

READING GUIDE TO POLITICAL POWER AND SOCIAL CLASSES by NICOS POULANTZAS

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Reading guide/issues for first week's reading.

The reading for the first week in our journey through Poulantzas is the most difficult. In spite of the fact that most of this part of the book is a kind of dictionary for Marxist concepts, nevertheless some of the key concepts remain only vaguely defined, and in some places some crucial distinctions are extremely confusing. So don't be discouraged. Unfortunately, it is really necessary to plow through these sections in order to deal with the discussions around the state in the rest of the book. In these notes I will do three things: (1) I will provide a very sketchy outline/guide to the issues Poulantzas discusses. Hopefully this will help you keep track of where the discussion is going as you read through it. I will also indicate especially confusing sections; (2) On a separate page are listed some of the basic concepts which P discusses in these first 120 pages. To the extent you can, you should try to write down in your own words definitions of these concepts based on P's analysis. In this way when we come to discuss the concepts in class we can see which are the most problematic; (3) Finally, I have included some general questions that might help in dealing with some of the substantive points in this section.

I. Guide to the Text (pp. 11-119). Starred sections are especially important.

Introduction

- Section 1, 2: discussion of the basic epistemological stance of the whole book. Pay particular attention to the definition of mode of production (p. 15ff) and to Poulantzas' defense of developing a theory of the political.
- 3: Throughout the book Poulantzas relies very heavily on Marxist classes both for concrete historical information and as a context for his own theoretical exposition. Here Poulantzas explains how he will use such sources.
- 4, 5: This is a defense of the order of exposition P will follow in the book.
- *6,7: Here Poulantzas provides his basic definition of the capitalist mode of production and introduces the concept of relative "autonomy" which is so central to his later discussion.

General Questions

I. The Concept of Politics

- 1 (37-44): Throughout the book, and especially the section on "General Questions", the discussion frequently revolves around the distinction between structures and practices, or structures and social relations. Here this distinction is introduced in terms of the distinction between the Political (structures) and politics (practices)

*ii (44-50): Poulantzas' basic definition of the state is introduced here. The last part of footnote 17 is useful, I think, in clarifying the functional dimension of Poulantzas' definition and its relationship to more traditional descriptive definitions.

iii (50-56): More discussion of differentiated functions of the state. The key point is that even apparently nonpolitical functions of the state must be interpreted in terms of their relationship to the global political function of the state which overdetermines them.

2. Politics and Social Classes

*i (58-70): This is a very murky section, especially pp.64-70, part of which is almost unintelligible (for me at least). Poulantzas does two things in this section: first, he differentiates his analysis from various other Marxist conceptions of class (especially in-itself/for-itself approaches), and then he attempts to establish the relationship between social structures and social classes, or alternatively, between social structures and social relations. This is a fundamental point and recurs throughout the analysis, so try to grasp at least some of it. The basic distinction (as I understand it) is between social relations between agents (or people) and relations between "elements". The latter comprise social structures; the former, social relations. On the concept of structure, look closely at footnote 24 on p.115, where political structures are seen as defined by/through relations among (or the "matrix" which organized) political institutions (in this case institutions are the "elements" of the structure).

ii (70-73): classes in a mode of production and in social formations: real classes, i.e. real social forces in history, always exist in social formations. Here P discusses the relationship between the two levels of abstraction.

*iii(73-77): Classes, P insists, cannot be defined structurally; they must be defined in terms of class struggle/practices.

iv,v (77-85): Here P is trying to make distinctions between the concept of class and other categories within social relations -- Fractions, categories, strata. Especially important in this discussion is the concept of "pertinent effects" as helping to distinguish classes from other concepts.

vi (85-93) This section attempts to develop further the notion that classes must be understood in terms of practices. Parts are, again, very obscure, especially p87.

vii (93-98): Key concept here is "conjuncture". This is especially important since Poulantzas argues that the conjuncture -- the "present moment" -- is the object of politics (political practice), i.e. that it is the "raw material" which is transformed by political practice. Note that the conjuncture is defined in terms of its class content, i.e. the constellation of class forces within the conjuncture.

3. The Concept of Power

i (99-104) Power is defined in terms of a relation between class practices, and thus is itself situated in the "field" of social relations, not social structures.

- *ii (104-114) Redefinition of political power in terms of objective class interests. Interests are defined in terms of class relations, not in terms of social structure. The actual definition of interests is rather unclear, but the central idea is that a class's interests are defined by the range of possible class action given by the structures of that social formation.
- iii (115-119) rather confusing distinction between apparatuses and power, but the basic idea is similar to Therborn's.

Some discussion questions:

1. Poulantzas defines the state as "the factor of cohesion between the levels of a social formation" (p.44 and elsewhere). The question is: is this a function of the state the very criterion for identifying state structures (i.e. is everything which is a "factor of cohesion...." part of the state), or is the state defined in some other way and than its function is deduced/observed? Footnote 17 on p.48 seems to indicate that Poulantzas is not using a completely functional definition, but elsewhere in the text this is less clear.
2. In Poulantzas' analysis, "Mode of Production" refers not only to the combination of forces of production/relations of production, but also to the articulation of political and ideological structures which correspond to economic structures. Thus, it is possible at the same level of abstraction as Marx's discussion in Capital of economic structures, to analyse capitalist political structures, i.e. they can be analysed in terms of modes of production. This may be appropriate, but it does raise problems when we move to the level of the social formation, where there are more than one mode of production. Usually this is seen as more than one mode of economic organization, and the political superstructure is then portrayed as being determined in the "last instance" by the dominant mode of production (=economic organization). The subordinate modes of production, in ~~such~~ such a formulation would not normally have political superstructures. But if mode of production as a concept includes political superstructures, it is not obvious what happens to these subordinate "political" instances when several modes of production exist in the same social formation. Anyway, I find this a confusing issue.

Concepts in Search of a Definition

Mode of production

Structure

Structure vs. social relation

relations of production vs. social relations of production

practice(s)

the objective of political practice vs. the object of political practice

historicism

Conjuncture

political power

objective class interests

Classes

Fractions, strata, categories

The State

Politics vs. the political

Concepts/2

The following are at least some of the causal words Poulantzas uses in his analysis. You probably can find others in the text. The distinctions among these concepts of determination are not always very clear.

condensation

fusion

dominance

determination

overdetermination

underdetermination

governs

reflects

assigns

pertinent effects

limits

II. The Capitalist State

1. The Problem

introduction (123-125): Initial posing of the problem: what is distinctive about the capitalist state? Answer = 1) the subjects of that state are not constituted as class actors, but as individuals-citizens; 2) political class domination is absent from the institutions of the state. Important point: these characteristics are not just ideological, but are structurally embodied in the state itself. Note also that Poulantzas regards this individualization process as located at the level of the political, not simply generated by production relations (124).

i. the capitalist state and relations of production (125-130): The first part of this section is a critique of the "historicist" view that capitalism historically presupposes the creation of "bare individuals" as autonomous actors/subjects. P stresses that the category "bare individual" really refers to a logical/theoretical element in the CMP, not an historical prerequisite. P then argues that what is really meant by the "free" or bare individual is that the direct producer is separated from the means of production within the labor process, but the crucial point is that this happens in such a way as to forge a basic social unity among agents of production (through concentration of capital, socialization of the forces of production, etc.). This is what gives the creation of juridical "individuals-subjects" within the state such importance because it negates the formation of workers into a class. This is one of Poulantzas' basic themes and will be repeated many times. One other issue in this section is the emphasis on the separation of direct producers from the means of production as the central fact of the CMP which "produces the specific autonomy of the political and the economic" (129).

*ii. the capitalist state and the class struggle (130-137): The key notion in this section is the analysis of the effect of the capitalist state on economic relations (economic class struggle), namely the pervasive reality of competition, or what P calls the "effect of isolation". Competition/isolation are thus not seen as directly a result of economic organization/relations, but of the effect of the political structures on economic relations. The analysis of the capitalist state hinges around this effect on economic class struggle. But the cap. state also has a second function: to represent the unity of the isolated relations which it has itself generated (133-134). As we shall see, this is important for understanding both the relation of the state to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Note the statement on p.133: "the capitalist state is determined by its functions with regard to the economic class struggle". Poulantzas is trying to establish the relationship between structures and practices, both of which have a specific autonomy. Here he argues that the structure is determined by its function with respect to a practice. See if this formulation is consistent with other causal statements/determinations he makes.

iii. hegemony (137-141): Hegemony is another key concept in P's work. It is important to see precisely how P uses it to designate the political practice of the dominant classes (137). P uses the concept in two contexts (140-41): to indicate how dominant class interests come to constitute the "interests" of the people/nation (general interests), and how a dominant class or fraction dominates the power block, i.e. the combination of fractions/classes which make up the dominant class. Much more will be said of this latter relation later.

2. Typology and Type of the Capitalist State

Introduction (142-145): Note the formulation on p.144 that the concrete state in a social formation is always a combination of several types of state which are part of different modes of production, and that this means that it is possible (although rare) to have a type of the state from a nondominant mode of production be the dominant form of the state while that mode of production is not the dominant mode of production in the social formation as a whole. Also note at the bottom of p.144 the discussion of the relationship between the structure of the state and its function.

(optional) i. Weber's typology (145-47): brief critique of method of ideal types. Not very useful unless you really understand the epistemological subtleties of Poulantzas' critique of empiricism. The crucial point which underlies this section, and which is important for understanding the thrust of the next section, is the distinction between a descriptive typology (empiricism and historicism) and a theoretical typology. Ideal types are of the latter sort (P argues), whereas a Marxist typology of the forms of the state are the latter. What this means in practice is that the stages in a typology are deduced from a theoretical analysis of functional imperatives derived from changes in the structure of the mode of production itself, rather than the typology being derived from the descriptions of reality itself.

**ii. types of state, forms of state, periodization (147-53): Forms of the state in the CMP must be analysed in terms of variations within the specific autonomy of the state which characterizes the capitalist state, and these variations must be related to variations in the very structure of the mode of production itself (and thus variations in class relations). Thus, the typology of forms of the state is derived from a periodization (theoretical, not chronological) of the forms of the capitalist mode of production. Note especially the discussion on pp.150-151 on the dimensions of variability of different forms of the capitalist state (read footnote 11).

iii. forms of regime and periodization of the political (153-156): forms of regime occur within given forms of the state, and reflect the specific development of the political as a relatively autonomous structure. Pay especial attention to the discussion on pp.155-156 on the problem of the dislocation between structures and functions.

3. The Absolutist State, the Transitional State

*i. Type of State and problems of transition (157-161): note the difference from Anderson's discussion. Here the Absolutist state is seen as a transitional state, not a feudal state, which results from the specific characteristics of the dissolution of feudalism combined with the emergence of capitalist property relations (but not relations of

real appropriation -- i.e. separation of the worker from the means of production within the labor process itself). Note the discussion on the bottom of p.160-161 about the functions of the transitional state "to produce not-yet-given relations of production (i.e. capitalist relations)..." Try to see if Poulantzas provides an adequate explanation of why such a function occurs within the structures of the Absolutist state? In the earlier analyses it seemed that functions were in some sense "dictated" by the logic of the structures (structures set limits on relations and functions), but here the argument is less clear.

- ii. The absolutist state--the capitalist state(161-167): Development of the argument that the structures of the absolutist state are basically capitalist in character because of relative autonomy from the economic and function of representing the people/nation as a unity. Note methodology used in analysing army and bureaucracy as structures of absolutism (p.164): "we must start from the particular functions of the army and the bureaucracy" and on p.166: "The transition, which assigns these functions to the state, allows them to be performed only by a state with a capitalist character". The key point is that it is not the balance of forces between bourgeoisie and nobility which determines the character of the absolutist state (i.e. characteristics located in the field of class struggle), but rather the nature of the structure of production relations and modes of production which can be characterized as transitional. Footnote 13 on p.165 might illuminate this issue.

4. Models of the Bourgeois Revolution (168-184): This is an especially clear (!!) and interesting discussion of bourgeois revolutions and relationship of bourgeoisies to the state apparatuses in France, Britain and Prussia. Because it is rather concrete and historical, these pages do help to understand many of the abstractions of the earlier discussion, and it sets the stage for later theoretical development. Especially interesting is the discussion of the relationship of the bourgeoisie to small-holders/petty bourgeoisie in the three countries and how this shapes the political fate of the dominant class and the state apparatuses. Note the discussion on p.181 about "errors of judgement" and the inability for the bourgeoisie to "make up its mind" in Germany as part of the explanation of Prussian development. This is very close to a discussion of consciousness as mediating the relationship of practices to structures. Read carefully the conclusion

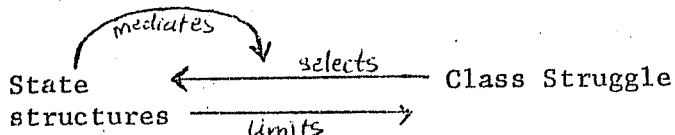
** on pp.183-184: the theme of the political incapacity of the bourgeoisie is extremely important in Poulantzas' later discussion and is introduced here.

Reading guide for the second weeks readings

III. The Fundamental Characteristics of the Capitalist State

* Introduction (187-189): Brief summary of some of the salient points already made. Point C on pp.187-188 is rather obscure, but the point is that the structures of the state determine the ways in which class struggle itself can effect the state (at least this is how I read the statement). Points 1 and 2 on the bottom of p.188-189 summarize the basic themes of much of the rest of the book: that the state functions to disorganize the working class and organize the capitalist class.

Note: one possible way of symbolizing what Poulantzas is saying in point C on pp.187-188 might be as follows:



** 1. The Capitalist State and the Interests of the Dominated Classes

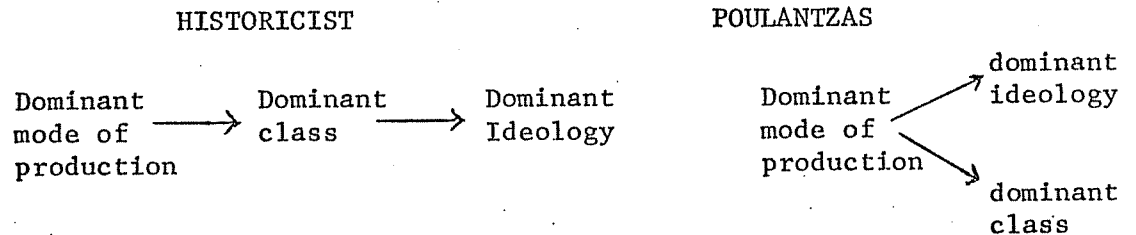
(190-194): A very crucial point is made here, namely that the capitalist state, because of its autonomy, can guarantee the economic interests of some dominated classes within certain limits. This is very important to understand, for it is the heart of Poulantzas' analysis of reformism and the relationship between economic and political functions of the state. The whole argument hinges around the statement on p.191, that "the state is not a class instrument, but rather the state of a society divided into classes." This means that the state functions to force the bourgeoisie to make economic sacrifices under certain conditions of class struggle precisely in order to maintain the dominance of the bourgeoisie (i.e. to reproduce capitalism). It is this argument of Poulantzas which has lead some of his critics to argue that he regards all reforms as reproductive, that no reform is possible which doesn't "ultimately" serve the interests of the bourgeoisie. Is this accusation reasonable? Note also that one of the upshots of P's analysis here is the assertion that the sacrifices made by the bourgeoisie are real, that (within limits) the state does act in terms of some sort of general interest, and thus this feature of the capitalist state is not "mendacious mystification."

2. The Capitalist State and Ideologies

(optional)i. The historicist conception of ideologies(195-201): Critique of the view that ideology constitutes the "unity of a formation", and that the dominant ideology = the ideology of the dominant class as a class-subject, imposed on the dominated class, through class consciousness/world view.

(optional) ii. Dominant ideology, dominant class and social formation (201-206): Continuation of the critique in section (i). Interesting point raised in section C (p.205) about the contamination of ideologies of one class in the ideologies of another, and why this is difficult to pose rigorously as a problem in the historicist perspective.

iii. The Marxist conception of ideologies (206-210): The basic point is made on p209, that the dominant ideology isa structural instance determined by the mode of production, not by the dominant class as an historical subject. Thus historicist conceptions can be contrasted to Poulantzas' as follows:



This is not meant to be an adequate or complete representation of either position, but just a reflection of the central distinction.

- (217-221 optional) iv. Bourgeois political ideology and the class struggle (210-221): Further elaboration of the concept of ideology, emphasizing the domination of one region of ideology within a given ideology (eg. the domination of political ideology within bourgeois ideology as a whole). pp.213-216 is perhaps the most important, discussing why juridical-political ideology is so important in the CMP, namely that it makes it possible for the state to play the role of isolating workers. Note also discussion of the double function of ideology: to hide the actual character of a social structure (particularly to obscure the dominant instance) and to provide for cohesion of social relations (p.215).
- (optional) v. The problem of legitimacy (221-224): legitimacy is defined in terms of the relationship of dominant ideology to the state, rather than in terms of forms of consent/acceptance of the political (a la Weber).
- (optional) 3. The Capitalist State and Force (225-228): This is a very cursory statement of the problem of repression/force. The basic point is that it is not a general characteristic of the state per se, but of the capitalist state in particular that it has a "monopoly of the use of legitimate force" (a la Weber), and that this derives from the relative autonomy of the state and its particular functions in the CMP.
4. The Capitalist State and the Dominant Classes (228-252)
- * i. The Power Bloc (229-234): Another important concept in Poulantzas' analysis. The essential point is that in capitalism there is not a single homogeneous dominant class, but a plurality of dominant classes and fractions. The structure of the capitalist state -- its specific autonomy -- makes it possible for the state to allow for a plurality of dominant classes to "participate in political domination" (234).
- ii. Power bloc, hegemony and periodization (234-240): Discussion of the relation of the concept of power bloc to Marx's work and to the concept of hegemony. Key point is that the dominant (hegemonic) fraction within a power bloc does not share power with other "members", certainly not equally, but rather represents the hegemonic force within the contradictory unity of the bloc (p239), i.e. the dominant fraction in a sense "represents" the others, just as the power bloc as a whole "represents" the people in general. Note the relationship between the analysis of forms of the state and power blocs: a given form tends to correspond to particular power blocs.
- (optional) iii. Power bloc, alliances and supporting classes (240-245): more distinctions concerning the relationship of dominant classes to the state. Supporting classes are classes which support a dominant class, but do not receive any sacrifices in return, the support being based on either ideological illusions or on fear of the working class. Alliances involve some sort of genuine unity, but of a more limited sort than represented by the power bloc.
- (optional) iv. Periodization and the political scene (245-252): The important point here is the introduction of political parties as representatives of classes, and the discussion of the relationship of the power bloc to parties. The political scene is the "field" of the action of parties.

More concepts to try to Define (page references in parentheses)

bare individual (125ff)

effect of isolation (130)

private vs. public (132)

hegemony (137)

type of state vs. form of state (148)

stages and phases of social formation (149)

function vs. ruptural dislocation (155)

transition (157ff)

power bloc (229ff)

political scene (246)

alliances (240ff)

ruling class vs. politically dominant class (249)

- **read with great care and perserverance (read several times if necessary to understand)
 - *read with care, but if after two readings you can't figure it out, go on.
 - (no asterisk) read through once and get the general issues.
 - (optional) at least skim through, but you do not need to read it carefully unless you want to.
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IV. The Unity of Power and the Relative Autonomy of the Capitalist State

** 1. The Problem as Theoretically Posed in the Marxist Classics (255-262): It is extremely important to grasp exactly what Poulantzas means by the unity of power of the Capitalist state, and its relative autonomy. On the face of it, the claim of the unity of power seems rather absurd: one needs only to think of agencies of the state "captured" by special interests as pictured by Nader, or for that matter the control of the executive by the popular unity party in Chile; such examples seem to contradict the thesis that there can be no "parcellization" of power in the capitalist state (255). This view, however, confuses the question of a disunity among the state apparatuses with a disunity of state power. Recall P's definition of power in part I, chapter 3 in terms of the capacities of classes to realize interests, i.e. power is relational. The concept of the "unity" of such power is still not transparent, but it is important to try to grasp it in terms of the unity of power rather than apparatuses.

Similarly for relative autonomy: this is seen as a general aspect of all capitalist types of state, not just of a state in some kind of "equilibrium"; it is a functionally necessary degree of autonomy from the dominant classes, necessary for the state to fulfill the functions set by its position within the total structure of the CMP

(option) 2. Some Misinterpretations and their Consequences (263-274)

- i. General Political Theory: basically criticizes pluralist and corporatist theories of the state for both breaking down the unity of state power and ignoring the specific relative autonomy of the state, either by absorbing the economic into the political or vice versa.
- ii. Marxist political theory: same points are made. Note the criticism on p.273-274 of the French Communist Party's theory of State Monopoly Capitalism as the fusion of the big monopolies with the state, which results in the state being the tool of the monopolies. Poulantzas argues that this view shares the same premises as pluralism.

read 273-274

3. The Capitalist State and the Field of the Class Struggle (275-295)

- * i. The General Problem (275-279): The first part here is a useful summary of the overall argument about the relationship of the state to other structures and to class struggle. The second half consists of more discussion of "unity", but here the ground seems to have somewhat shifted, where unity seems more like a variable: "the state's power constitutes unity of its own in so far as its institutions are organized so as to constitute the people's and the nation's unity"(278). This suggests that this unity may not be absolute if part of the institutional structure of the state does not represent the unity of the people/sovereignty. Is this possible? The concept of unity and sovereignty are very closely linked in this discussion -- does this imply that the "unity" is largely an ideological unity?

* ii. Marx's analyses (279-289): The central notion here is that it is because of the incapacity of the bourgeoisie to organize itself politically that the state must be relatively autonomous: it becomes relatively autonomous in order to guarantee the political interests of the dominant classes. This implies that autonomy of the state will be variable (within limits) depending on a variety of factors which shape bourgeois incapacity, among other things (286). Poulantzas takes special pains throughout this section to distinguish relative autonomy of the state from autonomy stemming from equilibrium of class forces, especially "catastrophic equilibrium". Note the concise summary of the critical points on the bottom of p.287. The upshot of all of this analysis is that the combination of relative autonomy plus unity of state power makes the capitalist state "the unambiguous political power of the dominant classes" (see pp.288-289).

(optional) iii. The so-called phenomenon of totalitarianism (290-295): Central point is that "totalitarian" states are essentially exaggerations of the capitalist state, and that they exhibit the same basic features of unity of power and relative autonomy, and thus do not represent a qualitative break from the liberal capitalist state as claimed by bourgeois theorists. P's discussion never really presents an adequate theoretical explanation of what is decisively different between liberal and totalitarian states in the CMP. (Note that in footnote 29 Poulantzas tries to differentiate the fascist state from the "totalitarian" state, and he argues that the former really are not simple forms of the capitalist type of the state.)

4. The Capitalist State and the Dominant Classes (296-307)

* i. The Power Bloc (296-303): Just as the state is relatively autonomous viz-a-viz the dominant classes, so it is relatively autonomous viz-a-viz the power bloc and the hegemonic class/fraction within that bloc. Poulantzas goes further: the unity of the state power which he has been discussing is really a unity which corresponds to the interests of the hegemonic fraction of the power bloc; just as classes as a whole cannot "share" state power, so to it is impossible for the classes and fractions that make up the power bloc to share power. The discussion on pp.299-300 about bourgeois parties being incapable of politically organizing the bourgeoisie, including the hegemonic fraction of the bourgeoisie (and thus the necessity of the state organizing this class), whereas the parties of the waking class can politically organize the proletariat is interesting (read footnote 4).

ii. The separation of powers (303-307): Poulantzas here attempts to deal with the obvious fact that the state is divided into different apparatuses, and that it can happen that different fractions "control" (305) different apparatuses, eg. the executive and the legislature. This might appear to be a situation where power is shared-out rather than unified. P's solution to this is to argue that one apparatus (or instance within the state) is always dominant over the others and thus constitutes the "nodal point where unitary institutionalized power is concentrated within the complex state organization" (303). He even admits that such situations may enable the nonhegemonic fractions of the power bloc to use nondominant apparatuses as "resistances to the dominant power" (305), but that nevertheless, state power remains "unitary."

5. The Problem of the Forms of State and Forms of Regime (308-321)

i. Forms of State, forms of Legitimacy (308-317): The executive/legislative distinction is related in this section to a) the relation of the state to dominated classes, and b) the relation of the state to the power bloc.

In terms of the former, the central issue is that changing requirements for legitimacy are bound up with the distinction executive/legislative. In Monopoly stage of capitalism, P argues that the Monopoly fraction is increasingly incapable of organizing its legitimacy through parliamentary institutions which explains the shift towards the executive. Note that P emphasizes that this has nothing to do with the potentiality of parliament being "captured" by dominated classes (313-314), but rather centers on the ideological problems of organizing hegemony politically by Monopoly Capital. The same issues are involved in the state-power bloc relation: monopoly capital, because of the intensity of fractional contradictions in monopoly capitalism, cannot organize its hegemony within the power bloc through parliament and thus shifts its power center towards the executive. Note the discussion at the end of the section on p.317 about crisis situations as situations in which "the state falls under the direct control of this class or fraction", i.e. the state becomes nonautonomous.

- * ii. Forms of regime, political parties (317-21): The really important part of this discussion begins on the bottom of p.319: Here Poulantzas introduces the concept of the variability of the relative autonomy of the state, and how this variability relates to forms of regime and forms of the state. Especially interesting is the very brief statements on p.320 about France, Britain and the United States concerning differences in relative autonomy, and how this might be related to the party system, organization, etc.

V. BUREAUCRACY AND ELITES

- (optional) 1. The Problem and the Theory of Elites (326-330): mainly a critique of various elite theorists view of bureaucracy and power, especially of the notion that the bureaucracy per se "has" power. Ultimately all elitest theories, P argues, fail to provide any explanation of the foundation of political power (330) and thus cannot offer an alternative to Marxism.
- 2. Class Affiliation of the State Apparatus (331-340): This is a fairly formal discussion of the class character of personnel in the apparatuses of the state. P distinguishes between their class affiliation (=origin) and the way in which their position in the apparatus determines their class functioning (= for the hegemonic fraction of the power bloc). This is critical for establishing the (relative) unimportance of recruitment directly from the hegemonic fraction. On pp.337-338 Poulantzas introduces the possibility of class affiliation have consequences, but those consequences are said to occur within limits set by the functioning of the bureaucracy. Note the curious statement near bottom of 338 about the capacity of the bureaucracy to create resistences without this constituting power. Why isn't resistance a form of power?
- (optional) 3. Bureaucratism-Bureaucracy(341-350): This is a rather rambling discussion of characteristics of Bureaucracy and Bureaucratism (i.e. the system of organization of the state apparatus). Two points are interesting: 1) bureaucratism is determined by a variety of aspects of bourgeois ideology (347-348); 2) the unity of bureaucracy as a social category is not generated by their interests so much as by bureaucratism itself (350).
- (optional) 4. Bureaucracy and Class Struggle (351-59): This is not a conclusion to the book (there is no concluding wrap-up). This discussion basically repeats various earlier statements about the state and class struggle specifically for the

problem of bureaucracy. The most interesting discussion concerns certain contradictions in the relationship between bureaucracy/bureaucratism and the capitalist state, especially between capitalist ideology and the petty-bourgeois ideology embodied in bureaucratism (355)

More definitions to unravel

Unity of Power

Relative Autonomy of the State

Power center

Sovereignty and people-nation, people-class-nation

Political Parties

polarization of interests within the power bloc (297)

nodal point of power (303ff)

executive vs. legislative (308, fn.1)

bureaucracy and bureaucratism