
Many ill-informed people still believe that the staff of the political science department at the London School of Economics, once headed by Harold Laski, presents a serious threat to the ongoing system. In fact, almost all the teaching staff are either tired Fabian fact grubbers or ignorant Marcuse-baiters such as Maurice Cranston.

Laski's sole heir among the senior staff is the brilliant Belgian-born co-editor of the annual Socialist Register, Ralph Miliband, who is best known as the author of Parliamentary Socialism (1961). This work, an historical critique of the British Labour Party in terms of "parliamentary cretinism", demonstrated that Labour entirely excluded all forms of action except voting, debating and negotiating, including even the elementary militancy of industrial action. Not surprisingly, it was described by Bernard Crick, Miliband's former colleague at the LSE and a member of the Labour Party, as "a piece of protracted teleology, rather like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr's notorious history of the New Deal." (Most of the reviews of this book in the scholarly journals were completely illiterate, but an excellent critique by the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm appeared in Universities and Left Review). More recently, Miliband's support for the rebels during the LSE student revolt of 1968-69 did not improve his standing with the majority of his professional colleagues who when under pressure are every bit as reactionary as their counterparts in the US and Australia.

In his latest and most ambitious work, The State in Capitalist Society, Miliband begins with the recognition that since Lenin — with the exception of Gramsci — Marxists have made little notable attempt to explore the phenomenon of the bourgeois State in the light of the concrete socio-economic, political and cultural reality of actual capitalist societies. Several years ago Paul Sweezy observed that "this is the area in which the study of monopoly capitalism, not only by bourgeois social scientists but by Marxists as well, is most seriously deficient."

Miliband's book is a very substantial contribution to remedying the deficiency noted by Sweezy. It constitutes a major advance on works such as James Harvey and Katherine Hood, The British State (1958), not only because it comes to grips with and effectively demolishes the most influential schools of thought subscribed to by bourgeois political scientists and political sociologists but also because it confronts the cultural reality of advanced capitalism, an area of crucial importance which has been largely neglected by Marxists in the English-speaking world. Two long chapters are devoted to the processes of legitimation of advanced capitalist societies, e.g. education, the mass media and the churches. Miliband recognises that for the ruling classes in these societies there can be no enterprises of greater importance than the battle to persuade the subordinate classes to accept the existing social order and to confine their demands and aspirations within its limits.

After reading The State in Capitalist Society, one must turn to the lengthy
review in *New Left Review* No. 58 by Nicos Poulantzas who puts forward a number of very important critical comments although he recognises the fundamental merits of the work. Unfortunately Miliband does not deal with the Marxist theory of the State as such. By omitting the first step he finds it rather difficult to get beyond opposing “concrete facts” to the old notions but these can only be combated effectively by the explicit introduction of new concepts. Another important point raised by Poulantzas is that the churches, political parties, unions, schools, the mass media and the family should be considered, despite their relative independence and autonomy, as *ideological* apparatus of the State as opposed to the classical *repressive* apparatus of the State (government, army, public bureaucracy, etc.). According to Marxist-Leninist theory, a socialist revolution does not signify only a shift in State power, but it must equally “break” the State apparatus. The classics of Marxism have considered it necessary to apply the thesis of the “destruction” of the State not only to the State repressive apparatus, but also to the State ideological apparatuses. The advent of a socialist society cannot be achieved by “breaking” only the State repressive apparatus while maintaining intact the State ideological apparatus, taking them in hand as they are and just changing their function.

Notwithstanding these and other criticisms brought up by Poulantzas — which this reviewer accepts — Miliband’s book remains a work of fundamental importance. He has demonstrated that the most important fact about advanced capitalist societies is the continued existence in them of private and concentrated economic power. As a result of that power, the owners and controllers in whose hands it lies enjoy a massive preponderance in society, in the political system, and in the determination of the policies and actions of the State.

**John Playford**

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**Late News**

The editors have pleasure in announcing that Roger Garaudy, eminent French marxist, has accepted an invitation by ALR to make a lecture tour of Australia in September this Year.

Further details will be announced shortly.