

interest in increasing production once they had amassed in their castles and palaces enough goods, *objets d'art* and luxurious clothes. There is an absolute limit to the possibilities of individual consumption and the acquisition of luxuries (for instance, the social surplus product in the feudal society of the Hawaiian Isles takes the exclusive form of food, and because of this, social prestige depends.... on body weight).

It is only when the social surplus product takes the form of money — of surplus value — and when it no longer serves merely for the acquisition of consumer goods but also for that of means of production, that the new ruling class — the bourgeoisie — acquires an interest in the unlimited growth of production. Thereby the necessary social conditions are created for an application of all scientific discoveries to production — in other words, the conditions necessary for the appearance of modern industrial capitalism.

## Chapter 3

### *The State, Instrument of Class Domination*

#### *1 The social division of labour and the birth of the state*

In primitive classless societies, administrative functions were carried out by all the members of the tribe. Everyone carried arms. Everyone took part in assemblies which took all decisions concerning the life of the community and the relations of the community with the outside world. Internal conflicts were also settled by the members of the community.

Of course, one should not idealise the situation within these primitive communities which lived under clan or tribal communism.

The society was very poor. Life was a constant struggle with the forces of nature. The morals, customs, and rules for the settlement of internal and external conflicts resulted, even though they were collectively applied, from ignorance, fear and magical beliefs. However, it is necessary to emphasise the fact that society collectively governed itself within the limits of its knowledge and possibilities.

It is therefore not true that the notions of 'society', 'collective human organisation' and 'the state' are practically identical and can be found mutually interlinked throughout humanity's existence. On the contrary, for thousands of years humanity lived in societies quite ignorant of the existence of a state.

The state was born when the functions which were previously undertaken by all members of a society became the prerogative of *a separate group of people*:

- an army distinct from the mass of armed citizens;
- judges who took over from the mass of citizens the task of judging their equals;
- hereditary chiefs, kings and nobles in place of representatives or leaders of a particular activity, elected

temporarily and always recallable by the collective;

— ‘ideological producers’ (priests, clerks, teachers, philosophers, scribes and mandarins) set apart from the rest of the community.

The birth of the state is therefore the product of a double transformation: the appearance of a permanent social surplus product, relieving a part of the society from the obligation to work in order to ensure its subsistence, and thus creating the *material conditions* for this part of society to specialise in the accumulative and administrative functions; and a social and political transformation permitting the exclusion of the rest of the community from the exercise of the political functions which had hitherto been everyone’s concern.

## 2 *The state in the service of the ruling classes*

The fact that the functions which had been carried out by all the members of primitive communities became at a certain point in time the prerogative of a separate group of people indicates in itself that there are people *who profit from* this exclusion. It is the ruling classes who organise the exclusion of the members of the exploited and productive classes from the exercise of those functions which would allow them to abolish the exploitation imposed on them.

The example of the army and armament is the most convincing proof of this. The birth of the ruling classes is brought about through the appropriation of the social surplus product by a fraction of the society. The evolution which one finds at the origin of the birth of the state in the oldest Eastern Empires (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, China, India, etc.) has been reproduced over the last few centuries in many African tribes and villages: gifts, services in the form of mutual aid, which were at first benevolently exchanged between all households, progressively become obligatory and are transformed into levies, taxes and forced labour.

But it is still necessary to make this requisitioning *secure*. This is mainly done through the constraint of arms. Groups of armed men — it matters little whether they be called soldiers, police, pirates or bandits — *compel* the cultivators and cattle breeders (later also the artisans and

merchants) to give up a part of their production for the benefit of the ruling classes. To this end they carry arms and prevent the producers from being armed as well.

In Ancient Greece and Rome it was strictly forbidden for slaves to possess arms. It was the same for the serfs of the Middle Ages or the peasants in feudal Japan. The first slaves were, moreover, often prisoners of war who were kept alive, and the first exploited peasants were often inhabitants of conquered countries; in other words, they were the victims of *a process which disarms the producers and accords the monopoly of arms to conquerors, rulers and their retinue*.

In this sense, Engels is right to sum up the definition of the state with the formula: a body of armed men. Of course, the state fulfils functions other than that of arming the propertied classes and disarming the productive class. But, in the last analysis, its function is that of constraint exercised over one section of society by another. Nothing in history can justify the liberal bourgeois thesis that the state was born of a ‘contract’, a ‘convention’, freely engaged in by all the members of a community. On the contrary, everything confirms the fact that it is the product of a constraint of violence exercised by a few against the rest.

If the appearance of a state allows the ruling classes to maintain the appropriation of the social surplus, this same appropriation allows the members of the state apparatus to be paid. The more important this social surplus is, the more the state can bolster itself up with greater numbers of soldiers, officials and ideologists.

The development of the state in the feudal Middle Ages makes these relations particularly transparent. At the height of feudalism each feudal noble was ‘in his domain’ the head of the army, the tax collector, empowered to mint new currency, the administrator in chief, and director of the economy. But progressively, as feudal domains were extended, as a hierarchy was established among nobles, and dukes and barons emerged with power over considerable areas of land, it became impossible to exercise all these functions personally. This was even more true of kings and emperors.

Thus the characters incarnating the separation of these

functions emerged: seneschals, marshals, ministers, secretaries of state, etc. But a study of the meaning of words reveals how ministers were originally the slaves or serfs of the lord; that is to say, they were in a state of total dependency on the ruling class.

### 3 *Violent constraint and ideological integration*

Although, in the last analysis, the state is a body of armed men, and the power of the ruling class is based on violent constraint, it cannot limit itself exclusively to this. Napoleon Bonaparte said that you can do anything with a bayonet except sit on it. A class society which only survived through armed violence would find itself in a state of permanent civil war — in other words, in a state of extreme crisis.

To consolidate the domination of one class over another for any length of time, it is therefore absolutely essential that the producers, the members of the exploited class, are brought to accept the appropriation of the social surplus by a minority as inevitable, permanent and just. That is why the state does not only fulfil a repressive function, but also a function of ideological integration. It is the 'ideological producers' who make the fulfilment of this function possible.

Humanity is unique in that it cannot assure its survival except by *social labour*, which implies social relations between people.

These indispensable bonds imply the necessity of communication, of language, which permits the development of consciousness, reflection, and the 'production of ideas'. Thus all important actions in human life are accompanied by reflections on these actions in people's heads.

But these reflections do not come about in a totally spontaneous manner. Each individual doesn't just invent new ideas. Most individuals think with the help of ideas learnt in school or in church, and, in our times, with the help of ideas borrowed from TV, radio, advertising and the newspapers as well. The current production of ideas, and of systems of ideas called ideologies, is therefore rather limited. It is to a large extent also the monopoly of a small minority in society.

In every class society *the dominant ideology is that of the*

*ruling class.* This is the case essentially because the producers of ideology find themselves in material dependence on the owners of the social surplus product. In the Middle Ages, poets, painters, and philosophers were literally maintained by the nobility and the Church (itself the largest feudal landlord apart from the nobility). When the social and economic situation changed, the merchants and rich bankers appeared as the patrons of literary, philosophical and artistic works. The material dependence is no less pronounced. It is not until the arrival of capitalism that ideological producers appear who are no longer directly dependent on the ruling class. They work for an open market on which, however, almost the only buyers are capitalists and the bourgeois state.

Whatever the dominant ideology, its function is that of stabilising the society as it is — in other words, of stabilising class rule. The *law* protects and justifies the predominant form of ownership. The *family* plays the same role. *Religion* teaches the exploited to accept their fate. The *predominant moral and political ideas* seek to justify the rule of the dominant class with the help of sophisms and half-truths (for example, the thesis of Goethe, formulated during and against the French Revolution, according to which the disorder provoked by the struggle against injustice would be worse than the injustice itself. Moral: do not change the established order).

### 4 *Ruling ideology and revolutionary ideology*

But if the *dominant* ideology of each epoch is that of the ruling class, this in no way means that the *only* ideas that exist in a given society are those of the ruling class. In general — and simplifying — each class society contains at least three major categories of ideas within it:

- the ideas reflecting the interests of the ruling class of the epoch, which are dominant;

- the ideas of the previous ruling classes, who have already been defeated and thrown out of power, but who continue to exercise an influence on people. This fact is due to *the force of inertia of consciousness, which always lags behind material reality.* The transmission and diffusion of ideas is

partly independent of what is happening in the sphere of material production. They can therefore remain influenced by social forces which are no longer the predominant forces economically;

— the ideas of a new revolutionary class which is emerging and, although still dominated, has already begun the fight for its emancipation and must, at least partially, throw off the ideas of its oppressors before it can throw off the oppression itself.

The example of Nineteenth Century France is very typical. The bourgeoisie is the ruling class. It has its own thinkers, lawyers, ideologists, philosophers, moralists and writers from the beginning to the end of the century. The semi-feudal nobility have been overthrown as the ruling class by the French Revolution. They will not return to power with the Bourbon restoration of 1815. But their ideology, especially ultra-montane clericalism, will continue to exercise a profound influence for decades, not merely on the remains of the nobility, but also on parts of the bourgeoisie, and on certain layers of the petty bourgeoisie (peasants) and even of the working class.

Side by side with bourgeois ideology and semi-feudal ideology there has, however, already developed a proletarian ideology, first of all that of the supporters of Babeuf and of the Blanquists, then that of the Proudhonists and of the collectivists, which leads us to Marxism and the Paris Commune.

### 5 Social revolutions and political revolutions

The more stable a class society is, the less the domination of the ruling class is challenged, and the more class struggle is absorbed into limited conflicts which do not question the structure of that society, what Marxists call the basic *relations of production* or the *mode of production*. But the more the economic and social stability of a particular mode of production is shaken, the more the domination of the ruling class is being challenged, the more class struggle will develop to the point of posing the question of the *overthrow* of this domination — the question of a *social revolution*.

A social revolution breaks out when the exploited and

oppressed classes no longer accept this domination as inevitable, permanent and just; when they no longer allow themselves to be intimidated and repressed by the violent constraints of rulers, when they no longer accept the ideology justifying this rule, when they are gathering the material and moral forces necessary for the overthrow of the ruling class.

Profound economic transformations prepare such conditions. The existing social organisation and the given mode of production, which have allowed the productive forces and the material wealth of the society to develop during a certain period, have become a brake to their continued development. The expansion of production enters into collision with its social organisation, with the social relations of production. There lies the ultimate source of all the social revolutions in history.

A social revolution substitutes the rule of one class for that of another. It presupposes the elimination of the previous ruling class from state power. Every social revolution is accompanied by a political revolution. The bourgeois revolutions are in general characterised by the elimination of the absolute monarchy and its replacement by a political power in the hands of assemblies elected by the bourgeoisie. The Estates-General suppressed the power of Philip II of Spain in the revolution of the Netherlands. The English Parliament destroyed the absolutism of Charles I in the English revolution of 1649. The American Congress destroyed the domination of George III over the thirteen colonies. The various Assemblies of the French Revolution destroyed the power of the Bourbon monarchy.

But if every social revolution is at the same time a political revolution, every political revolution is not necessarily a social one. *A revolution which is only political* implies the replacement, by revolutionary means, of *one form of domination, one state form of a class, by another state form of the same class*.

Thus the French revolutions of 1830, 1848 and 1870 were political revolutions which successively installed the July Monarchy, the Second Republic, the Second Empire and the Third Republic, all different political forms of government of the same social class — the bourgeoisie. In general,

political revolutions overthrow the state form of the same social class as a function of the predominant interests of the various layers and factions of that same class which succeed each other in power. But the fundamental mode of production is in no way overthrown by these revolutions.

#### *6 Particularities of the bourgeois state*

The modern bourgeoisie did not start from scratch in creating its state machine. It largely contented itself with taking over the state machinery of absolute monarchy and then remodelling it into an instrument which would serve its class interests.

The bourgeois state is distinct in that, apart from its repressive function and its ideological (integrationist) function, it also fulfils a function which is indispensable to the smooth running of the capitalist economy: that of guaranteeing the *general conditions of capitalist production*. Capitalist production is effectively generalised commodity production based on private property, and therefore on competition. This fact itself means that the collective interests of the bourgeoisie as a class cannot be identified with the interests of any one capitalist, even the richest. The state acquires a certain autonomy in order to be able to represent these collective interests; it is the 'ideal collective capitalist' (Engels).

Stable and equal conditions of law and security for every capitalist are necessary if the capitalist economy is to function in a normal, not to say an ideal manner. At the very least, a unified national market, a monetary system based on a certain number of national currencies, and a national and international system of acknowledged (i.e. written) law must exist. All these conditions do not spontaneously result from private production and capitalist competition. They are created by the bourgeois state.

When the bourgeoisie is economically prosperous and in ascendancy, sure of its social and political domination, it tends to reduce the economic functions of the state to the minimum we have just mentioned. In conditions where bourgeois rule is weakening and in decline, however, it tries on the contrary to extend these functions so as to make the state guarantee private profit.

## Chapter 4

### *From Petty Commodity Production to the Capitalist Mode of Production*

#### *1 Production for the satisfaction of needs, and production for exchange*

In primitive society, and then within the village community born of the neolithic revolution, production was essentially based on the satisfaction of the needs of the productive collectivities. Exchange was only accidental, and affected only a tiny fraction of the products at the disposal of the community.

Such a form of production presupposes the deliberate organisation of labour. *As a consequence, labour is directly social*. Deliberate organisation of labour is not necessarily the same as conscious (and certainly not scientific) organisation. Many things may be left to chance, precisely because no thrust towards private enrichment presides over economic activity. Morals, ancestral habits, customs, rites, religion and magic can determine the alternance and rhythm of productive activities. But they are always essentially destined to satisfy the immediate needs of the collectivities, and not for exchange or enrichment as an end in itself.

A diametrically opposed form of economic organisation slowly emerges from this primitive community. Owing to progress in the division of labour, and the appearance of a certain stable surplus, the labour potential of the collectivity is progressively fragmented into units (big families, patriarchal families) working independently of each other. *The private character of labour* and the private ownership of the products of labour and even of the means of production gradually separate the members of the community one from another. This also prevents them from deliberately and immediately establishing economic relations amongst themselves. These units or individuals no longer have a direct