

The Problem of the Capitalist State

Ralph Miliband's recently published work, *The State in Capitalist Society*,¹ is in many respects of capital importance. The book is extremely substantial, and cannot decently be summarized in a few pages: I cannot recommend its reading too highly. I will limit myself here to a few critical comments, in the belief that only criticism can advance Marxist theory. For the specificity of this theory compared with other theoretical problematics lies in the extent to which Marxist theory provides itself, in the very act of its foundation, with the means of its own internal criticism. I should state at the outset that my critique will not be 'innocent': having myself written on the question of the State in my book *Pouvoir Politique et Classes Sociales*,² these comments will derive from epistemological positions presented there which differ from those of Miliband.

First of all, some words on the fundamental merits of Miliband's book. The theory of the State and of political power has, with rare exceptions such as Gramsci, been neglected by Marxist thought. This neglect has a number of

different causes, related to different phases of the working-class movement. In Marx himself this neglect, more apparent than real, is above all due to the fact that his principal theoretical object was the capitalist mode of production, within which the economy not only holds the role of determinant in the last instance, but also the dominant role—while for example in the feudal mode of production, Marx indicates that if the economy still has the role of determinant in the last instance, it is ideology in its religious form that holds the dominant role. Marx thus concentrated on the economic level of the capitalist mode of production, and did not deal specifically with the other levels such as the State: he dealt only with these levels through their *effects* on the economy (for example, in the passages of *Capital* on factory legislation). In Lenin, the reasons are different: involved in direct political practice, he dealt with the question of the State only in essentially polemical works, such as *State and Revolution*, which do not have the theoretical status of certain of his tests such as *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*.

How, by contrast, is the neglect of theoretical study of the State in the Second International, and in the Third International after Lenin, to be explained? Here I would advance, with all necessary precautions, the following thesis: the absence of a study of the State derived from the fact that the dominant conception of these Internationals was a deviation, *economism*, which is generally accompanied by an absence of revolutionary strategy and objectives—even when it takes a ‘leftist’ or Luxemburgist form. In effect, economism considers that other levels of social reality, including the State, are simple epiphenomena reducible to the economic ‘base’. Thereby a specific study of the State becomes superfluous. Parallel with this, economism considers that every change in the social system happens first of all in the economy and that political action should have the economy as its principal objective. Once again, a specific study of the State is redundant. Thus economism leads either to reformism and trade-unionism, or to forms of ‘leftism’ such as syndicalism. For, as Lenin showed, the principal objective of revolutionary action is *State power* and the necessary precondition of any socialist revolution is the destruction of the bourgeois State apparatus.

Economism and the absence of revolutionary strategy are manifest in the Second International. They are less obvious in the Third International, yet in my view what fundamentally determined the theory and practice of ‘Stalinist’ policy, dominant in the Comintern probably from 1928, was nevertheless the same economism and absence of a revolutionary strategy. This is true both of the ‘leftist’ period of the Comintern until 1935, and of the revisionist-reformist period after 1935. This economism determined the absence of a theory of the State in the Third International, and this *relation* (economism/absence of a theory of the State) is perhaps nowhere more evident than in its analyses of fascism—precisely where the Comintern had most need of such a theory of the State. Considerations of a concrete order both confirm and explain this.

¹ Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London 1969, 292 pp., 45/–.

² Maspero, Paris,

Since the *principal symptoms* of Stalinist politics were located in the relations between the State apparatus and the Communist Party in the USSR, symptoms visible in the famous Stalin Constitution of 1936, it is very comprehensible that study of the State remained a forbidden topic *par excellence*.

It is in this context that Miliband's work helps to overcome a major lacuna. As is always the case when a scientific theory is lacking, bourgeois conceptions of the State and of political power have pre-empted the terrain of political theory, almost unchallenged. Miliband's work is here truly *cathartic*: he methodically attacks these conceptions. Rigorously deploying a formidable mass of empirical material in his examination of the concrete social formations of the USA, England, France, Germany or Japan, he not only radically demolishes bourgeois ideologies of the State, but provides us with a positive knowledge that these ideologies have never been able to produce.

However, the procedure chosen by Miliband—a *direct* reply to bourgeois ideologies by the immediate examination of concrete fact—is also to my mind the source of the faults of his book. Not that I am against the study of the 'concrete': on the contrary, having myself relatively neglected this aspect of the question in my own work (with its somewhat different aim and object), I am only the more conscious of the necessity for concrete analyses. I simply mean that a precondition of any scientific approach to the 'concrete' is to make explicit the epistemological principles of its own treatment of it. Now it is important to note that Miliband nowhere deals with the Marxist theory of the State as such, although it is constantly implicit in his work. He takes it as a sort of 'given' in order to reply to bourgeois ideologies by examining the facts in its light. Here I strongly believe that Miliband is wrong, for the absence of explicit presentation of principles in the order of exposition of a scientific discourse is not innocuous: above all in a domain like the theory of the State, where a Marxist theory, as we have seen, has yet to be constituted. In effect, one has the impression that this absence often leads Miliband to attack bourgeois ideologies of the State whilst placing himself on their own terrain. Instead of *displacing* the epistemological terrain and submitting these ideologies to the critique of Marxist science by demonstrating their inadequacy to the real (as Marx does, notably in the *Theories of Surplus-Value*), Miliband appears to omit this first step. Yet the analyses of modern epistemology show that it is never possible simply to oppose 'concrete facts' to concepts, but that these must be attacked by other parallel concepts situated in a different problematic. For it is only by means of these new concepts that the old notions can be confronted with 'concrete reality'.

Let us take a simple example. Attacking the prevailing notion of 'plural elites', whose ideological function is to deny the existence of a ruling class, Miliband's reply, which he supports by 'facts', is that this plurality of *elites* does not exclude the existence of a ruling *class*, for it is precisely these elites that constitute this class:³ this is close to Bottomore's response to the question. Now, I maintain that in replying to the

³ Miliband, pp. 24 ff and 47.

adversary in this way, one places oneself on his ground and thereby risks floundering in the swamp of his ideological imagination, thus missing a scientific explanation of the 'facts'. What Miliband avoids is the necessary preliminary of a *critique of the ideological notion of elite* in the light of the scientific concepts of Marxist theory. Had this critique been made, it would have been evident that the 'concrete reality' concealed by the notion of 'plural elites'—the ruling class, the fractions of this class, the hegemonic class, the governing class, the State apparatus—can only be grasped if the very notion of elite is rejected. For concepts and notions are never innocent, and by employing the notions of the adversary to reply to him, one legitimizes them and permits their persistence. Every notion or concept only has meaning within a whole theoretical problematic that finds it: extracted from this problematic and imported 'uncritically' into Marxism, they have absolutely uncontrollable effects. They always surface when least expected, and constantly risk clouding scientific analysis. In the extreme case, one can be unconsciously and surreptitiously contaminated by the very epistemological principles of the adversary, that is to say the problematic that finds the concepts which have not been theoretically criticized, believing them simply refuted by the facts. This is more serious: for it is then no longer a question merely of external notions 'imported' into Marxism, but of principles that risk vitiating the use made of Marxist concepts themselves.

Is this the case with Miliband? I do not believe that the consequences of his procedure have gone so far. It nevertheless remains true that, as I see it, Miliband sometimes allows himself to be unduly influenced by the methodological principles of the adversary. How is this manifested? Very briefly, I would say that it is visible in the difficulties that Miliband has in comprehending social classes and the State as *objective structures*, and their relations as an *objective system of regular connections*, a structure and a system whose agents, 'men', are in the words of Marx, 'bearers' of it—*träger*. Miliband constantly gives the impression that for him social classes or 'groups' are in some way reducible to *inter-personal relations*, that the State is reducible to inter-personal relations of the members of the diverse 'groups' that constitute the State apparatus, and finally that the relation between social classes and the State is itself reducible to inter-personal relations of 'individuals' composing social groups and 'individuals' composing the State apparatus.

I have indicated, in an earlier article in NLR, that this conception seems to me to derive from a *problematic of the subject* which has had constant repercussions in the history of Marxist thought.⁴ According to this problematic, the agents of a social formation, 'men', are not considered as the 'bearers' of objective instances (as they are for Marx), but as the genetic principle of the levels of the social whole. This is a problematic of *social actors*, of individuals as the origin of *social action*: sociological research thus leads finally, not to the study of the objective co-ordinates that determine the distribution of agents into social classes and the contradictions between these classes, but to the search for *finalist* explanations founded on the *motivations of conduct* of the individual actors.

⁴ 'Marxist Political Theory in Great Britain', NLR 43.

This is notoriously one of the aspects of the problematic both of Weber and of contemporary functionalism. To transpose this problematic of the subject into Marxism is in the end to admit the epistemological principles of the adversary and to risk vitiating one's own analyses.

Let us now consider some of the concrete themes of Miliband's book in the light of this preamble.

1. The False Problem of Managerialism

The first problem which Miliband discusses, very correctly, is that of the *ruling class*, by way of reply to the current bourgeois ideologies of *managerialism*. According to these ideologies, the contemporary separation of private ownership and control has transferred economic power from entrepreneurs to managers. The latter have no interest as owners in the strict sense, and hence do not seek profit as their aim—in other words, profit is not a motivation of their conduct, but growth, or development. Since the ruling class is here defined by the quest for profit, and this quest no longer characterizes the directors of the economy, the ruling class itself no longer exists: we are now confronted with a 'plurality of elites', of which the managers are one. What is Miliband's response to this?⁵ He takes these ideologies literally and turns their own arguments against them: in fact, managers do seek profit as the goal of their actions, for this is how the capitalist system works. Seeking private profit, they also make up part of the ruling class, for the contradiction of the capitalist system according to Marx, Miliband tells us, is 'the contradiction between its ever more social character and its enduringly private purpose'.⁶ While not excluding the existence of some managerial goals relatively different from those of owners, Miliband considers managers as one among the distinct economic elites composing the ruling class.

I consider this a mistaken way of presenting the problem. To start with, the distinctive criterion for membership of the capitalist class for Marx *is in no way* a motivation of conduct, that is to say the search for profit as the 'aim of action'. For there may well exist capitalists who are not motivated by profit, just as there are non-capitalists (the petty-bourgeoisie in small-scale production, for instance) who by contrast have just such a motivation. Marx's criterion is the objective place in production and the ownership of the means of production. It should be remembered that even Max Weber had to admit that what defined the capitalist was not 'the lure of gain'. For Marx, profit is not a motivation of conduct—even one 'imposed' by the system—it is an objective category that designates a part of realized surplus value. In the same way, the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist system, according to Marx, is not at all a contradiction between its social character and its 'private purpose', but a contradiction between the socialization of productive forces and their *private appropriation*. Thus the characterization of the existing social system as capitalist in no way depends on the motivations of the conduct of managers. Furthermore: to characterize

⁵ Miliband, *ibid.*

⁶ Miliband, p. 34.

the class position of managers, one need not refer to the motivations of their conduct, but only to their place in production and their relationship to the ownership of the means of production. Here both Bettelheim and myself have noted that it is necessary to distinguish, in the term 'property' used by Marx, formal legal property, which may not belong to the 'individual' capitalist, and *economic property or real appropriation*, which is the only genuine *economic power*.⁷ This economic property, which is what matters as far as distribution into classes is concerned, still belongs well and truly to *capital*. The manager exercises only a functional delegation of it.

From this point of view, the managers as such do not constitute a distinct fraction of the capitalist class. Miliband, basing himself on the non-pertinent distinction of motivations of conduct, is led to consider the managers a distinct 'economic elite'. By doing so, he not only attributes to them an importance they do not possess, but he is prevented from seeing what is important. For in effect, what matters is not the differences and relations between 'economic elites' based on diverging aims, but something of which Miliband says virtually nothing, *the differences and relations between fractions of capital*. The problem is not that of a plurality of 'economic elites' but of fractions of the capitalist class. Can a Marxist pass over in silence the existent differences and relations, under imperialism, between comprador monopoly capital, national monopoly capital, non-monopoly capital, industrial capital, or financial capital?

2. The Question of Bureaucracy

The next problem that Miliband selects for discussion, again correctly, is that of the relation between the ruling class and the State. Here too Miliband's approach to the question is to provide a direct rebuttal of bourgeois ideologies. These ideologies affirm the *neutrality* of the State, representing the general interest, in relation to the divergent interests of 'civil society'. Some of them (Aron, for example) claim that the capitalist class has never truly *governed* in capitalist societies, in the sense that its members have rarely participated directly in the government; others claim that the members of the State apparatus, the 'civil servants', are neutral with respect to the interests of social groups. What is the general line of Miliband's response to these ideologies? Here too he is led to take up the reverse position to these ideologies, to turn their argument against them. He does so in two ways. First of all he establishes that the members of the capitalist class have in fact often directly participated in the State apparatus and in the government⁸. Then, having established the relation between members of the State apparatus and the ruling class, he shows (a) that the *social origin* of members of the 'summit' of the State apparatus is that of the ruling class, and (b) that *personal ties* of influence, status, and milieu are established between the members of the ruling class and those of the State apparatus.⁹

⁷ Bettelheim, *La Transition vers l'Economie Socialiste*, and Poulantzas, *Pouvoir Politique et Classes Sociales*, pp. 23 ff.

⁸ Miliband pp. 48–68.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69–145, especially 119–145.

I have no intention of contesting the value of Miliband's analyses, which on the contrary appear to me to have a capital *demystifying* importance. Yet however exact in itself, the way chosen by Miliband does not seem to me to be the most significant one. Firstly, because the *direct* participation of members of the capitalist class in the State apparatus and in the government, even where it exists, is not the important side of the matter. The relation between the bourgeois class and the State is an *objective relation*. This means that if the *function* of the State in a determinate social formation and the *interests* of the dominant class in this formation *coincide*, it is by reason of the system itself: the direct participation of members of the ruling class in the State apparatus is not the *cause* but the *effect*, and moreover a chance and contingent one, of this objective coincidence.

In order to establish this coincidence, it would have been necessary to make explicit the role of the State as a specific instance, a regional structure, of the social whole. Miliband, however, seems to reduce the role of the State to the conduct and 'behaviour' of the members of the State apparatus.¹⁰ If Miliband had first established that the State is precisely *the factor of cohesion of a social formation and the factor of reproduction of the conditions of production of a system* that itself determines the domination of one class over the others, he would have seen clearly that the participation, whether direct or indirect, of this class in government *in no way changes things*. Indeed in the case of the capitalist State, one can go further: it can be said that the capitalist State best serves the interests of the capitalist class only when the members of this class do not participate directly in the State apparatus, that is to say when the *ruling class* is not the *politically governing class*. This is the exact meaning of Marx's analyses of 19th century England and Bismarckian Germany, to say nothing of Bonapartism in France. It is also what Miliband himself seems to suggest in his analyses of social-democratic governments.¹¹

We come now to the problem of the *members of the State apparatus*, that is to say the army, the police, the judiciary and the administrative bureaucracy. Miliband's main line of argument is to try to establish the relation between the conduct of the members of the State apparatus and the interests of the ruling class, by demonstrating either that the social origin of the 'top servants of the State' is that of the ruling class, or that the members of the State apparatus end up united to this class by personal ties.¹² This approach, without being false, remains descriptive. More importantly, I believe that it prevents us from studying the specific problem that the State apparatus presents; *the problem of 'bureaucracy'*. According to Marx, Engels and Lenin, the members of the State apparatus, which it is convenient to call the 'bureaucracy' in the general sense, constitute a specific *social category*—not a class. This means that, although the members of the State apparatus belong, by their class origin, to different classes, they function according to a specific internal unity. Their class origin—*class situation*—recedes into the background in relation to that which unifies them—their *class*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 68–118.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 96 ff.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 119–45.

position: that is to say, the fact that they belong precisely to the State apparatus and that they have as their *objective function* the actualization of the role of the State. This in its turn means that the bureaucracy, as a specific and relatively 'unified' social category, is the 'servant' of the ruling class, not by reason of its class origins, which are divergent, or by reason of its personal relations with the ruling class, but by reason of the fact that its internal unity derives from its actualization of the objective role of the State. The totality of this role itself coincides with the interests of the ruling class.

Important consequences follow for the celebrated problem of the *relative autonomy* of the State with respect to the ruling class, and thus for the equally celebrated question of the relative autonomy of the bureaucracy as a specific social category, with respect to that class. A long Marxist tradition has considered that the State is only a simple tool or instrument manipulated at will by the ruling class. I do not mean to say that Miliband falls into this trap, which makes it impossible to account for the complex mechanisms of the State in its relation to class struggle. However, if one locates the relationship between the State and the ruling class in the social origin of the members of the State apparatus and their inter-personal relations with the members of this class, so that the bourgeoisie almost physically 'corners' the State apparatus, one cannot account for the relative autonomy of the State with respect to this class. When Marx designated Bonapartism as the 'religion of the bourgeoisie', in other words as characteristic of *all* forms of the capitalist State, he showed that this State can only truly serve the ruling class in so far as it is relatively autonomous from the diverse fractions of this class, precisely in order to be able to organize the hegemony of the whole of this class. It is not by chance that Miliband finally admits this autonomy only in the extreme case of fascism.¹³ The question posed is whether the situation today has changed in this respect: I do not think so, and will return to this.

3. The Branches of the State Apparatus

Miliband's approach thus to a certain extent prevents him from following through a rigorous analysis of the State apparatus itself and of the relations between different 'branches' or 'parts' of this apparatus. Miliband securely establishes that the State apparatus is not only constituted by the government, but also by special branches such as the army, the police, the judiciary, and the civil administration. Yet what is it that governs the *relations* between these branches, the respective importance and the relative predominance of these different branches among themselves, for example the relation between parliament and the executive, or the role of the army or of the administration in a particular form of State? Miliband's response seems to be the following:¹⁴ the fact that one of these branches predominates over the others is in some way directly related to the 'exterior' factors noted above. That is to say, it is either the branch whose members are, by their class origin or connections, nearest to the ruling class, or the branch whose pre-

¹³ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 119 ff.

dominance over the others is due to its immediate 'economic' role. An example of the latter case would be the present growth of the role of the army, related to the current importance of military expenditures.¹⁵

Here too, I cannot completely agree with Miliband's interpretation. As I see it, the State apparatus forms an *objective system* of special 'branches' whose relation presents a *specific internal unity* and obeys, to a large extent, *its own logic*. Each particular form of capitalist State is thus characterized by a particular form of relations among its branches, and by the predominance of one or of certain of its branches over the others: liberal State, interventionist State, Bonapartism, military dictatorship or fascism. But each particular form of capitalist State must be referred back, *in its unity*, to important modifications of the relations of production and to important stages of class struggle: competitive capitalism, imperialism, state capitalism. Only *after* having established the relation of a form of State as a unity, *that is as a specific form of the system of State apparatus as a whole*, with the 'exterior', can the respective role and the mutual internal relation of the 'branches' of the State apparatus be established. A *significant* shift in the predominant branch in the State apparatus, or of the relation between these branches, cannot be *directly* established by the immediate exterior role of this branch, but is determined *by the modification of the whole system of the State apparatus and of its form of internal unity as such*: a modification which is itself due to changes in the relations of production and to developments in the class struggle.

Let us take as an example the present case of the *army* in the advanced capitalist countries. I do not think that the 'immediate' facts of the growth of military expenditure and increasing inter-personal ties between industrialists and the military are sufficient to speak of a *significant* shift of the role of the army in the present State apparatus: besides, in spite of everything, Miliband himself is very reserved in this matter. In order for such a shift to occur, there would have to be an important modification of the form of State as a whole—without this necessarily having to take the form of 'military dictatorship'—a modification which would not be due *simply* to the growing importance of military expenditure, but to profound modifications of the relations of production and the class struggle, of which the growth of military expenditures is finally only the *effect*. One could thus establish the relation of the army not simply with the dominant class, but with the totality of social classes—a complex relation that would explain its role by means of a shift in the State as a whole. I believe that there is no more striking evidence of this thesis, in another context, than present developments in Latin America.

4. The Present Form of the Capitalist State

Can we then speak in the present stage of capitalism of a modification of the form of the State? I would answer here in the affirmative, although I do not believe that this modification is necessarily in the direction of a preponderant role of the army. Miliband also seems to

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 130 ff.

give an affirmative reply to the question. How does he situate this present modification of the form of State?¹⁶ If the relation between the State and the ruling class is principally constituted by the 'inter-personal' relations between the members of the State apparatus and those of the ruling class, the only approach that seems open is to argue that these relations are now becoming increasingly intense and rigid, that the two are practically interchangeable. In effect, this is just the approach which Miliband adopts. The argument seems to me, however, merely descriptive. Indeed, it converges with the orthodox communist thesis of *State monopoly capitalism*, according to which the present form of the State is specified by increasingly close inter-personal relations between the monopolies and the members of the State apparatus, by the 'fusion of State and monopolies into a single mechanism'.¹⁷ I have shown elsewhere why and how this thesis, in appearance ultra-leftist, leads in fact to the most vapid revisionism and reformism.¹⁸ In fact, the present modification of the form of State must mainly be sought and studied not in its simple effects, which are besides disputable, but in profound shifts of the articulation of economy and polity. This modification does not seem to me to alter the relative autonomy of the State which at present, as J. M. Vincent has recently noted in connection with Gaullism,¹⁹ only assumes different forms. In brief, the designation of any existent State as the pure and simple agent of big capital seems to me, *taken literally*, to give rise to many misinterpretations—as much now as in the past.

5. The Ideological Apparatuses

Finally there is one last problem which seems to me very important, and which will provide me with the occasion to go further than I have done in my own work cited above. I wonder in effect if Miliband and myself have not stopped half-way on one critical question. This is the role of *ideology* in the functioning of the State apparatus, a question which has become especially topical since the events of May–June 1968 in France. The classic Marxist tradition of the theory of the State is principally concerned to show *the repressive role of the State*, in the strong sense of organized physical repression. There is only one notable exception, Gramsci, with his problematic of hegemony. Now Miliband very correctly insists in long and excellent analyses (*The process of legitimization*, I, II, pp. 179–264) on the role played by ideology in the functioning of the State and in the process of political domination: which I have tried to do from another point of view in my own work.

I think however that, for different reasons, we have both stopped half-way: which was not the case with Gramsci. That is to say, we have ended by considering that ideology only exists in ideas, customs or morals without seeing that ideology can be embodied, in the strong sense, in *institutions*: institutions which then, by the very process of institutionalization, belong to the system of the State whilst depending

¹⁶ Ibid., especially p. 123 ff.

¹⁷ See the acts of the colloquy at Choisy-le-Roi on 'State Monopoly Capitalism' in *Economie et Politique*, Special Number.

¹⁸ Poulantzas, op. cit. p. 297 ff.

¹⁹ *Les Temps Modernes*, August–September 1968.

principally on the ideological level. Following the Marxist tradition, we gave the concept of the State a *restricted* meaning, considering the principally repressive institutions as forming part of the 'State', and rejecting institutions with a principally ideological role as 'outside of' the State, in a place that Miliband designates as the 'political system', distinguishing it from the State.²⁰

Here is the thesis I would like to propose: the system of the State is composed of *several apparatuses or institutions* of which certain have a principally repressive role, in the strong sense, and others a principally ideological role. The former constitute the repressive apparatus of the State, that is to say the State apparatus in the classical Marxist sense of the term (government, army, police, tribunals and administration). The latter constitute the *ideological apparatuses of the State*, such as the Church, the political parties, the unions (with the exception of course, of the *revolutionary* party or trade union organizations), the schools, the mass media (newspapers, radio, television), and, from a certain point of view, the family. This is so whether they are *public* or *private*—the distinction having a purely juridical, that is, largely ideological character, which changes nothing fundamental. This position is in a certain sense that of Gramsci himself, although one he did not sufficiently found and develop.

Why should one speak in the plural of the state ideological apparatuses, whilst speaking in the singular of the State repressive apparatus? Because the State repressive apparatus, the State in the classic Marxist sense of the term, possesses a very rigorous internal unity which directly governs the relation between the diverse branches of the apparatus. Whilst the State ideological apparatuses, by their principal function—ideological inculcation and transmission—possess a greater and more important autonomy: their inter-connections and relations with the State repressive apparatus appear, by relation to the mutual connections of the branches of the State repressive apparatus, vested with a greater independence.

Why should one speak of *State* ideological apparatuses; why should these apparatuses be considered as composing part of the State? I will mention four principal reasons:

1. If the State is defined as the instance that maintains the cohesion of a social formation and which reproduces the conditions of production of a social system by maintaining class domination, it is obvious that the institutions in question—the State ideological apparatuses—fill exactly the same function.

2. The condition of possibility of the existence and functioning of these institutions or ideological apparatuses, under a certain form, is the State repressive apparatus itself. If it is true that their role is principally ideological and that the State repressive apparatus does not in general intervene *directly* in their functioning, it remains no less true that this repressive apparatus is always present behind them, that it defends

²⁰ Miliband, p. 50 ff.

them and sanctions them, and finally, that their action is *determined* by the action of the State repressive apparatus itself. The student movement, in France and elsewhere, can testify to this for schools and universities today.

3. Although these ideological apparatuses possess a notable autonomy, among themselves and in relation to the State repressive apparatus, it remains no less true that they belong to the same system as this repressive apparatus. Every important modification of the form of the State has repercussions not only on the mutual relations of the State repressive apparatus, but also on the mutual relations of the State ideological apparatuses and of the relations between these apparatuses and the State repressive apparatus. There is no need to take the extreme case of fascism to prove this thesis: one need only mention the modifications of the role and relations of the Church, the parties, the unions, the schools, the media, the family, both among themselves and with the State repressive apparatus, in the diverse 'normal' forms through which the capitalist State had evolved.

4. Finally, for one last reason: according to Marxist-Leninist theory, a socialist revolution does not signify only a shift in *State power*, but it must equally '*break*', that is to say radically change, the State apparatus. Now, if one includes ideological apparatuses in the concept of the State, it is evident why the classics of Marxism have—if often only in implicit fashion—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*: Church, parties, unions, school, media, family. Certainly, given the autonomy of the State ideological apparatuses, this does not mean that they must all be 'broken' in homologous fashion, that is, *in the same way* or *at the same time* as the State repressive apparatus, or that any one of them must be. It means that the 'destruction' of the ideological apparatuses has *its precondition* in the 'destruction' of the State repressive apparatus which maintains it. Hence the illusory error of a certain contemporary thesis, which considers it possible to pass here and now, to the 'destruction' of the university in capitalist societies, for instance. But it also means that the advent of socialist society cannot be achieved by 'breaking' only the State repressive apparatus whilst maintaining the State ideological apparatuses intact, taking them in hand as they are and merely changing their function.

This question evidently brings us closer to the problem of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* and of the *cultural revolution*: but I have the feeling that it takes us farther from Miliband. I do not however, want to enter here into the problem of the political conclusions of the Miliband's book, in which he shows himself very—too—discreet: the question remains open. I will end by recalling what I said at the beginning: if the tone of this article is critical, this is above all proof of the interest that the absorbing analyses of Miliband's work have aroused in me.