leadership (or to put it better, one element of leadership), the vector of specific social and class interests in the heart of the state'. The Communist Party thus becomes for Asor-Rosa 'the concrete subject of working-class centrality' (p. 198; a somewhat different emphasis on the party as political 'filter' of the social crisis is given by Tronti, 1978b).

The second concrete problem that underlies the theory of the autonomy of the political lies in the changed composition of the working class itself, which, as a result of a capitalist 'dismantling' of the labour market, has extremely weakened direct trade union industrial action (as this was waged in the 'hot autumn' by the assembly-line workers in the big factories of the north Italian 'industrial triangle'). (See Genth and Altvater, 1977; Accornero, 1978b.) Capital in these sectors reacted to the 'rigidity' of the defence of wages and levels of employment by those workers with strong trade union organization with a so-called 'turn over', the rotation of industrial employees without the creation of new jobs. In parallel with this, a 'secondary sector' of the labour market has developed in the course of the last ten years, alongside the strongly trade-unionized primary sector, as a result of the extreme decentralization of entire branches of production, this secondary sector being characterized by a low level of trade union organization and the absence of a guaranteed basic wage ('precarious work', domestic work, illegal work, seasonal work, under-employment, etc.). Alongside the classical danger of a split between employed and unemployed, there is also in Italy the danger of a split between the 'strong' sector organized in trade unions and the 'weak sector' irregularly employed in the 'dispersed factory' (particularly in central Italy, see Graziani, 1978 and Bagnasco, 1977). This also gives rise within the trade union movement to an attempt to compensate politically for the weakening of the unions' direct powers of struggle, and make up for the 'social centrality' of the working class in large-scale industry that has been put in question, by the 'political centrality' of the PCI in the institutions (see Accornero). The theory of the 'autonomy of the political' provides a theoretical foundation for such a transformation of political

structures, leading to a greater emphasis on centralism, though also to a stronger competition of party-political orientations within the trade union movement.

In the words of Mario Tronti:

There are two conditions for the centrality of the working class to function politically. The first necessity is that the factory workers are surrounded by a large penumbra of social consensus, the second that their effect on the political and their relationship to the institutions remains stable over a long period. It must be made evident and perceptible, with practical actions, that this state must be simultaneously defended and changed. What must be defended are the formal guarantees, the constitutional mechanisms of equilibrium and the significance of the political agreement between the democratic parties. What has to be changed is the significance of power, the functioning of the decision-making mechanisms, the guidance of the economy, and the control, consumption and application of social wealth. (Tronti, 1978a, p. 24.)

As against this understanding of party politics as politics in the institutions, which is gaining strength within the PCI—and thus also against the corresponding subordination of trade union strategy to the space of compromise defined by the political system—the trade union and inner-party criticism is voiced that it is not the party but rather the working class itself that should be the ‘concrete political subject’ of social change. The ‘hegemonial force’ of the working class, in this conception, cannot be delegated to a party or institution, or to the state, it must rather be realized by way of ‘the instruments that the working class is able to develop historically and combine in a dialectical relationship: one or more parties, trade unions, other forms of participation, whether these are temporary or permanent’, which must all be developed in the direction of the ‘self-government of the producers’ (Trentin, 1979, p. 9).

#### 4. *THE INTERVENTIONIST STATE AND SOCIAL CONTRADICTIONS*

In its fundamental aspects, this conception of politics as institutional in the realm of the state and ‘social’ on the part of the various movements, is dependent on the idea of the ‘interventionist state’, and on the development of political alternatives to the interventions of the bourgeois state directed at maintaining the status quo. The first question to ask, therefore, is that of the reasons for the crisis of the interventionist state, before we go on to deal briefly with the

contents of politics, having already discussed the changed forms of politics in the crisis.

*Keynesianism as Political Compromise*

The modern interventionist state grew up as the result of a social and political compromise, and not simply on the basis of the contradictory tendencies of capital accumulation. Keynesianism can thus be understood as the result of a social and political compromise between the classes. In as much as it promises full employment, it takes into account the interests of the working class. The need for a compromise results from the redistribution effect between the tax burden and the consumption of state expenditures. The distinction between 'right'- and 'left'-wing Keynesianism indicates that the zone of compromise is itself wide enough for different political options to be fought for and carried through. This compromise, however, is not simply the result of the temporary balance of class forces at the time, but is far more complex in its composition. Firstly, it is dependent on the conditions of accumulation. In times of prosperity, it is possible for profits and wages to rise together, with a simultaneous expansion also of state expenditures, i.e., a shift within the zone of compromise in favour of the working class, whereas in time of crisis this is precisely not possible. Compatibility between working-class and capitalist interests is thus dependent on accumulation. Secondly, the particular form of the political system is itself significant for the applicability of Keynesian perspectives. (Cf. in particular Blanke, Jürgens and Kastendiek, 1975, chapter 10.) This is true first of all in a quite trivial sense, i.e., that the political system must itself be rationalized, if it is to react in Keynesian fashion to the demands placed upon it. If the political and social compromise has to be newly reached for each major intervention decision (e.g., between the different clienteles of the political leaders), then it is generally impossible to reach any harmony between the time co-ordinates of economic trends and the modalities of political action and reaction. On top of this, considered from the point of view of the social system as a whole, the political system, as the '*cervello sociale*' (social brain), is committed to systemic rationality, though it in no way need itself satisfy the Weberian criterion of formal bureaucratic rationality. Precisely because the state is not a 'plan state' and not institutionally divorced from society (corresponding to the idea of the dual structure which we discussed in the first section), all social contradictions resurface within it as internal bureaucratic contradictions between factions in the administration. The rationalization

tendency of the social system is thus not automatically accompanied by an internal rationality of the political system. On the contrary, the difficulties of getting the state authorities to introduce quick and efficient programmes of Keynesian deficit spending are an index of this problem, as are also the ossified programmes of public works in the south of Italy, the famous 'cathedrals in the desert'.

The third point here is the already discussed institutional form of the relationship between masses and power, between participation in the state power and exclusion from it, which now becomes fundamental. The possibility of a 'left', i.e., socially oriented Keynesianism, is greater in a democratic republic than in an authoritarian state, which will tend rather towards a 'right'-wing Keynesianism. How does this state intervention get into crisis, how is this expressed, what consequences result from it, and how does the workers' movement react?

The crisis of the interventionist state is generally due to the contradiction between the rising need for intervention and the limited means available for this. This limit is expressed first of all in the material 'triviality' that revenues are not adequate to meet the needs arising from the functional mechanism of social development. This becomes particularly clear in times of economic crisis, when incomes fall or increase less quickly as a result of unemployment (falling wages), a decline in profits (falling revenue from corporate taxation), etc., while the functional requirements rapidly overtake fiscal capacity: i.e., unemployment benefit and other welfare-state provisions, these being hard-won social rights that can as yet scarcely be revoked, as well as higher subsidiary means of economic incentive (subsidies, etc.). The state taxation system experiences a fiscal crisis (O'Connor, 1974; Grauhan and Hickel, 1978). This can at times be avoided by government borrowing, but there are given economic limits to this, which are today imposed on the national state especially by world market conditions.

A vicious circle thus comes into existence, which is basically responsible for the non-functioning of bourgeois state interventionism. Given the requirements of the accumulation process, the political system develops into an interventionist state without the internal structure of the state administration and the political sphere (the expanded state) having been rationalized. It is impossible therefore to establish the preconditions for the satisfaction of functional requirements. As a result of its internal contradictions, which cannot be reduced to nothing, interventionism does not function to maintain or establish the rationality of the social system,

and the interventionist state runs aground. Fundamentally, however, this results from the form of the state in bourgeois society as a state based on taxation. The political system cannot itself produce the means of its existence, and must consequently collect these in the form of taxes and government debt. This is a characteristic determined by the system itself, deriving from the fact that capitalist valorization can only take place as private appropriation, and while this can certainly be supported by the state, it can in no way be taken over by it. It also follows, therefore, that the securing of the state's material basis is linked to the accumulation of capital, which is a sure condition for politics having only a limited autonomy. Paradoxically, this is all the more true, the greater are the institutional apparatus of the state and its personnel, and the more comprehensive its potential for ensuring 'political primacy', since the costs of supplying it are correspondingly greater.

#### *The Difficulties of the PCI's Transition Strategy*

The functional requirements of a rationalization of the system can thus not be accomplished by way of the primacy of politics. This has precisely been the experience of the highly developed capitalist societies in the present deep economic crisis, since the situation has now arisen in which Keynesianism has been put to the acid test. The direction of retreat is back towards the primacy of economics, the rebirth of neo-classical and neo-liberal doctrines, the stemming of state intervention (which can be particularly clearly seen in the advice of the West German council of experts on economic development) and the abandonment of the social and political compromise which has been the content of Keynesianism. The withdrawal of the state from the economy and its 'surrender' to capital is simultaneously a political and economic attack on the workers' movement, even if certain basic achievements of the welfare state remain in existence.

From the standpoint of the PCI's transition strategy, at least, this situation means an unambiguous defeat. For the adversary is shifting the terrain of political struggle from the political sphere back into the economic, precisely where it is not possible to carry through the policy of 'homogenizing' a society that has been particularly torn apart and divided by the crisis, and instead of the 'great offensive of ideas' (Vacca, 1977, p. 309), the organizations of the workers' movement are compelled to act politically as a 'corporate power' (*ibid.*), i.e., as a group defending their special interests. (We should indicate here the difference from the Anglo-

Saxon debate on corporatism, which is rather about an orientation to overall interests.) The political offensive of the workers' movement is now blocked by the 'specific economic laws' of 'industrial society', which has to remain competitive on the world market, so that attempts to take over general social responsibility under the sign of the primacy of politics (cf. here the important theoretical investigation of Jaroslowski, 1978) are barred in such a way as to prevent social rationality or a synthesis being established politically by the organization of the workers' movement. In the light of these economically mediated political constraints, the concept of hegemony is itself placed in question, and again Vacca notes how, under these conditions, which aim at a 'contraction in the sphere of working-class hegemony', elements of 'passive revolution' are clearly introduced into the Italian situation (Vacca, 1977, p. 310). By passive revolution, Vacca means here the passive binding of the workers' movement to the state, which it had sought actively to change in the direction of its own rationality, according to the concept of hegemony. The binding of the working class into a tripartite system of state, employers' associations and working-class organizations contains great dangers, particularly when the organizations of the workers' movement—and this is true also for the PCI after the high point of 1976—have lost their offensive dynamic. The inseparable connection between austerity and corporate political structures, as the content of the relationship between economic and politics in the present crisis, raises a problem to which strategic responses must be found, if the working class is not to lose the initiative to the bourgeoisie, i.e., on the question of a solution to the crisis, or to win this back, if it is already lost.

### *The Need for Alternatives in the Form and Content of Politics*

The dual line of attack—authoritarian structuring of government policy, which no longer seeks social and political compromise with the workers' movement, and the release of the economy to market forces—presents the workers' movement with a historic challenge, and will gradually compel the formulation of alternatives to the prevailing policy. A retreat to the anticipated de-legitimizing effect of a social and welfare-preserving opposition movement ('the Achilles heel of late capitalism is not its functional structure, but rather its crisis of legitimation', Zolo, 1978, p. 150; cf. also Ferrajoli and Zolo 1978; Stame, in Berlinguer and Bolaffi 1977; Stame 1979) would be setting its sights too low. It could no more lead to a strategy of transition than could the hope for an 'entry of the masses

into the state' effected by the PCI in the form of its participation in government (cf. Barcellona, 1978). A social adaptation to the economic restructuring demanded by the world market, in view of the new division of labour between the 'Third' world and the industrial centres, and especially in the light of the results of the oil price rise (cf. on this the discussion between Chiaromonte, La Malfa, Signorile and Trentin, in *Rinascita* 44, 10 November 1978), may well be achieved (a so-called '*mutamento*'), but not the perspective of a changed and new society ('*transizione*', cf. Donolo, 1977). The danger of a split in Italy between the party and the trade unions, with the party 'going into the state' and functioning as a transmission belt to the working class for hypothetical 'common interests', while the trade unions seek with greater or lesser militancy to promote merely corporate special interests, quite apart from the tendency that new and chiefly corporate operating groups will form and become active outside of the traditional organizations, could have the result that the bourgeois class will succeed in handling the social contradictions by itself and work politically to maintain its own hegemony (in the sense of a *rivoluzione passiva*).

If the 'relations between the process of economic development and the stabilization and legitimization functions of the state' (Stame 1979, p. 11) are not to be settled in the sense of a rationalization and consequent reinforcement of bourgeois domination (as a *rivoluzione passiva*), then the workers' movement cannot abandon the attempt to develop concrete initiatives of changing social relations. Alternatives are thus developed especially against the government's economic policy, which aim not only at a more effective economic policy for overcoming the crisis more rapidly, as well as paying greater attention to its social components (cf. *Memorandum*, 1978), but rather to compel or induce the bourgeoisie, by an appropriate political initiative, to remake the abandoned social and political compromise with the working class and the other subaltern strata. An alternative economic policy in this sense, therefore, while not demanding a revolutionary change in the system, does demand for a start the re-establishing of the status quo that prevailed before the crisis, adjusted to a certain extent for the needs of the time. This already indicates, however, that alternatives of this kind can in no way be designed first and foremost as better instruments of economic policy for re-establishing a lost 'governability', but rather as a political pressure to regain lost positions. These may be expressed economically in the deteriorated position of the working class in the relations of national income

distribution but fundamentally the question is one of political action against 'austerity'.

There seem to be two points of departure on this question. The PCI is attempting, with a very fine distinction between 'austerity' (the bourgeois form, which adopts the English term) and '*austerità*' (as its Communist alternative), to find a road (cf. Soriente, 1978) which on the one hand concedes certain economies and restrictions in the gains made by the working class after 1968, but on the other hand demands from the governing Christian Democrats the granting of such reforms as a democratization of the state apparatus, investments in the South with a view to stimulating employment there, reform of taxation and of parliament, etc., with the goal of restricting the monopoly power of the Christian Democrat party. A political formula of this kind, however, no matter how attractive it appears at first sight, has to reckon with the sitting tenant, i.e., the Christian Democrats themselves, and what this means has been tragically shown in Naples where the PCI has held the mayor's position since 1976, and ever since been entangled in a constant war of position with the Christian Democrats, losing political support in the region as a result of its inability to carry through its electoral promises (cf. De Giovanni and others, 1978). On top of this, however, such a line requires the ability to keep in balance a complicated equilibrium between different interests within the working class itself: between those in employment, whose wages and working conditions may well be frozen, the unemployed in both South and North, regional and central interests, etc. A policy of political reforms at the price of economic retreat always hangs ultimately on the alliance between the workers' party (PCI) and the trade unions. Since 1977, this has become more than clear in Italy. The PCI's 'offensive of ideas' has come up against the (justifiably) 'corporate' trade union interests.

Before we come back to the problem that this involves, the second approach should be mentioned, as it is formulated for example in the *Memorandum*. Here, with little attention to projects of political reform, an economic alternative for government revenue and expenditure is formulated against the present economic policy. Taxes should be drawn more from profits, especially monopoly profits, and less from wages, while government spending should be directed less into profits by way of subsidies and contracts, and more to meeting the social needs of the population. Since economic activity is generally reduced in time of crisis and depression, there is also the question of achieving an overall expansion of demand by

appropriate government policy. Even if the *Memorandum's* alternative cannot be called Keynesian in the traditional sense, we should not fail to notice that it demands both a stronger regard for the social and political interests of the working class in economic policy, i.e., the re-establishment of the compromise, and also an expansion in the zone of this compromise.

We cannot deal in any comprehensive way here with the key points in the conception of an alternative economic policy in the Federal Republic (cf. on this subject Altvater, Hoffman and Semmler, 1979a, 1979b). Two brief remarks, however, must still be made, which apply also to the conception of an alternative 'austerity', even if the consequences for wages of 'austerità' and the *Memorandum* are opposed to one another.

Firstly, it is important that the policy proposed and carried through by the government should confront an alternative. But such alternatives alone are not enough, if they remain mere models without a political subject able to implement them. The political subject is not simply the party (PCI) as an organization, or the trade union apparatus, but rather the broad base of the social movement. The point is, therefore, to take up and articulate the demands developed by the mass movements in the phase after 1968, integrating these into a concept of social synthesis without thereby displacing the movements themselves. The Keynesian compromise was agreed between capital (and its political associations) and the organizations of the workers' movement. We believe that it can no longer be established in this way, and that alongside the 'traditional' workers' movement a broad social and political movement has arisen that neither can nor will be brought any more into the Keynesian compromise. (We have attempted to show this in our discussions of the crisis of Marxism.) This is true for the women's movement, and equally so for the movements of young people, students and unemployed. In order to overcome the crisis of working-class strategy, which is what the 'crisis of Marxism' actually indicates, it will prove more necessary than it has been in the past to take account of these 'new' demands, though without abandoning the 'centrality' of the workers' movement. These needs are no longer simply centred on and around the labour process (the demand for jobs, ensuring the conditions of reproduction of labour-power, leisure time, etc.), but rather arise on new paths of political socialization, being no longer unconditionally work-centred (we do not see Badaloni's distinction between productive and unproductive workers, as applied in this connection, as very

adequate to the problem; cf. Asor-Rosa, 1978a). The problems that have thus arisen require a solution (cf. also the interview with Trentin 1978a), if alternatives in economic policy or a 'left' austerity are to become really effective.

Secondly, alternatives in economic policy are directed at the state. The state is the central subject of economic policy, and this also has its problems. For in many fields of policy, the state now acts in a compensatory way, but one that is problematic. Given the level of socialization of the reproduction process, the effects of the private sector have ever more ravaging effects on society. This can be seen both in the field of health, and in the ecological effects. The quantitative dynamic of capitalist accumulation does not yield to the qualitative requirements of individual and social life. To stem its course is one goal of the social movements that we mentioned in the previous section. We have still to show here, however, how new approaches for the discussion of alternatives follow from this situation. For it is questionable whether the destructive effects of highly developed capitalist production can still be stemmed or cancelled by a policy of state compensation, or whether the point of application for alternative measures does not need to be sought in a new organization of the production process itself, starting with new technologies that are benign towards workers and their environment, through to new dispositions of (shortened) working hours and changed organization of work, as well as alternative raw materials and products.

In this way we can link up with an antithesis that determines the discussion on the state: the politicization of society or the socialization of politics. Here the fact is expressed that it is already necessary under capitalism (and not just 'after the revolution') to develop approaches for taking the formulation, decision and execution of policy 'back into society'. The alternatives raised by the workers' movement in the present crisis, therefore, which always and necessarily develop as a force against the primacy of economics that the bourgeoisie seeks to reactivate, must consequently aim at politicizing the economic base of social domination (and hegemony), and not just the 'political superstructure'. The socialization of politics embraces the production process just as much as it does the realm of state activity in economic policy.

*Translated by David Fernbach*

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