



*Contretemps Web signale la parution récente d'un dossier de la revue Viewpoint Magazine sur l'État.*

*Viewpoint Magazine* est une revue de théorie marxiste en ligne basée aux États-Unis, initiée dans le cadre des débats autour des mouvements *Occupy* ! Il s'agit d'une publication ouverte sur les nouvelles formes de radicalités et portée théoriquement sur les traditions révolutionnaires extraparlimentaires, ultra-gauche et opéraïstes. Sans sectarisme, ni esprit de chapelle, *Viewpoint Mag* propose régulièrement des livraisons thématiques, sollicitant des contributeurs contemporains mais aussi traduisant ou republiant des analyses plus anciennes du mouvement révolutionnaire européen – en particulier la séquence rouge des années 1960 et 1970 en Italie, France et Allemagne.

Dans ce numéro sur l'État, *Viewpoint Mag* propose des investigations aussi bien théoriques, philosophiques que stratégiques de l'État, du point de vue d'une politique communiste. La revue convoque une grande pluralité de références, allant des classiques de l'opéraïsme (Panzieri sur le contrôle ouvrier), pour aborder aussi les tournants critiques du mouvement (l'« autonomie du politique » de Tronti), jusqu'au mémoire de maîtrise de Daniel Bensaïd – pour la première fois traduit en anglais –, en passant par la gauche extraparlimentaire allemande influencée par l'École de Francfort (le tristement oublié Hans-Jürgen Krahl, véritable jonction entre Adorno et Rudi Dutschke). Ces fragments de la tradition révolutionnaire européenne sont complétés par des investigations théoriques du problème stratégique contemporain. Après la remise en circulation de l'« Idée du communisme », comme a pu le faire Alain Badiou (ou même, à sa manière, Antonio Negri), comment les mouvements doivent-ils articuler leurs pratiques à l'État ? Comment inventer une politique « à distance de l'État » qui soit aussi une politique pensée en termes d'hégémonie ? Enfin, quel bilan tirer d'expériences de pouvoir populaire comme la Révolution culturelle chinoise ou, plus proche de nous, la révolution bolivarienne au Venezuela ? Ces questions cruciales, qui n'épuisent pas ce numéro – on serait tenté d'évoquer aussi le débat, largement ignoré en France mais remis au goût du jour par le Comité invisible, sur la *logistique* comme pouvoir et le *blocage des flux* comme résistance – sont l'objet d'une attention éditoriale soutenue, exigeante, pour mettre en dialogue les points hauts de la tradition révolutionnaire, ainsi que les grands noms de la pensée marxiste d'aujourd'hui : Jodi Dean, Panagiotis Sotiris, Alex Demirovic, Nina Power, Gavin Walker, Alberto Toscano, Sergio Bologna, ou encore Sandro Mezzadra.

<http://viewpointmag.com/2014/10/30/issue-4-the-state/>

INTRODUCTION

"I believe that the status of the state in current thinking on the Left is *very problematic*," Stuart Hall wrote in 1984, in the midst of Margaret Thatcher's war on the "enemy within." He reflected on the legacy of the postwar period, which saw the extension of public services within the context of a vast expansion of the state's intervention in social life.

## STRATEGIC LEGACIES

[Seven Theses on Workers' Control \(1958\)](#) | Raniero Panzieri

In the workers' movement there has been for a long time, and in successive periods, a discussion of the question of the modes and temporalities of the transition to socialism. One tendency, which occurred in various forms, believed it was possible to schematize the temporality of this process, as if socialist construction had to be preceded, always and in every case, by the "phase" of construction of bourgeois democracy.

[Theses on the Transformation of Democracy and the Extraparliamentary Opposition \(1968\)](#)  
| Johannes Agnoli

These theses serve as a supplement to my book *Transformation of Democracy* and a correction to some misquotations made at the remarkable delegates conference of the SDS. I am generally of the opinion that rather than interpret texts, revolutionaries should change relations. As measured by the state's actual power relations and by the actual relations of domination in society, the familiar expression for the modern bourgeois state - "parliamentary democracy" - represents a paradox.

[Crisis and Strategy: On Daniel Bensaïd's "The Notion of the Revolutionary Crisis in Lenin"](#) | Patrick King

The English translation of Daniel Bensaïd's autobiography, *Une lente impatience*, is a welcome event in the Anglophone Marxist world. Not only does it contain a rich history of some of the most decisive moments for the French Left from the '60s to the present, it also deepens our understanding of the heterodox sources that coexisted within Bensaïd's unique form of Marxism.

[The Notion of the Revolutionary Crisis in Lenin \(1968\)](#) | Daniel Bensaïd

In several places throughout his work, Lenin tries to define the notion of a "revolutionary crisis," especially in *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* and *The Collapse of the Second International*. However, he outlines a notion more than he establishes a concept, as the descriptive criteria that he enumerates remain subjective assessments.

[Hans-Jürgen Krahl: From Critical to Revolutionary Theory](#) | Michael Shane Boyle and Daniel Spaulding

Hans-Jürgen Krahl died in a car crash in 1970, at the age of twenty-seven. By that time he had weathered the rise and decline of the Socialist German Student Union (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, or SDS), among whose ranks he was, arguably, both the most sophisticated theorist and, after Rudi Dutschke, the most incendiary orator. The SDS had been founded shortly after World War II as the youth wing of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of Germany. As the latter moved towards the center, however, the SDS radicalized, eventually leading to expulsion from its parent organization in 1961. It would soon become

~~the most important student group in Germany, even as its official policy shifted further towards revolutionary Marxism.~~

[The Philosophy of History and the Authoritarian State \(1971\)](#) | Hans-Jürgen Krahl

Historical materialism's critical economic prognoses on the natural course of the capitalist world order have been confirmed. The conditions for the economic breakdown and crisis of capital have been fulfilled; the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation has long since reached the degree of concentration and centralization that Marx and Engels designated as its naturally produced historical terminus. The existence of the authoritarian state is just as much an expression of the "final crisis" as it is of the temporary, politically mediated success of the attempt to manage it in the interests of monopoly capital.

[The New Deal and the New Order of Capitalist Institutions \(1972\)](#) | Luciano Ferrari Bravo

To speak of the New Deal as a huge qualitative leap in the development of capitalist institutions – a leap that, precisely because it functions at a crucial point in the plot of capitalist society at a global level, has itself a special historical importance – seems to be a statement by now generally taken to be wholly correct. The matter was already settled in the mind of its greatest protagonist and in the ideology created around him that enthusiastically founded the "myth" of the New Deal's "revolution"; and, if every myth must have a real justification, this one lay in the effective dismantling of the system in the rapid course of a decade. No less significant, at this level, is the bitter opposition from various positions that the New Deal came to provoke; these were attitudes that then, and not accidentally, flowed back against it in a wide underlying consensus.

[Notes on the Political Over the Longue Durée](#) | Matteo Mandarini

Written towards the end of what we might call the "second period" of Tronti's reflections, that of the so-called "autonomy of the Political," sandwiched between the more famous phase of Operaismo and the – almost completely unknown to the Anglophone world – "third period" political theological phase, that of the twilight of the political, the short text translated here will come to many Anglophone readers of Tronti as a surprise.

[The Political \(1979\)](#) | Mario Tronti

The political has a history. It is the modern history of relations of power. To reconstruct, reread, to accumulate materials, to lay out the problems by following the unhurried course of time, to set out from the classics is not an escape into the past, it is an experiment, a test, the attempt to verify a hypothesis. Let us leave formulae to the arithmetic of politics. Let us leave the autonomy of politics to the newspapers. The difficulties encountered by the Marxist theory and practice of the workers' movement in taking upon itself the fact of power all stem from this absence of knowledge, from this lack of reflection on the historical horizon of bourgeois politics.

ROUNDTABLE: POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES

[The Committee Room and the Streets](#) | Geoff Eley

The idea that one could reconstitute a viable left politics by straightforwardly reappropriating the elements that were so effective in this earlier period is a non-starter. At the same time it does not mean that you cannot take some or even all of those elements – suitably rethought – and combine them in new and creative ways that can have real

efficacy for the purposes of the present. You have to begin the argument now rather than in relation to then. You can't recuperate "then" as a way of restarting "now."

### [Rethinking Political Power and Revolutionary Strategy Today](#) | Panagiotis Sotiris

The question of political power has returned to the forefront of political and theoretical discussion. This is not a coincidence. The acute economic crisis, its serious social consequences, the open political crisis in certain social formations, and the very sight of the overthrow of governments and regimes under the force of political mobilization – despite, in the case of the Arab Spring, the tragic end of such processes – mean that such questions are again urgent.

### [The Ends of the State](#) | Joshua Clover and Jasper Bernes

It is in no way self-apparent that thinking more about the state, even if one promises to do it differently, is the sensible remedy for the problem of social movements that hurl themselves repeatedly against the colonnades of the National Assembly. If we are to confront practical problems in the struggle to remake the world, we should like to see the situation right side up. *For us, the problem is not how to seize state power but how not to be seized by it* – how we might elude being hailed by the question of power rather than that of social reproduction, and in turn, elude being forced to fight on terrain that is unfavorable.

### [Commune, Party, State](#) | Jodi Dean

As it forces the matter of the political form of the people, the Paris Commune serves as a key reference point in Marxist discussions of the state. What form does the people's self-government take? Insofar as the people precede the state, analysis of the Commune event necessarily opens up to the people's subjectification and to the political process of which the people are the subject. And insofar as the people politicized are people divided, a part of a constitutively open and incomplete set, the place from which the people are understood is necessarily partisan. The question of the party precedes the question of the state.

### [The State Against the State](#) | Nina Power

As the last vestiges of the welfare state all but disappear in the UK, we are faced with the paradoxical situation of those most opposed to "the state" (either as anarchists or as revolutionaries committed to its "withering away") being forced to defend elements of it against those who are in the process of privatizing it into oblivion. Of course "the state" is not simply a vanishing safety net or a real but ignored set of obligations, but also prisons, police, courts, and multiple other forms of coercion, punishment, control, and violence. Can we defend the "good state" against this other one without falling into political contradiction or practical confusion? Can we separate out the state and capitalist production?

### [Lessons for Building a Democratic Workers' State](#) | Immanuel Ness

The failure of socialism in the early 20th century is a product of the internal contradictions of bourgeois democracy, which permitted independent working-class organizations on condition that they did not pose a challenge to the capitalist state. In this way, the most significant historic fracture on the Left, one which remains with us today, followed the eager embrace of liberal democracy by Second International reformist socialists.

Given that a militant politics has to date largely been confined to “the margins,” and given the present fairly bleak political terrain, an examination of historical manifestations of political creativity at the mass level might have greater than historiographical importance. Wu Yiching’s re-interpretation of the Cultural Revolution – *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis* – is such a study, and it is a story whose dynamic bears an important relation to the historical vicissitudes of the local/center dynamic. Considering its historical and continuing political importance, including in much recent radical philosophy, the Cultural Revolution remains one of the most under-studied phenomena of the 20th century.

[From Subaltern to State: Toward a Left Critique of the Pink Tide](#) | Robert Cavooris

As people throughout Latin America react to the unsparing neoliberal policies that swept the region in the 1980s and 90s, Venezuela has become the hinge of a much broader leftward turn. This shift has impelled massive political transformations in Venezuela and Bolivia, stirred more moderate resonances in the Southern Cone, and in the cases of Paraguay and Honduras, aroused reactionary coups. As one of the few left political projects of its scale in the post-Soviet era, this Latin American *marea rosada*, or “pink tide,” is a material testing ground for the transition from capitalism to something else – leaving open for now the question of whether this something else is communism – and it demands substantive discussion on the Left.

RETHINKING THE POLITICAL

[The Political Economy of Capitalist Labor](#) | Heide Gerstenberger

The conviction that capitalist production requires laborers who are not only dispossessed of autonomous means of reproduction, but are also legally free to offer their capacity to labor on the market, has been central to Marxist analyses of capitalism. Any endeavor to confront this thesis with the actual history of capitalism not only runs counter to the dominant content of traditional Marxist analysis, but also to the fundamentally optimistic Marxist philosophy of history.

[The Critique of Politics](#) | Alex Demirovic

Politics, and in particular democratic politics, is often viewed within political theory as the area in which human beings come together in order to make collective decisions and to become capable of collective action. From this perspective politics is seen – in distinction to the economy, with its power and its inherent necessities – as the sphere of autonomy and freedom. In opposition to this perspective, Marx put forward the view that politics is itself heteronomous and has its share of social unfreedom.

[Remarks on Gender](#) | Cinzia Arruzza

We often use the term patriarchy to underscore that gender oppression is a phenomenon not reducible to interpersonal relations, but rather has a more societal character and consistency. However, things become a bit more complicated if we want to be more precise about what exactly is meant by “patriarchy” and “patriarchal system.” And this move becomes even more complex when we begin to ask about the precise relationship between patriarchy and capitalism.

Gavin Walker

In a brief moment of his theoretical work, the great Japanese Marxist critic Tosaka Jun deployed a decisive and crucial phrase, a phrase that I believe concentrates within it the historical conjuncture we have been experiencing on a world-scale in the recent years of crisis: he calls this ultimate crystallization of politics “the facts of the streets” or “the facts on the streets” (*gait? no jijitsu*).

## LOGISTICS OF POWER

[Lineaments of the Logistical State](#) | Alberto Toscano

It has long been noted that the apparatuses of control and accumulation that structure the social and material reality of circulation – transport, the energy industry and, after World War Two, “business logistics” as a veritable science of real subsumption – though born to break the bargaining power of transport workers and accumulate profits by annihilating space and depressing wages, have also, especially through their energetic dimensions, created dynamic arenas for class struggle.

[Disrupting Distribution: Subversion, the Social Factory, and the “State” of Supply Chains](#)

| Deborah Cowen

We have entered a time of logistics space. Contemporary capitalism is organized as a dispersed but coordinated system, where commodities are manufactured across vast distances, multiple national borders, and complex social and technological infrastructures. Geopolitical economies that were previously governed largely at the national scale – even though as part of a global system of trading nation states – have been reordered into transnational circulatory systems.

[Inside Logistics: Organization, Work, Distinctions](#) | Sergio Bologna

Logistics can never be understood from outside the warehouse, only by coming inside and looking at the techniques employed, the equipment and the organization of work does one understand if we find ourselves faced with something that belongs to the new economy, in the real sense of the term, or that resembles the sweatshops of Bangladesh. There is therefore no organization of standardized labor with specific figures, because every commodity sector has its specificity in industrial logistics, and because in distribution logistics, not all goods are subject to the same treatment (think only of perishable products, the cold chain or dangerous and toxic products). Speaking in the generic sense of “logistics” does not lead us anywhere.

## NEOLIBERALISM AND GLOBALIZATION

[The State of Capitalist Globalization](#) | Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson

It seems almost a paradox, or perhaps just an anachronism, to suggest that it is possible to describe the global situation from the vantage point of the state. Flows and scapes, transnational corporations, migratory movements, financialization, supply chains, the “unholy trinity” of the World Bank, IMF, and WTO – these are the actors, processes, and entities to which analyses of the global most frequently refer. Overwhelmingly the focus has been on operations and dynamics that in some way exceed or displace state power and borders. So much is this the case that arguments about the decline of the state have

[The Reproduction of Patriarchal Hegemony: Women in Italy Between Paid and Unpaid Work](#) | Tania Toffanin

In the system of gender relations, the role played by women in augmenting the productivity of the workforce has been and still remains absolutely functional to economic growth. In these terms, the role assigned to women is the outcome of the condition of subordination and dependence on the employment status of the partner or husband, and also the cause of the reproduction of this condition. This process was a structural feature of the Fordist regime, but it is also shaping the post-Fordist regime – because it is precisely through the denial of reproductive work that the patriarchal system allows capital accumulation, and state disengagement in public spending.

[State Violence, State Control: Marxist State Theory and the Critique of Political Economy](#) | Chris O’Kane

In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, a number of movements arose which in different ways, opposed the status quo. At the time, many of us in our exuberance thought these events signaled the end – or at least the beginning of the end – of capitalism. Yet from London to Oakland to Madrid to Athens to Cairo, each of these movements were met and outmaneuvered by an institution which was generally neglected in analyses of the final crisis, and the calls to communize everything by abolishing the value-form: the state.

[Europe Forged in Crisis: The Emergence and Development of the EU](#) | Oisín Gilmore

These are turbulent but confusing times in Europe. The Great Recession has taken a serious toll. In Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, and Spain (the PIIGS), intervention by the EU in domestic policy seems unprecedented. Portugal, Ireland, and Greece were forced by financial markets into bailout agreements with the “Troika.” In Italy, under the watchful eyes of Europe, the unelected technocratic government of Mario Monti replaced the elected government of Silvio Berlusconi – and not a single member of this new technocratic government was elected. Spain negotiated with the Troika, but was saved by changes in the financial markets.

CITIZEN AND MIGRANT

[Paths of Racism, Flows of Labor: Nation-State Formation, Capitalism and the Metamorphosis of Racism in Italy](#) | Anna Curcio

Since the mid-19th century, Europe has been characterized by a “double path” of racism, directed against Southerners on the one hand, and the African colonized population on the other. To understand the present, not just the question of racism, but of Europe’s “Southern” problem, and of underdevelopment itself, it will be necessary to consider the metamorphosis of Italian racism through the 20th century, and the shape taken by European racism within the crisis. It will be just as important to identify new possible antiracist practices, which can both identify and struggle against the material basis of racism.

[The Biology of Citizenship: Immigration, DNA Testing, and the State](#) | Torsten Heinemann and Thomas Lemke

While this understanding of biological citizenship certainly highlights important social and

political implications of biotechnological innovations in a globalized world, it tends to downplay and ignore practices of surveillance and exclusion, and the refusal of citizenship rights based on biological knowledge. An interesting example in this respect is the use of DNA testing for family reunification. By discussing Germany as an exemplary case, we show that the use of parental testing endorses a biological concept of the family and may lead to the exclusion or suspension of citizenship rights.

[The Deep State: Germany, Immigration, and the National Socialist Underground](#) | Wildcat

Nearly three years ago, in November 2011, news of a double suicide after a failed bank robbery developed into one of the biggest scandals in postwar German history.<sup>1</sup> Even now, it remains unresolved. For thirteen years the two dead men, Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt, had lived underground, together with a woman, Beate Zschäpe. The three were part of the National-Sozialistischer Untergrund (NSU), a fascist terror organization which is supposed to have murdered nine migrant small entrepreneurs in various German towns and a female police officer, and to have been responsible for three bomb attacks and around fifteen bank hold-ups.

Letters from Readers

[Dear Comrades](#)

Part workers' center and part domestic violence resource center, the Mujeres Unidas y Activas space in East Oakland is demonstrating what it means to build a Latina immigrant women's organization • It's clear to those of us paying attention that gentrification is hitting the Bay Area particularly hard • The idea of providing immediate services to those locked up in jails and prisons is sometimes seen as a compelling and essential way to reach people inside • When I first heard the word "DREAMer" I didn't think it was a problematic term, nor did I think it would have a negative impact on our movement. • As a Guatemalan third-world left feminist with Marxist tendencies, I organize knowing the enemy • Sin Barras is a prison abolition group based in Santa Cruz, California.