

## Agenda #11: Abraham's analysis of the Fall of Weimar, November 20, 2002

### I. Conceptual menu

1. *Subsumption*: one class subsumes the interests of another. What does this mean? (Shamus)
2. hegemonic bloc, block in power
3. intra-class vs. inter-class hegemony
4. hegemony:
  - hegemony & stability: how does hegemony enhance stability?
  - hegemony & state autonomy: what exactly is the relation between these two concepts? (Landy)
  - hegemony & democracy: popular pressures in democracy would seem to make it harder to form a hegemonic bloc. (Landy)

### II. More specific points of explanation and historical argument

1. **Labor/unions/SDP role in the process.**
  - It isn't entirely clear the extent to which workers militancy contributed to the impasse via the profit squeeze. If the working class had pulled back in its struggle to maintain its position, would this have significantly altered the instability problem? (Matt V, Keedon, Theresa)
  - Abraham also suggests that the defensive stance of the Unions and the SPD reflected their *organizational* weakness – if they had been stronger would this have enabled them to control militancy better? (Landy)
  - The SPD in fact had a militant base sufficient to challenge the Nazis, and if the SPD & KPD had been able to work together than the Nazis could have been defeated. (Matt N)
2. **parties & parliament.** If the distinctive function of an encompassing party to constitute a bargaining forum for the resolution of conflicts, why cannot this function be performed in parliament among nonencompassing parties? Why is a broad party important for forging a hegemonic compromise? (Matt D) In any case it is not so clear that the rules of the party system really explain the failure to form an elite compromise. (James)
3. **The Nazi “reaggregation of interests”.** To what extent was this based on a displacement/diffusion of class interests (via nationalism) as opposed to a reaggregation of interests? (Cesar)
4. **Counterfactuals, alternatives.** There are a number of ways in which the trajectory might have been different. The interrogations raised a range of counterfactual possibilities:
  - *reform of political structures*: why didn't the bourgeoisie reform the state in a constitutional way? (Robyn)
  - *labor strategies*: if labor had been less militant and been willing to make concessions, would this have been the crisis resolvable? (Matt V, Keedon)
  - *stagnation or civil war*: could an indefinite political stalemate without real institutional decay have been an alternative? (Theresa)
5. **The state as a “factor of cohesion”.** Abraham argues that the state is a factor of cohesion in the society, but in the Weimar case the state never seems to achieve this. If the state never achieves this, how can the collapse of the state be interpreted as a result of this failure? (Amy)
6. **Capitalist support for Nazis.** It is not clear precisely how crucial their active support was and in what sense the lack of this support would have blocked the Nazi's from power. (Pablo)
7. **The rise of Nazis and the collapse of Weimar.** Perhaps it would be better to reverse the causal argument: instead of the collapse of Weimar explaining the success of the Nazis, perhaps the Nazis rise enabled them to destroy Weimar. (Keedon)
8. **Reductionism** Abraham's argument seems ultimately reductionist – seeing the collapse of Weimar as explained only by economic causes? [Sun Jung]