CHAPTER 8

8. CONCLUSION

The main argument of our thesis has been that the present framework of the state policy in India — summarized under the concept of "socialist pattern" — is a historically specific expression of the hegemony of the Indian corporate-capitalist class. The specific form of this hegemony and the necessity of the ideological form of the "socialist pattern" have been a product of the historical conditions within which the Indian bourgeoisie originated, grew to maturity and class-consciousness and, through a long drawn out process of struggle, thrust its long-term interests into the body of the state.

The civilizing mission of colonialism consisted in forcibly destroying the fabric of the old modes of production in the colony, in integrating it into the circuit of the world market, and in creating the general conditions of capitalist mode of production. Colonialism in India spread itself over two distinct (though overlapping) phases, expressed in terms of two different forms of state, corresponding to the changing forms of world capital. In its first phase, it represented the interests of the British merchant's capital which gradually established its political rule in the form of the absolutist-colonial state, relating to the society as an instrument of "domination" imposed
from above. With the change in the nature of British capitalism (from manufacture-mercantilist to industrial-), began the second phase of colonialism, spread over the last three quarters of the nineteenth century, expressed in the form of transformation of the state from its mercantile absolutist form to the industrial-capitalist form. The latter implied a drive on the part of the state to shift the means of its relationship with the society from "domination" to "hegemony". This entailed a quiet, passive, internal revolution within the state, in terms of its form and functions. Around the turn of the century, and especially since the First World War, there developed a transitional form of state corresponding to (a) the contradiction between its industrial-capitalist form and the modern corporate-capitalist functions it was called upon to perform under the conditions of twentieth century; and (b) the contradiction between its hegemonic drive, deriving from its nature as representing capital in general, and the fact that it could not succeed in doing so because of its functions arising out of its being an instrument of a particular alien-national capital. The transitional form of state is also marked by uncertainties and contradictions in the state-policies created due to the conflict between its reactive functions with respect to the changed socio-economic conditions for maintaining its own existence, and the fact that these very actions would ultimately be instrumental in hitting the roots of its colonial character (i.e., being instrumental in the growth
of the national movement and the strength of the national
capitalist class of India).

The national movement originated as the unintended
by-product of the colonial state policy seeking to create a
hegemonic base for itself during the second half of the nine-
teenth century. As a middle class movement of a society with a
underdeveloped capitalist class, it initially represented the
abstract nationalist demands of a class which was yet to grow
and mature. On the other hand, the specific historical conditions
in which the Indian bourgeoisie had to grow, imparted a
specifically corporate (but relatively weak, having to grow under
a hostile state) character to the class. Confronted with
(a) a vacillating transitional form of state, which was capitalist
in a general sense, but hostile to it at the same time (having
to represent the British interests), and inadequate to the
tasks expected of it under the conditions of twentieth century;
and (b) an autonomous national movement which represented
its nationalist aspirations in an abstract sense, but yet
articulating these aspirations in forms of struggle which
sometimes threatened to go beyond the capitalist framework
(at least in ideology and in the self-consciousness of some of
its individual leaders); the Indian bourgeoisie demonstrated
enough maturity of self-consciousness, and succeeded in building
up strategy and tactics to establish its hegemony over the
national movement and over the independent nation-state.
The aim of the Indian bourgeoisie was, therefore, to organise itself and struggle for transforming the state from the colonial-capitalist to the national-capitalist form. But insofar as it was weak, scattered and nascent, its first aim was to put forward intermediate demands for attaining sufficient strength within the structure of the colonial state. Gradually, it would work out its long-term class interests for state-supported growth and expansion, in the form of a programme which at the same time appeared to represent the interests and aspirations of the nation as a whole for economic development and prosperity. Seeking to establish itself as the harbinger of this development/prosperity, the Indian bourgeoisie built up a strategy for the constitutional transformation of the state — to transform its nationality while retaining its capitalist character, and at the same time bringing about the necessary changes and reforms in it, making it up-to-date.

If the bourgeois revolution, i.e., revolution by the national bourgeoisie, in India was "passive", it was passive in a sense somewhat different from what Gramsci attributes to the Italian Risorgimento in his *Prison Notebooks.* Here it was passive in three aspects: (a) The major tasks of the revolution had been accomplished by the colonial state as part of its "civilising mission" — the destruction of the fabrics of the old modes of production, the creation of forms of legislation conducive to generalised commodity circulation,

formal subordination of the old modes of production under capital, creation of modern means of communication etc. conducive to the development of capitalist relations of production and modern industry, the creation of the modern state apparatus with functions to defend and protect capitalist property, and so on and so forth. 

(What the early colonial state achieved through force or "domination", the late colonial state would do in a more systematic way through a drive towards "hegemony"). It acted like the European absolutist state in creating the conditions for capitalist development, though without directly helping in the creation of a native capitalist class. However, once the latter came into being and sought to assert itself, it found that its enemy was not from any pre-capitalist mode of production, but one belonging to the capitalist mode of production itself — an alien capitalist class with common bonds as capital, but a competitive enemy. And hence its aim naturally lay in only changing the nationality of the state, keeping the capitalist integument constant. (b) The late colonial state, in its objective tendency to create a hegemonic social basis for its own existence, had created the colonial intelligentsia which, as a result of its own contradictory existence, led to the growth of the nationalist intelligentsia and the natural movement. The prior autonomous existence of a national movement, before the political organisation of the native bourgeoisie could crystallize and play a leading role, had already ceded away from the class sufficient independent political initiative. (c) The very nature of its aims and tasks and the weak political strength of the class forced it to adopt a strategy which was passive and compromising in many ways.
On the other hand, the bourgeois revolution in India was not "passive" in the following sense: (a) It did involve a political party which included, alongside the "organic" intelligentsia, a layer of the "traditional" intelligentsia, who mobilised the vast masses of the petty bourgeoisie and rural masses behind the bourgeois programme. (b) It involved widely organised mass movements which, though not intended to reach its logical conclusion, nevertheless, did play an important role in building up considerable pressure on the state even for the reforms and for the constitutional transformation. (c) The bourgeoisie did evolve a programme on the basis of which it sought to establish its hegemony over the society, and translate its interests into the body of the state in the form of laws and policies. (d) Besides its original weaknesses, the condition of world economy and the specifically post-war, post-depression epoch in which the belated bourgeois revolution took place in India, also forced it to adopt a programme of greater role of the state in the economic development.

It is a necessary and inevitable feature of the bourgeois revolution that the self-consciousness of the revolution presents a glorified and idealised picture of the real class demands and aspirations. It must take a prolonged period of struggle before the disillusionment takes place, and the contradiction between the idealized form and the sober content of the achievements of the revolution is resolved. In India the specific form of resolution of this contradiction took the form of the "socialist
pattern" as the ideological expression of bourgeois socialism -- state-aided growth and concentration of corporate capital under the ideological form of the state policy (socialism, mixed-economy etc) in a backward capitalist country like India. The shifts in emphasis in the government industrial policy over the years, the gradual dilution of its radical content in the language of the laws and in the policy pronouncements, and the arbitrary use of the instruments the state possessed for the alleged control of high concentration and monopolization -- all these were the expressions of this process of translation into the corporate hegemony in the form of state laws and policies.

The concentration of corporate private capital, facilitated by the state planning and state industrial policy, has in its turn far-reaching implications. Some of these implications can be listed in the form of problems for future research as the following:

(a) What are the implications of a high level of concentration and monopolization of capital, i.e., of economic power, for the operation of political democracy -- in terms of its stability, nature and extent of democratic functioning and short-term and long-term tendency? (b) within the given politico-economic structure, is it possible for political parties without a pro-corporate-capitalist programme to come to power; and in case they do, is it possible for them to hold it for some length of time? And what problems are thereby created for the continuation of the present socio-economic order?
(c) Given the fact that the present form of the state, though expressing the hegemony of corporate capital, reflects the inherited weakness of the entire class, does a gradual strengthening of the class imply that the present form of mixed economy would give way to a more privatized economy?

(d) What are the long term effects of the high degree of monopolization of the economy and high level of state protection, in terms of scientific and technological development of India?

(e) What are the possible political strategies of the private corporate capitalist class, and the possible political scenarios in the coming decade or so, especially in the context of the present worldwide economic downturn into the farrow of the Kondratiev cycle?

We hope that future research will provide answers to some of these questions.